

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DEACON?



*Devotions
for Deacons*



DIACONAL MINISTRIES
CANADA

www.diaconalministries.com



- **Faithfully support** those with financial difficulties.
- **Provide hope and encouragement** through words and deeds.
- **Seek out opportunities to serve** the vulnerable, elderly, sick and bereaved.
- **Offer practical assistance** where it is needed (i.e. rides, fixing

JUSTICE

"For I, the Lord, love justice." Isaiah 61: 8a

- **Offer hospitality** to victims of injustices (i.e. refugees, aboriginal people).
- **Encourage participation** in justice-related ministry and advocacy (i.e. letter writing)
- With church members, **discover** practical, just, and sustainable **services** in our communities.
- **Provide ministry and advocacy**

suggestions on behalf of the vulnerable in our communities.

COMPASSION

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all " Gal. 6:10a

- **Discover the neighbourhood** of your church with its assets and needs.
- **Partner**, where possible, with existing community services.
- **Serve your community** with ministries which build trusting, meaningful relationships.
- Always be able to "give an answer for the hope that you have."

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON?

STEWARDSHIP

"from the one who is entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Luke 12:48b

- **Inspire people to give** generously of their resources.
- **Invite others to participate** in diaconal opportunities to multiply ministry.
- **Provide awareness of opportunities** for service.
- **Educate the congregation** about the financial offerings and denominational ministry of our churches.



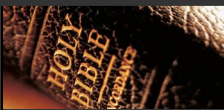
COMMUNITY MINISTRY

"Always be prepared to give an answer...for the hope that you have." 1 Peter 3:15

Hospitality is more than a Committee



Justice



Scripture Reading: Luke 7:36-50

This is not exactly a straightforward dinner invitation. It comes from Simon, a Pharisee, and it comes after a progression of encounters between the law-keeping Pharisees and Jesus, who is clearly not what the Pharisees expect of a teacher.

The Pharisees are, at first, clearly puzzled and mildly alarmed at the things Jesus does. They accuse Him of blasphemy when He heals and forgives the paralytic. They grumble that Jesus eats with a tax collector. They see Him as unlawful when He and His disciples pick grain and eat it on the Sabbath. However, when Jesus heals on the Sabbath, publically and in front of everyone, the Pharisees are “furious” and begin “to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.” (Luke 6:11). The next encounter comes after Simon’s invitation to dinner.

In the context of all that has already happened, it seems clear that eating at Simon’s house will not be a simple social call. By inviting Jesus to a formal dinner, the Pharisee is inviting Jesus into a context in which a certain decorum is expected and religious debate is encouraged. It probably seems like a perfect place to trap Jesus. And Simon’s lack of proper welcome might just betray his true motives. But Jesus knows Simon’s heart and is ready to use this opportunity to show him a better way.

When the woman from the town enters the dinner, something rare and amazing happens. This woman, whom the Bible says lived a “sinful life,” in essence displaces Simon as host of the dinner. And her welcome is beautiful! She lavishly pours out her love at Jesus’ feet, and Jesus graciously receives it and recognizes the value of her hospitality. Simon does not give

Jesus water for washing; yet this woman wets Jesus’ feet with her tears. Simon does not welcome Jesus with a kiss; yet the woman even kisses his feet. Jesus restores her dignity by giving her a “place” of honour, receiving her gift, and forgiving her sins.

And yet, Jesus is also host. He cares for the woman and pours out that forgiveness generously. With Jesus, the roles are not clearly defined. They shift around, making both the act of giving and receiving equally important within the context of hospitality. Pharisees know all about law and truth. Jesus adds grace to the truth to widen the welcome and create a climate of hospitality that pushes boundaries and overturns expectations.

Deacons, if hospitality sounds to you like the work of a committee, perhaps it is time to reclaim the practice within

your diaconal work. It means being intentional about welcoming the stranger, but it also means affirming each person’s dignity and worth.

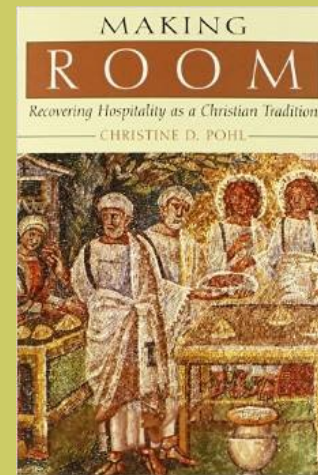
And yet, if this puts the deacon perpetually in the position of host, a critical dimension is lost. Jesus gave to the Pharisee and to the woman the gift of His wisdom, His grace and His forgiveness. However, Jesus was also guest: He received from the woman and from the Pharisee alike. This recognition fundamentally challenges the imbalance of power between a person with needs and a person (or diaconate) with resources.

Understanding that everyone has something to give and that everyone is blessed by receiving creates a welcome and hospitality that builds community, affirms dignity and maintains generous spaces of inclusion. Be blessed as you do justice through hospitality.

Discussion:

1. Reflect together on the practice of hospitality and how you feel it relates to your work as deacons.
2. Think through the connection between justice and hospitality. How does welcoming the stranger and being welcomed in return help to balance the imbalance of power and make change the perception that “the stranger” has needs and we have resources to give?
3. Spend time in prayer, asking God to give you and your diaconate a heart for justice.

Further Reading:



Making Room

by Christine D. Pohl

Related Resources:



How does justice intersect with the work of the deacons?

Diaconal Ministries Canada has developed [a brochure](#) (at left) but also has many other resources on the website:

www.diaconalministries.com

About Diaconal Ministries Canada:

We seek to inspire, equip and encourage deacons, churches and their partners as they join in God's transforming work in communities.



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