

# ***THE OFFICE OF DEACON***

## **General Description**

The office of deacon is an office of the Church which was instituted in the NT. It is one of the two offices of the NT Church, alongside that of elder (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-13). I Tim. 3:8-13 describes the office of deacon as one that requires maturity in the Lord and experience in the ministry. The requirements for the office of deacon are similar to those for elders. Acts 6:1-7 describes the basic rationale for and the function of deacons.

The ministry entrusted to the “seven” was given to them by the leaders of the Church, the Apostles. In the same way, the diaconate receives oversight from the elders and ultimately entrusted with the tasks of mercy and care by the elders. In Acts 6 the ministry entrusted to them was specifically for the care and needs of the widows in the early church. As v.3 shows, this ministry required spiritual discernment and wisdom. From this, along with the general teachings of the NT, one can see that the primary responsibility of the deacon is to minister to the physical and financial needs within the congregation of believers, focusing not only on the obvious needs but offering spiritual counsel and dealing with the causes and problems that give rise to the needs.

In addition to this, there are a number of related ministries that are appropriate for deacons, such as visitation of widows, shut-ins, and the sick, mobilizing the church community to meet physical needs within their congregation, manifesting the compassion of Christ to the poor and needy of the world, helping to create an environment conducive to spiritual worship for the congregation, and whatever other duties and ministries are delegated to them by the elders and allows the elders to be “free” to teach, lead, guard, and shepherd the congregation. Together they reflect a balanced ministry of both word and deed.

The word “deacon” means “servant” which not only describes the essence of this calling but emphasizes the servant spirit that is to characterize an entire congregation. The deacons embody and model this spirit to the congregation and are the pacesetters for the congregation in this regard.

## **Fleshing it Out**

Deacons are primarily responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and stimulating the mercy ministries of the local church. These are men who have demonstrated a high and consistent level of spiritual maturity and involvement in ministries of mercy and who are ready to invest themselves in helping meet the physical and spiritual needs of the congregation and the community at large, all under the oversight of the Session. The gifts needed for this office are primarily mercy, helps, service, and administration. This ministry will be divided into two categories of “The Household of Faith” and “Community Outreach” according to the priority given in Galatians 6:10.

The Household of Faith:

- (1) Assist the elders in visiting the sick, the elderly, those in the hospital, and responding to crisis needs. This is a shepherding and encouraging ministry.
- (2) Regularly stay in touch with members of our congregation to monitor and address needs as they arise. This particularly applies to single mothers, the elderly, and others with special needs. Refer any new needs or necessary information to the Session.
- (3) Seek ways to encourage and educate the members to care for one another and to be involved in mercy ministries of all kinds.

Community Outreach:

- (1) Oversee and coordinate the various ways that our congregation is involved in mercy ministry in our community and in the greater Chicagoland area.
- (2) Educate and encourage people to begin new ministries as they feel burdened and led as well as investigate and suggest new areas of ministry that would be appropriate and in keeping with our doctrinal standards and philosophy of ministry.

As part of the above, the deacons would also do the following:

- (1) Manage and disperse the Benevolence Fund, making a monthly report to the elders. The Session can itself give direction and make suggestions to the deacons as to the use of this Fund.
- (2) Make suggestions to the elders regarding the Benevolence portion of the annual budget (though they will not have any other responsibility regarding the making of the budget).