

MAKING VISITS

Be compassionate to those in need and treat them with dignity and respect; hold in trust all sensitive matters confided to you. Encourage with words that create hope in hearts and with deeds that bring joy into lives....live as examples of Christ Jesus; look to the interests of others. (Charge to Deacons, Form of Ordination, 2016)

The primary role of the Deacons is to share the love of Christ and demonstrate His caring concern to those in need. Because of this, a Deacon should always be aware of the needs of the congregations and its individual members.

Some examples of when a visit may be appropriate and/or required are:

- *someone confined to their home because of sickness or a disability;*
- *someone without adequate housing;*
- *an unemployed person in the church or neighbourhood;*
- *a widow grieving the loss of her husband;*
- *a person who has been abused;*

- *a person who feels lonely in the church;*
- *a senior celebrating a milestone birthday;*
- *others in varying painful circumstances.*

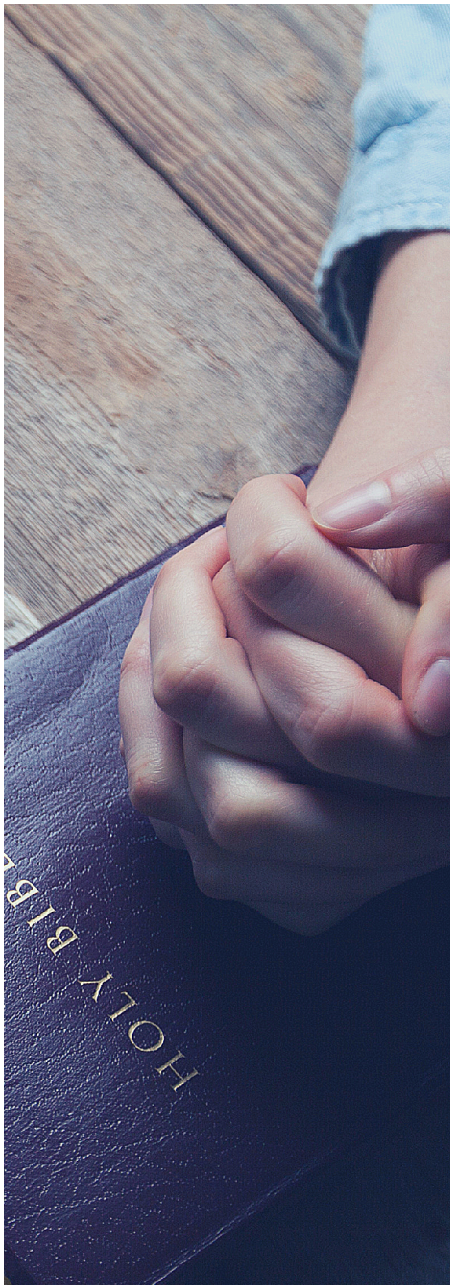
Ensuring a Meaningful Visit

Wrap the Conversation in Prayer: Pray prior to a conversation/visit, asking God for guidance. Pray throughout the visit as well, sharing your uncertainties with God.

Listen Well!: Listening creates an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. This gift of listening empowers people to put their thoughts and feelings into words, which may be their first step towards helping themselves. Listening also helps people build relationships with each other and God. If we listen carefully, we can explore a variety of needs. And we will know what to pray when the time comes.

Ask Good Questions: This not only helps to clarify a current situation, but also helps Deacons resist the urge to offer simple advice or quick answers. Deacons should also not be afraid to say "I don't know."

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
(1 Thess. 5:11)*



continued from other side...

Ensure Confidentiality: Deacons should assure the individual that it is safe to share with them.

Point People to God: Deacons may do this by offering words of encouragement, a brief word from Scripture, and prayer. They should be sensitive to the nudging of the Spirit!

Offer Help: Share ways the church could support the member in their current difficulty only when this is appropriate and/or is requested. Next steps must be determined and owned by the person in it.

The Importance of Prayer

Prayer should be an integral part of every visit and not just a way to begin or end. Prayer is primarily a way to communicate with God.

Make prayer a natural part of the conversation. The appropriate moment to pray during each visit depends on the person's needs and when s/he is ready. This moment will be determined by careful listening. The entire visit is an opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love and concern.

Prayer may be initiated by saying...

- *"Would you appreciate a prayer right now?"*
- *"We have talked about this problem and you have expressed a lot of feelings. Would you like to share these with God in prayer?"*
- *"I am so thankful with you how things have turned out for you this week. Shall we share our thanks with God in prayer?"*

Appropriate Scripture Passages

As deacons immerse themselves in God's Word, they will be able to share appropriate words of hope and encouragement in the varying circumstances. A deacon's meeting is a great time to share helpful passages with each other. Here are some suggestions:

- **Psalm 23 & Hebrews 13: 5-6** (God will not forsake us in our time of pain)
- **Psalm 62** (finding peace in the midst of pain)
- **Psalm 63** (the need for prayer)
- **Psalm 86** (a reminder of God's great love for us)
- **Psalm 90** (putting our hope in God)
- **Philippians 4:6-7 & I Peter 5:7** (bringing your anxieties to God for He cares for you)
- **Romans 5:10-11 & I John 1:9** (forgiveness is a gift and a promise)
- **Galatians 4:5 & Romans 8:15** (God is our Father)
- **Galatians 6:9 & Isaiah 41:10** (God will strengthen you; don't give up)

