

A Proposal For Church Leadership And Repurposing
Structure at Severna Park Baptist Church
By Pastor David Brown / Current Deacon Body
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SEVERNA PARK BAPTIST CHURCH
GROWING GODLY GENERATIONS

Severna Park Baptist Church (SPBC) is a fellowship of baptized believers, joined by God's grace in the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and are united together in the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Great Commission. A church, like a family or community, is always adjusting to the needs of people. Our fundamental doctrines stay the same, but our methods of communicating these doctrines may change in order to help the church better accomplish its mission.

1. Church Identity

SPBC is vested in the body of baptized believers under Jesus Christ who compose the membership. It is subject to no other ecclesiastical body; rather it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which is common among other Southern Baptist Churches. In so far as it is practical, SPBC will cooperate with and support the Arundel Baptist Association, the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware and the Southern Baptist Convention. If, at any time, the majority of this church shall depart from the principles herein stated and embodied in its church purpose, covenant and statement of faith, the property of this church shall belong to the minority, however small, that adhere to the principles thus set forth.

2. Beliefs Summary

2A. Believers

- We believe every person was created in the image of the Triune God (Father-Son-Spirit) but has fallen short of reflecting that image. Therefore, every person is a sinner in need of God's salvation. Salvation is a gift of God through Jesus Christ.
- Faith in Jesus of His perfect life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection is the only means of our rescue from sin and the grave. True faith turns away from sin and turns toward trusting God in every area of life.
- We believe the return of Jesus will bring justice to earth and humanity, bringing Christians into eternal heaven and unbelievers into eternal judgment.

2B. Bible

- We believe the Old and New Testament are the inerrant, inspired, and infallible word of God.
- We also believe the Bible is an intimate treasure for faith and practice in the Christian life.
- God's word is the supreme standard for our beliefs and behaviors.

2C. Baptist Body of Believers

- We believe every believer not only belongs to the global Church but should belong to a local church. The local church is the expression of Jesus Christ on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The purpose of the church is to glorify God by expanding His kingdom in spreading the gospel of Jesus to every tribe and tongue, neighbor and nation.
- We believe Christ's church is made up of persons with believer's baptism, covenanted together by faith and fellowship in the gospel, and together observing the ordinances (baptism and communion).
- While the church may call and hire a variety staff, the primary offices of the church are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications and duties are defined in the Bible (Timothy and Titus).

2D. Beliefs

- A full statement of our church beliefs and position statements can be found in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 ([click](#)), adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention.

3. Core Values

The word “*gospel*” can be a helpful acronym that further describes our church family and core values.

3A. God: We are worshipers.

All of us give ultimate attention and affection to someone or something. When good things become ultimate things, they can become an idol. We want to prioritize each area of our life in the proper place, believing God is only worthy of our worship.

I commit to Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, and to follow Him in community with my church family.

I believe the Bible is God’s word and affirm the faith statement of my church family.

3B. Others: We are family and friends.

No person is an island. We need each other for strength and support. Our church seeks to create an environment of loving relationships where every person is valued regardless age, gender, race, politics. Even those who may be seeking or skeptic can find in our church family a people who will listen and learn from one another.

I commit to growing in faithful friendships, protecting unity in my church, and to participate in a small group Bible fellowship.

I commit to a life of repentance, walking in the fruit of the Spirit, and inviting accountability from others speaking truth in love.

3C. Spiritual Growth: We are thermostats impacting communities and culture.

A thermometer reads its environment, but a thermostat impacts its surroundings. Our church’s aim is not only to attract a Sunday audience, but to equip an army of people who have God’s calling, conviction, character, and capacity to make a difference in the world around them. Growth in the Bible and spiritual disciplines aids our development as a thermostat.

I commit to honor God through faithful spiritual growth through serving and supporting my church with my time, talents, and financial treasure.

3D. Prayer: We are spiritual warriors.

Life is tough and can be described as war. Our weapons of warfare are faith, hope, love, and prayer. We gain perspective in life's blessings and burdens when we learn to pray and see the world through God's eyes. Prayer makes a powerful difference in how we live.

I commit to pray for my circumstances and my church family.

3E. Evangelism: We are sent.

The church is called to spread God's love and share God's truth with neighbors and across the nations. Our church's aim is to display God's grace in word and deed through authentic friendships and intentional partners.

I commit to promote the gospel with my life and proclaim the gospel with my lips to others.

3F. Leading Generations: We are growing godly generations.

Eternity starts today. Our example of faith today is leaving a legacy to impact future generations. Our church's aim is to equip disciples of Jesus in every home and family.

I commit to investing in the next generation to grow in faith through my home, church, and community.

4. Church Membership

Members shall consist of those who have made a clear commitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord, are regularly and actively involved in worship and ministry, and who are in joyful agreement with the mission of SPBC. Church membership is a spiritual matter through the spiritual governance of the church body.

Membership should be meaningful and will be accomplished through one of the following:

- Profession of faith and baptism by immersion by SPBC
- Letter received from another Baptist Church
- Statement of Christian experience and baptism by immersion in another church of like faith and order.
- All new or re-activated members will complete the Meaningful Membership Orientation and will sign a commitment covenant to serve and support the church
- Qualified applicants for membership will be officially accepted by affirmation of the church at any membership business meeting

Members have the joy of uniting in fellowship and service to the Lord and each other. Intentional processes for ministry will be created through the church and its leadership to ensure members are cared for and equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. Further, members have the privilege and responsibility to steward the church's resources through participation in membership business meetings, voting rights, ministry service, and financial support.

5. Mission

SPBC exists to grow godly generations through equipping people to love God, live Jesus, and lead generations. Church structure may not sound interesting, but it is very influential for the effectiveness of our ministry. Our church structure requires a regenerate and faithful membership with two biblical offices of the church: Pastors and Deacons.

6. Transitioning to a Jesus-ruled, congregational-accountable, deacon-served ministry, and pastor-led.

6A. Jesus-Ruled

The local church is governed by its head, Jesus Christ as the Chief Shepherd.

Matthew 16:18-19

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

6B. Congregational-Accountable

The local church is primarily the work of members, with its pastors equipping and mobilizing the saints for the work of ministry. The NT is filled with “one another” exhortations, reminding believers that following Jesus is an on-going journey lived in community. We cannot fulfill the commands of Jesus and the NT without a commitment and partnership with the church. Under Christ, the church assembly is accountable for matters of discipline (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4; 1 Timothy 5:19-20). Further, the church is called to submit to godly leaders (Hebrews 17:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). In all, our church’s core values help guide our actions and growth as Christians and church members.

Romans 12:4-8

⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,*

⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

⁶ *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;*

⁷ *if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;*

⁸ *the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

1 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

Ephesians 4:11-12

¹¹ *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,*

¹² *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*

²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

6C. Deacon-Served

The role of Deacon is servanthood (διάκονος = servant, literally “through dust”). The early church Apostles could not care for all the needs of a growing faith community, so they appointed godly servants (Acts 6). The work of these godly servants was a partnership with the Apostles to serve others with the gospel and living out God’s kingdom values. To note, the Acts 6 passage is descriptive of their role (serving food) not prescriptive. In other words, a Deacon’s role may be a variety of giftings/service to the needs of that unique body and individual; they are servants of practical needs, and peacemakers for unity in the church.

Deacon qualifications are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 with insight from Acts 6:1-6.

Deacon women vs. Deacon wives (1Tim 3:11)?

“Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.”

- The text context is Deacons, but the word in v.11 is uncertain since it can mean either “women” or “wife.”
- Γυναῖκας is in the plural, perhaps indicating a new category rather than a Deacon’s wife (singular).
- Context shows no mention of overseer wives and could imply the focus is not on wives but an argument of silence in that females are excluded from the overseer/elder/pastor role but permissible for female deacons; this would also relate back to context of 1Tim 2:11-15 for women not teaching over men.
- Further, why would a deacon’s wife have a higher qualification than an elder wife, which is without description?
- Also, other Scriptures indicate women likely serving as Deacons: Phoebe in Romans 16:1. Other women are listed prominently in service roles but perhaps not specifically as a deaconess: Mary in Romans 16:6, Tryphena & Tryphosa in Romans 16:12, and Euodia & Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3.
- At the very least, deacon women/wives are to have similar qualifications for godly character.

6D. Pastor-Led

The New Testament (NT) describes the early church led by a plurality of pastors/elders; vocational or non-vocational.

All NT churches planted by Paul had elders.

Acts 14:23 “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Elders were in the Church at Jerusalem.

Acts 15:2 “And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.”

Elders were in Ephesus.

Acts 20:17 “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.”

Elders were in all the Churches of Crete

Titus 1:5 “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.”

Elders were in all the Churches of the Dispersion of the Roman Empire

James 1:1; 5:14 “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. . . . Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

Elders were in all the Churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

1 Peter 1:1; 5:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen... Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God.

Elder qualifications are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The term “Elder” is synonymous and interchangeable with the term Pastor/Bishop/Overseer.

Acts 20:17, 28

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders (πρεσβύτερος) of the church to come to him.

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπίσκοπος), to care (ποιμαίνω) for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

1 Peter 2:25 “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

1 Peter 5:1-4

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”

1 Timothy 3:4 “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.”

1 Timothy 5:17 “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

Titus 1:5, 7

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders (πρεσβύτερος) in every town as I directed you—

⁷ For an overseer (ἐπίσκοπος), as God’s steward, must be above reproach...

Hebrews 13:7, 17 “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith... Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

Pastors serve the church by shepherding with grace and godliness wisdom (Acts 20:28-35; 1 Timothy 4:6-16; 1 Peter 5:1-5), feeding with God’s truth (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9), and leading a fitting strategy of faithful prayer and contextual discipling (Acts 6:1-7; Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15; Titus 1:3).

3 reasons SPBC should consider re-purposing leadership structure.

1) To reflect biblical leadership terminology more accurately.

- This document outlines a biblical perspective of ministry. There are at least two ways SPBC leadership structure could better reflect the biblical pattern.
 - A) Plurality of pastors so the church does not depend upon one person for...
 - Shepherding: Currently the Deacons assist in shepherding, but a level of effectiveness has been questioned in varying seasons based upon gifting and time management ability. We believe assigning shepherding responsibilities to a plurality of pastors will benefit the church.
 - Feeding (teaching): Currently there is one pastor preaching over almost 45+ Sundays a year. While this may be consistent with trends of other churches, there could be increased productivity in this area. Further, additional discipling and equipping could grow in effectiveness; i.e. teacher and ministry training, etc. Having additional Pastors (vocational or non-vocational) who can carry some of the teaching roles could be helpful to the church body.
 - Leading: Currently a Church Council assists in leading the church with ministry decisions, financial stewardship, campus maintenance, calendaring events, and miscellaneous tasks. Again, the C.C. has done a tremendous job, but time management and ability sometimes can be limited in giving actual leadership implementation.
 - In all, plurality of pastors balances the weaknesses of a solo pastor model. Congregational unity can increase more easily as the body is represented with indigenous leadership and diverse pastoral wisdom.
 - B) Aligning Deacon Ministry with the biblical roles of serving practical ministry needs in the body, rather than as a shepherding and oversight. Further, opening Deacon Ministry to females as allowed in biblical examples (see outline above 6C).

2) To shepherd members more effectively.

Church consultants suggest having 1 full-time pastoral staff for 76 members, with staffing around 49-54% of total budget.¹ Currently, SPBC has 124 members with 100 regular attenders experiencing some level of pastoral care. These numbers alone reflect some level of understaffing of pastoral ministry in the church.

3) To serve the ministry more effectively.

- 60 of 124 members are serving at least monthly. While this is almost 50%, we need to increase this number and mobilize people into regular ministry service. Transitioning to Pastor-led structure removes some level of *church maintenance* from volunteers to emphasizing more time available for ministry. Further, titling ministry team leads as Deacons elevates their sense of call and importance for their role within the body.
- Current Deacon Ministry is responsible for shepherding and oversight rather than serving practical ministry needs. Further, in the past, not every person called to become a Deacon was gifted in relationally shepherding but had other gifts that could be used. However, our structure did not necessarily allow that as the church needing shepherding for the people groups. Ultimately, our aim would be to align biblical titles and roles with member gifts.

¹ <https://thomrainer.com/2016/11/six-surprises-about-church-staff-salaries-and-budgets/> also <https://tonymorganlive.com/2017/07/18/money-church-spending-staff/>

- The Church Council is the primary source of decision-making and/or forwarding action items to or from the congregation. However, at times decisions and actions have lacked execution. While a variety of issues may be the reason, we believe a plurality of pastors leading with deacon ministers can be more effective in accomplishing tasks.
- Previous limitations are removed to specifically see women equipped and flourishing in ministry roles.

In summary, it is the Pastor's and the current Deacon Body's recommendation to repurpose Deacon ministry and shift structure towards an pastor-led model. An pastor-led model would become the primary source for decision-making and ministry action, while still maintaining accountability with the congregation. We believe an pastor-led model will be able to better define our ministry vision, develop our ministry strategy, and deploy members into mission.

An outline of leadership, ministry structure, and process

Pastors

A Lead Pastor is generally vocational staff and "first among equals." Other Pastors may be vocational (full-time or part-time) or non-vocational (volunteer). A church may request a percentage or majority of Pastors to be non-vocational or not. All Pastors should be elected by 3/4 of congregation vote. A Pastor may be suspended with majority vote of the Pastors, and/or terminated by 2/3 congregation vote.

All Pastors evaluate vocational Pastors with input from congregation, personnel, finance. Pastors may propose adding vocational Pastors and/or Ministry Staff within the congregational budget approval.

A Lead Pastor evaluates ministry and support staff with input from congregation, personnel, finance.

Roles may be assigned to non-vocational Pastors, as so with calling vocational pastors. Non-vocational Pastors should serve a 3-year term with opportunity to renew another 3 year term, afterwards to consider taking 1-year off before returning. Pastors shall aim to disciple and develop new Pastors through intentional teaching and training each year.

The Pastoral team meets monthly for prayer, shepherding families, ministry planning. Vocational staff, deacons, and/or others may be invited for specific planning purposes.

Potential roles for Pastors

- Pastor(s) of Teaching & Vision
 - Preaching
 - Leadership
 - Shepherding Oversight
- Pastor(s) of Maturity & Discipleship (Loving God)
 - Bible Groups
 - Prayer & Spiritual Disciplines
- Pastor(s) of Member Care (Living Jesus to Others)
 - Connection & Care of needs (benevolence, visitation, etc.)
 - Ministry service
- Pastor(s) of Mission (Leading Generations)
 - Local Outreach
 - Missions

2020	Aim of 3-5 total pastors (1 Vocational, 2-4 Non-Vocational) 3 year terms with opportunity for 3 year renewal, then 1 year off encouraged) (train all qualified; deploy set #)
2025	X Pastor rotate off / ? rotate on
2026	Y Pastor rotate off / ? rotate on
2027	Z Pastor rotate off / X rotate on
2028	Y Pastor rotate on...
2029	Z Pastor rotate on...

Deacons

Deacons are volunteers who are “tested” by the Pastors before placement. Deacons are elected by 3/4 congregational vote to serve 3-year term with opportunity to renew another 3-year term, afterwards requested to take 1-year off as a ministry team lead before returning.

Pastors may oversee and meet with Staff, Deacons, and Members at any time for planning, prayer, and oversight. Each deacon role is as subjected to the necessity of the church and elders. Deacons can recruit others to participate on team/tasks as needed.

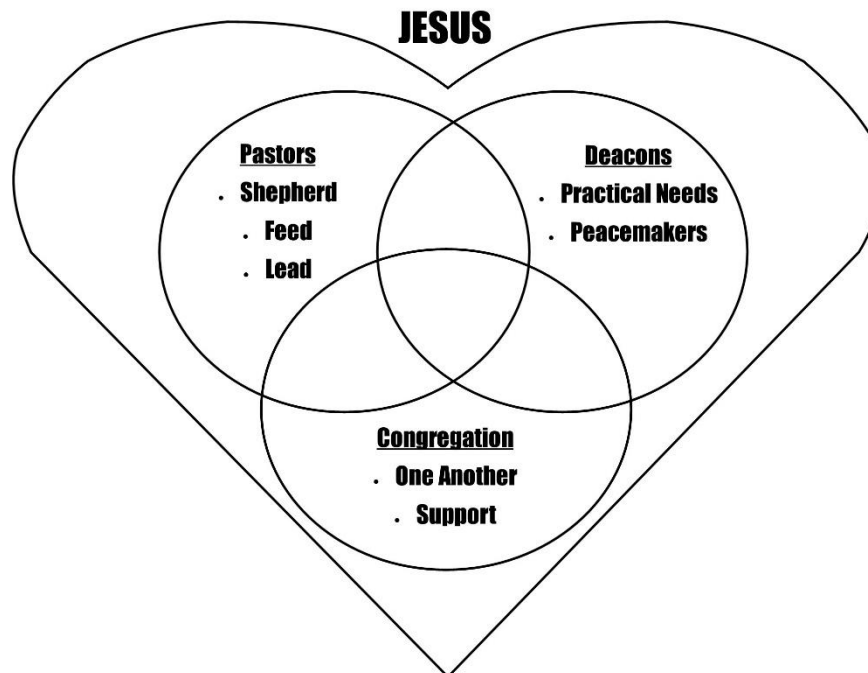
Examples...

- Deacons of Building & Grounds
- Deacons of CM/YM
- Deacons of Fellowship: Benevolence, Bereavement, Kitchen, Recreation, Visitation
- Deacons of Outreach
- Deacons of Stewardship: Accounting, Budget, Tellers
- Deacons of Worship Gatherings: ordinances, a/v, greeters, aesthetic, etc.
- Deacons of Women/Men ministry

Member Meetings (3x year: April / August / December / additional as needed)

Member Meetings are the primary source of receiving/removing members, affirming (or not) Pastors, Deacons, Budget/Debt, and the means to make recommendations to the Pastors.

- Moderator opens
- Report on Membership by Pastors (adding/removing)
- Report of Ministry by Pastors
- Open for Member requests to be submitted
- Prayer



A Process of Transitioning (a tentative timeline)

- 2014-2018 Studying 9Marks mini books with Deacons with 2018 “Understanding Church Leadership” with Pastoral Epistles
- 2019 Summer Bible Groups Pastoral Epistles (Timothy & Titus)
- Oct-Dec presentations to Deacons, Church Council, others...
- 2020 Jan-March congregation presentations and open forums.
- Potential April congregation affirmation of structure outline to begin implementation
- April – December revising Constitution & Bylaws and any other practical implications
- 2020 Pastoral training
 - Biblical Overview & Basics of Elders in partnership with Bethlehem College & Seminary (accessed: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/basics-of-church-eldership/#the-plurality-of-elders>)
 - Theology: Equip BFM (pd), Bible Doctrine (Grudem), Pastoral Theology (Akin)
 - Pastoral: Gospel Eldership (Thune), Pastoral Ministry (Croft)
 - Ministry: 9Marks The Deliberate Church (Dever), Trellis & Vine (Payne)