

# **Elgin deacons learn to become servant leaders in congregation, community\_50304**

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**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

ELGIN—Church finances, leaky roofs and plumbing problems easily can dominate discussions in deacons meetings.

But at First Baptist Church of Elgin, deacons are setting aside that “business” to focus on serving the congregation and the community.

Following a recent study of deaconship with resources from the Baptist General Convention of Texas minister/church relations office, the deacons are emphasizing service throughout their ministry, according to Odus Crumley, deacon chairman.

During monthly meetings, leaders spend more time talking about their passions and ministry opportunities than administering church activities, Crumley said. As deacons discuss recent ministry ideas, others help formulate ideas of getting the work started.

Gerald Aalbers, pastor of the church, said the deacons are “looking to stand in the gaps” where service is needed. The deacons are searching for community and individual needs they can meet.

“We recognize all deacons are servants, but not all servants are the same,” Crumley said.

Enabling servant leadership is one of the 11 characteristics for a healthy church adopted by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

From these meeting conversations, the deacons have started a monthly luncheon that serves about 60 people. During the meal, participants minister to others in various ways, including making gift bags for shut-ins.

Deacons started a prayer breakfast for men and boys in the community. Each Sunday, the church also prays for deployed soldiers with connections to the congregation. The men deliver bags of gifts and church information to each visitor.

They also began distributing food to about 70 families a month. The men have become passionate about serving the poor or temporarily jobless through the ministry, according to Aalbers. He sees men loading and unloading bags of food each week.

“We shine where we can shine,” Crumley said. “We do the work where it needs to be done.”

These ministries strengthen the church's presence in Elgin, Crumley said. People recognize the congregation is trying to improve lives and see it as a place of hope.

“We would hope that it would enable us to share Christ and let people know we care,” Crumley said.

Expanding and strengthening the kingdom of Christ through witnessing

and service is a deacon's calling, Crumley said.

“Being a deacon means saying you're going to be a servant—to follow the Christian lifestyle in our church home and workplace,” Crumley said

For more information about the BGCT's resource for encouraging servant deacons, call (888) 446-1453.

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