

February 7, 2010
Deacon Ordination Service

Good morning. I'm glad you are here today. If you are a guest this morning, you need to know that today is not a normal worship service, but it is an important one. I want you to grab your message map and get ready to fill in some notes today. Where normally we would go verse by verse through a passage of Scripture, today most of the notes will come before we get there – so definitely not a normal day but - this is an exciting day here at Fairway as we get to share in this process of deacon ordination. If that concept is new or foreign to you – that's ok, you'll figure it out as we move forward together.

One of the truths that matters most here, is that church is not just an institution. The Church of God is not an organization – it is a living organism. But it is an organized organism. All organisms that do what they ought to do are organized. To be organized simply means that something functions in an ordered sequence. Obviously we can't do everything at the whim of everybody who wants to do it. There's got to be organization within the organism. You're body is that way – and it's a good thing or you'd have all kinds of issues with how it functions and we are the body of Christ and it's a good thing God has given us organization or we'd have all kinds of issues with our functions. And we are going to get a glimpse at that today.

In fact, speaking of our function, I want to tell you a little bit about our church and for most of you this will be a reminder but for some of you this will be a way for you to get to know us a little better. But at Fairway we have a specific purpose and our purpose in everything is to glorify God. But God has expressed that purpose in a unique vision for how we are to go about that. And the vision that drives us here at Fairway so that we glorify God is that **Fairway exists to be moving people to LIFE in Christ one step at a time together.**

That's what salvation is about – that's what being a Christian means – it is an on going relationship with God through Jesus in which we do life every day. So we are about moving people to life in Christ and doing life in Christ one step at a time together.

And for us we have captured those steps of doing life in Christ in 4 statements and those statements express both what it means to be actively doing life in Christ and how to move into the process of life in Christ. So as I explain this quickly, I'll be introducing a logo that represents what we are all about in this vision to you and the first truth is that these statements – these steps are connected and they never end. **Life in Christ is life ALL the time moment by moment by moment.** So you have this circle in the logo.

From there, these 4 statements are rather simple – you hear them all over the place – you will begin to see them more and more as soon the worship guides and the posters all over our campus and the website will reflect these statements.

And it starts with **WORSHIP JESUS.** We want to respond to who Jesus is and to what He has done for us in the words we say and the way we live everywhere all the time. We cannot follow what we are not focused on – but we do become like what we are focused on – so we want to worship Jesus individually and corporately all the time – without that step, it is impossible to do life in Christ.

From there the next statement – the next step is to **LEARN TRUTH** – we want to be growing not just in our knowledge of the Word of God but in our application of God's truth to our lives because as we worship Jesus and give Him the rightful place of priority in our lives, we cannot not give His Word it's rightful place of authority in our lives and it is by learning His truth that our minds are renewed and our lives are transformed and we are able to know how to day to day live life in Christ.

And as we learn truth we cannot help but see in God's word the next step – the next statement is to **BUILD COMMUNITY.** Life in Christ cannot be done alone – we are designed by God to do life together and the heart of that togetherness is being in Christ – a common salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and from that unifying heart we want do life together – to build the breadth and

depth of our relationships in exactly the kind of selfless love and that God's Word commands over and over again in how we are to treat and interact with one another and then we want to build that community by serving one another and serving the family with whatever gifts and talents and abilities and resources and opportunities God gives us to bring about the health and glory of His body the church because we understand that by serving each other we are serving Jesus.

And finally the last statement – the last step that comes from this literally flows out of the other three – that as we worship Jesus, as we learn truth, as we build community, we cannot help but want others to know that experience – to understand what life in Christ can be; so the final step is to **REACH YOUR WORLD**. To literally do whatever it takes- to sacrifice what ever is required – to take any opportunity to speak Jesus into the lives of those around us who are far from Him – to meet needs and speak truth any way we can for the glory of God. Not to build the numbers at Fairway – not because we are supposed to – but because if we are doing life in Christ, such a life cannot help but overflow into the lives of others.

That's who we are and as a church that is where we are going – doing life in Christ one step at a time together – worshipping Jesus - learning truth – building community – reaching your world – for the glory of God.

And here is where that organization within the organism comes in, **as a church body God has given us a group of LEADERS who are leading us in that direction to accomplish that vision. God's Word describes those leaders in two offices – elders and DEACONS.**

Now listen - leadership in the church is not a mantle of status to be conferred on the church's aristocracy. It doesn't come by seniority. It isn't purchased with money. It isn't inherited through family ties. It doesn't necessarily fall to people who are successful in business or finance. It isn't doled out on the basis of intelligence or education or human talent. Its requirements – as we've seen even recently in our study of Titus – are faultless character, spiritual maturity, a willingness to serve humbly, and in some cases, a skill in teaching. It can go to the rich or the poor – the well known or unknown in the world – to those who have failed or not as the world measures success because that has nothing to do with it.

If you think back to last summer when we began our study of the book of Titus, we spent several weeks looking at the office of elders in the church as that was and is a new term for many of us especially in Baptist life and we will continue to pursue God's leadership in the understanding and development of that reality here at Fairway in the months to come even as we return to our study of Titus next Sunday. But as always – like we saw in Colossians - **Jesus Christ is the HEAD of His church – He is our chief shepherd and the Word of God is our final and sufficient GUIDE.**

And right now God is using me as your pastor and the rest of the staff over their specific areas of ministry or congregation that you have placed them as undershepherds with the authority to teach and to govern in the local church and they and I and we are seeking to be faithful in that responsibility and ministry even as we look forward to whatever God may lead us into here in the future.

But the Word lays out two offices and the other one is the office of deacon and those offices are designed to complement each other. One office – **the elder - focuses on oversight, leadership, DIRECTION, government, protection, and especially the teaching and administering the TRUTH.** The other office – **the deacon - focuses on enabling the elder to function by serving and focusing on the areas of and those who are in NEED.** And these two offices complement each other – you have to have both of these roles functioning in a church in order to accomplish the purpose that God has laid out for this body. And I want to focus this morning on that office of deacon – on what the deacon ministry of Fairway does.

And in many ways this is a transition for us. For a long time the deacons here have been focused on supporting the staff and being a sounding board for the pastor. They were involved with me in seeking God in developing the vision for over a year before I ever brought it to the church as a whole. But for much further back than that, the biblical office of deacon and purpose for it has not

really been in practice here. And I am excited as we ordain these four guys this morning for the challenge it is for all of us to move back into that biblical ministry.

The deacons at Fairway minister to the congregation as a whole and to the staff by taking care of our facilities, helping with the ordinances – baptism and the Lords Supper – by serving in administration areas behind the scenes – and primarily by being examples of what the vision is all about - examples of men doing life in Christ here at Fairway. But they also are to serve specific members of the congregation – and those specific members of the family are those who are weak, needy, and poor – those with real needs.

The deacon is called to lay down his life for the church family – when he sees a church family member in need – he opens his heart –his life and he helps that person in need. The deacon ministry is primarily toward the weak, the needy, the poor in the church and as such the deacon ministry is one that we cannot afford to neglect. It is one that must be prioritized. It is an imperative that we amplify and stress this ministry. God has given deacons a wonderful ministry of service, mercy, and love to needy people. And that is what we are setting these men aside to do in their life for today – to serve in that capacity.

There are two things you need to know about the deacon ministry. At least two. First - **the deacon ministry is DRIVEN by the needs that exist in our church and by the gifts and abilities of the men who bear the title deacon.** Two things drive that ministry – needs that exist in the church – which really emphasizes that we need to know about needs – that **as a church body we need to do a good job about COMMUNICATING our needs** – talking about what is happening. If you or another family have a need in your life, you need to communicate. That's why we have listed in the bulletin every week – deacon on call or deacon on back up – so you can know every week exactly what you are supposed to do – you can call that deacon and say I've got a significant need in my life – I've got a real need here – I need help. We need to be good at communicating needs because those needs drive that ministry.

So we've got to be good about not letting pride keep us from saying I've got a need. Sometime the last person to admit they have a need is the person who has the most significant need. We've got to get past that. We have got to be willing as a church family to be real – not to be whiney and complaining and not to say we stop trusting God – that's not what I'm saying – but that when we've got needs and we need some help doing things in our lives, God has called us and made us and even organized us as a family partially to take care of each other. So that is imperative because needs drive this ministry.

And the other thing that drives this ministry is the gifts and abilities of the deacons. Some of these guys are really gifted at making people feel welcome, some are great with numbers and business, some are great with their hands and working and building, some are great at listening and giving wise council, and all of them are connected to multiple other men and women in the church with other gifts and abilities who are willing to come along side and serve with them. There are all kinds of service that can be provided among the weak, the needy, and the poor within our church family. And so their giftedness – their abilities – are going to be grouped in such a way that they can respond to the needs that come up within our church family.

The second thing you need to know about our deacon ministry is that every family and individual in our church family will have the support and service of our deacon body. Now let me clarify that. This may be new information for you if you have been here a long long time or if you are relatively new here. So listen up. This may be a change from what you were used to. Individuals and families are not assigned a particular deacon. Is that clear? Let me rephrase that – you don't have a personal deacon. Instead the entire deacon body is there to serve you. **When you fall into the classification of the weak, the needy, the poor within this congregation you will have an entire FORCE of men ready to respond to your situation, not just ONE.**

What I've discovered along with some of my other pastor friends is that when everyone is assigned a deacon – a lot of people who don't need deacons are wondering where their deacon was! And what happens is that many times the deacons are distracted from their primary calling because they have people who don't need deacons wondering why their deacon isn't doing such and such for them. Now if that's you – don't be offended – because I don't know who you are and this isn't about you. But understanding that helps us as leadership change to be more effective in accomplishing the purpose that God has laid on us as leaders. And the purpose for the deacons is to meet the needs of the weak, the needy, and the poor within the congregation – to enable the elders to fulfill their function.

That means that **MOST of you don't need a deacon day in and day out** - you don't need one. So what you need to do – and I say this in Christian love – **what you need to do is join with the deacons in SERVING those who need a deacon – who are in need** - are you with me? That's what we've got to do as a congregation. When it comes to being a member of the Fairway family, or any church family, you must not see yourself as a recipient only nor can anyone hide behind the idea that "that's the deacons' job" or "that's the pastor's job." The truth is that is almost never true – rarely can it be applied straight out of the gate. In fact most things only get to be the pastor's job when they have failed to be done by the individual believers in the church and even those things that fall to the deacons most of the time should have already been addressed two or three times by others in the church family before they get to the deacons. That's what building community by serving each other as we do life in Christ together looks like.

Now there are going to be people in this room today who don't need a deacon today – but in two weeks something is going to happen in your life and you are going to need a deacon. And when that happens, you will have at your disposal the entire body of deacons that God has called out as servant leaders here at Fairway to come in and meet your needs as God enables them. And if you were here last Sunday night to hear from these 4 men, you know these guys are certainly going to represent that from what they've already shared with us.

Let me take us finally to **1 Timothy 3 – we'll look at verses 8-10**

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.

Speaking of deacons here in 1 Timothy 3 – Paul says you need to make sure they are tested – that they are proven to be above reproach. These men have been through a very serious process, we talked about it at length last Sunday night with you – but if you were to nominate someone to become a deacon – and let me just remind you that any of you who are members of this family can do that any time by talking to any of us on staff or any of the current deacons and sharing that person's name and why you think you see in him the biblical qualities of being a deacon. It has nothing to do with popularity – has nothing to do with status – it has nothing to do with any of those things that would get in the way – it has to do with biblical qualities – and when you see those biblical qualities in a person, you are free to nominate that person any time – and that person will be contacted that they have been nominated – and then they will have to answer several questions.

Do I sense God calling me to be a deacon?

Do I see these qualities in my own life?

Do I understand what the deacons do?

He has to respond to an interview with me and another deacons – that if you haven't had this interview put before you – it is fairly difficult and invasive – we try not to leave any thing unquestioned. We are not looking for perfection – because that would disqualify all of us – but looking for men who are striving toward righteousness – that they want to know Christ above all things and it shows in their lives - we look for men who are qualified.

He meets with the deacons as a whole for follow-up and other questions.

And in the midst of that everything from doctrine and theology to ecclesiology or view of church and personal integrity and family support and business ethics and reputation – all of that is addressed. And as God leads, we come to the day of ordination – which is today.

We have some of the greatest men and women already serving in this church all over the place and yet it thrills my soul to see how God is mobilizing this body – not just in the deacons but through all of us – to demonstrate the gospel of Jesus – to exemplify life in Christ one step at a time together.

So as we move into the **ordination** time, I'm going to ask Kevin Rouillard, Sam Aston, Greg Young, and Jonathan Brady to come now and be seated here along the stage. Ranette if you would come and stand behind Kevin and Jamie if you would come stand behind Greg.

And we are going to move into a time of prayer for these guys and I'm going to give you some direction. Couple things I want you to do during this time. **First – I want you to PRAY for them.** These guys and their wives are going to come down and be seated at the stage here and you will see our current deacons – Scott West, Randy Sullener, Phil Hudson, Mike Davis, and Monty Barnett – come down and lay hands on them and pray for them. Why? Because this is their commissioning. The laying on of hands simply means an identification of the solidarity and oneness of the whole church with them in their ministry. It is a beautiful ordination that is signified by laying on of hands and praying for each of them.

And then when that is done I'm going to invite those of you who know them – who are friends or have served in ministry with them – or if God just compels you, to come and we'll make a circle around them extending into the pews just person to person and I'll lead us in a prayer for them together. So you pray for them in this time.

But the second thing I want you to do in addition to praying for them is I want you to **LISTEN to the Lord.** In a service like this, it is not meant to be exclusively about these 4 guys because every one of us knows that Jesus Christ died for us and if God so demonstrated his love for us by giving us Christ, how can we not all respond to Jesus by yielding our lives to him and by committing to serve him in the name of Christ? So specifically in your life decide how you are going to respond to God's call in your life. **You may not bear a title, but if you are a follower of Jesus Christ – you bear the love of Christ and so you are called to SERVE.** That's what we saw just last Sunday in 1 John – the social test – that our salvation should show up in each of us in a love of choice toward each other that is simply awesome. So respond to the call on you.

Men – I want to share a couple words with you before we go into this prayer time. First of all I want you all to remember that in this service you do not serve us - you serve the Lord in serving us. And if your service is to the Lord first then I want to urge you to know Christ above all things – to love him above all things – because out of a love for Christ in relationship with him, you will be able to properly serve him and to serve him in a way that when people recognize you for serving, you won't think it is about you. You will serve him in a way that when people don't even know you did something, you won't feel like you got ripped off because God is the one who sees and it is his praise your heart longs for. So serve him.

Secondly - listen to what Samuel Brengle, a Salvation Army preacher, said, "The final estimate of men shows that history cares not an iota for the rank or title a man has borne, or the office he has held, but only the quality of his deeds and the character of his mind and heart."

Your call to be a deacon is a call to honor and serve the Lord, not because you have a title, but because Jesus died for you, because God loved you so much. As men who are charged to help the needy and poor, your own personal lives must exemplify generosity. When you see a need, you should give. Give as you are able to give – of time, ability, resources, wisdom, love. Be generous. If you want to be faithful in your office, the office of helping the needy, then live a life of generosity, exemplifying the generosity of God, who gave His very own Son for you.

Lastly – understand this. That as you serve like that – you do the greatest service of all. Because that kind of giving displays for all to see the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and there is no greater way that you can serve this body than to demonstrate and proclaim the gospel of our Lord.

I'm thankful for you guys – and grateful you've responded to God's call on your life. So if you'll come take these seats on the stage, Adam – you play. Deacons you come first to get us started. All of you – let's pray.

Look at me and listen to the words of Jesus.

Matt 25:31-40

And when those on his other side complained and worried about their treatment, Jesus responded in verse 45 to say:

Matt 25:45

Folks Jesus takes this really seriously.

As we seek to build a deacon ministry – it must flow out of all of us doing life in Christ one step at a time together – where all of us build community by using our gifts, talents, abilities, resources for building each other up – meeting needs. Today all of us are challenged by Jesus that if your salvation is real, then **go demonstrate a LOVE that is unexplainable except by the common presence of Jesus Christ transforming our lives and making us FAMILY.**

Title or no – that is part of what we are about. Let's do it together.