

Part 1: The Ministry of the Deacon

Scenario: A valued, long-serving deacon has just retired. The deacons are talking about the blessing of his/her service, and beginning to talk about who they might ask to consider becoming a deacon.

This search for people who will serve in the office of the deacon often begins with a conversation of “who might be a good deacon?” What characteristics in a person might be valuable for the role of deacon?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

*What do you think are the primary activities of deacons?

1) Heart of a Deacon

God’s Word speaks briefly and succinctly about deacons.
Read together the following verses:

“Deacons, likewise, are to be *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.*”
(I Timothy 3: 8-10)

A. Review and describe the main characteristics of a deacon.

Note the focus at the centre of this description: “*They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith*”.

B. A few deep ‘truths of the faith’ are:

“*Love God and love my neighbor as myself*”: from Luke 10: 27

“*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me*”:

Matthew 25: 40

“*He defended the cause of the poor and needy...is that not what it means to know me?*”

Jeremiah 22: 16

Share examples of these truths in the life of Jesus when He was involved in ministry.

Jesus became involved and completely present in the struggles of the neglected, the poor, the isolated, those on the fringes and those despised or found to be annoying. Recall His invitation to the tax collector, His care for the Samaritan woman, His delight in the woman who washed His feet, His service in the washing of the disciples’ feet, His

teaching to the disciples for a “new presence” in the world. All of these actions demonstrated His “willingness to serve, not to be served”. (Matthew 20: 28)

C. How might we follow His heart and example as deacons in our churches?

Let His heart continue to affect the heart and efforts of your diaconal ministry!!

2) Activity of a Deacon

A. What are some of the activities of your current diaconate?

B. Read the charge which is read to the deacons (in front of the congregation) before they begin their ministry:

“... **inspire faithful stewardship** *in this congregation*. **Remind us** that “from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded” (Luke 12:48b). **Teach us to be merciful. Prompt us to seize new opportunities** to worship God with offerings of wealth, time and ability. **Help us realize** that benevolence is a quality of our life in Christ and not merely a matter of financial assistance. Therefore, **minister to rich and poor alike**, both *within and outside the church*. **Weigh the needs of causes and use the church’s resources** discerningly. **Be compassionate to the needy. Respect** their need for dignity; **hold in trust** all sensitive matters confided to you. **Encourage them with words** that create hope in their hearts and **with deeds** that bring joy into *their* lives. **Be prophetic critics** of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society, and **be sensitive counselors to the victims** of such evils. **Let your lives be above reproach; live as examples of Christ Jesus; look to the interests of others.”**

What are some striking features about this charge? What do the **bold** words indicate?

C. Deacons in the Christian Reformed Church are chosen by their local congregations to provide leadership in diaconal ministry.

Name some activities of diaconal ministry to which reference is made in the charge.

Diaconal ministry may be described as being the hands and feet of Jesus in the lives of our neighbours. Each diaconate has different passions and strengths. Each community has different opportunities. As a result, the face and shape of diaconal ministry will vary from place to place.

3) Aspects of Diaconal Ministry

Review, describe and imagine the possibilities of the ministry of your diaconate/church under each of the following themes. Add, if you like, to the definitions of A. to D.

A. Compassion: to show kindness to the hurting/lonely/marginalized by words/deeds of hope and encouragement.

In the ministry of compassion, what are we doing?

What else could we do?

B. Community Ministry: to model for, encourage and equip the church to be engaged in the community in a meaningful and effective way.

In community ministry, what are we doing? How are we doing it?

What else could we do?

C. Stewardship: to inspire and mobilize members to authentic stewardship of time, talents, creation, and money.

In stewardship, what are we doing?

What else could we do?

D. Justice: to alert the church members to injustices (such as the plight of refugees, world hunger, abortion, homelessness and racism) and energize a response.

In justice, what are we doing?

What else could we do?

4. Goals for your Diaconate

A. Planning/setting goals is a significant part of a vibrant, purposeful diaconate. Share some of the ways that goal setting is important for a group of deacons.

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Goals assist a diaconate to carry out its priorities and its calling.

Note the various diaconal ministry activities that were shared under item #3.

B. Summarize some new actions to enrich your diaconal ministry. (Perhaps some of the current agenda items/activities are not as relevant as they used to be.) Take intentional steps to identify WHO will do it, by WHEN, and WHAT additional resources/people we need to act.

New Actions	Who	When	What Additional Resources
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Remind each other that it is part of the calling of the diaconate to involve others in the church and in the community in the opportunities of diaconal ministry.

For deacons to **lead and serve** in the church, ministry needs to be focused on the future. When there are not goals, when there is not clarity of purpose, the life of a deacon can become a schedule of unfocused efforts at meetings that quickly dissolve into a myriad of different activities without clear purpose, **missing countless wonderful opportunities to lead and serve in His Name.**

Philippians 4:13, 19: *“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*