

Ten Ways

TO BE A CARING DEACON



Deacons are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, administering the mercy of Christ to all people. They lead the congregation in faithful stewardship, service, justice, and reconciliation. That's a big job—one that sometimes leads to burnout. These ten tips will help you care for others, as well as for yourself, as you live out this calling and serve your congregation and community.

1 MODEL SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The heart of your calling is twofold: to lead by serving others in your local church and community, and to lead by equipping members of your congregation to serve in the ministry of mercy. Commit yourself to facilitating the spiritual growth of your congregation and community by providing opportunities to serve. You can lead by example while you encourage others to exercise their gifts.

2 IDENTIFY AND USE THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

Remember that God, who has called you to this office, will supply everything you need to fulfill this call. As you enable others in your church family to serve with you, your gifts will complement theirs, and God's work will be accomplished. To delve more deeply into giftedness, take the gifts surveys available in *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* (Faith Alive, 2008; see also [Discover Your Gifts - free survey](#)) and *Strengthsfinder 2.0* (Gallup Press, 2007). Consider this a long-term calling that is not limited to your term as a deacon.

3 BE ATTENTIVE TO YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the needs around you. Making time for prayer will help you face your ministry with a new sense of wholeness and enthusiasm. Spending time in the Word and meeting with an accountability group should also be part of your regular routine. It's important to be in tune with God as you engage in helping and equipping others in your work as a deacon.

4 GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE

Excel at building relationships with people in your church and neighborhood who may be sick or lonely or new to the area. Take advantage of "chance" encounters, and look at them as divine appointments. Stay tuned to times of grief, hospitalization, loneliness, uncertainty, joblessness, accidents, or chronic illnesses as well as times of joy and celebration. Visits, calls, cards, or notes during these special times will deepen your relationships. Encourage your church to wrestle with the question "Who is our parish?"

5 MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

Be aware that it's easy to cross boundaries unintentionally. Maintain the boundary between your life as an officebearer and your personal and family life. Be vigilant about the boundaries of sexuality in your relationships with parishioners, especially those who are vulnerable. And know when to involve others in meeting a need. The surest way to burn out is to try to be all things to all people!

6 LEAD YOUR CHURCH FAMILY IN STEWARDSHIP

Your task is to share with the congregation specific opportunities to be good stewards of their money, time, and resources. This enables people to respond with the gifts God has given them. Continually look for opportunities for people to carry out the call to serve others. Share volunteer opportunities, plan service projects, recruit volunteers, and provide educational opportunities. An essential part of leadership is to be accountable to the vision and mission the church has set by reporting on outcomes consistent with that vision and mission.

7 DISCOVER COMMUNITY NEEDS AND ASSETS

You cannot plan or implement effective community ministry while staying inside the walls of your church. Listen carefully to the people who live around you. Hear their strengths and weaknesses, their dreams and fears. Then you will be able to partner with them to work toward a common vision. Consider participating in training for Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).

8 PARTNER WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

In addition to helping people who live in your church neighborhood, you also have a responsibility to support other Christian ministries that are working to bring mercy and justice. The causes you support should be determined by such factors as where your church is located, the interests and commitments of your members, and consensus on what God is calling your church to do.

9 TELL STORIES

Bless the members of your congregation by sharing stories of how God is at work through their gifts and their service. (Remember to always ask permission to share someone's story, and never share confidential information.) Encourage people who have received help to share their gratitude with the church family if they wish to.

10 FIND JOY IN YOUR WORK

In your work as a deacon you will likely find challenges galore, but you will also be blessed beyond your wildest dreams. Deacons testify that you will experience deeper relationships, a growing faith, God's kingdom at work, your church acting as an agent of God's kingdom, affirmation of your gifts, and more.

Faith Formation Ministries encourages and equips local CRC ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their context. The [Faith Formation Ministries](#) team and our [regional catalyzers](#) are available to consult with your congregation on any faith formation matter.

Portions of this list are excerpted from the excellent resource *The Deacon's Handbook* by Lori Wiersma and Connie Kuiper VanDyke (Faith Alive, 2009, [FaithAliveResources.org](#))



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