

GRACE & PEACE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CALIFORNIA, MARYLAND

GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

FOREWARD

The Diaconate of Grace and Peace Orthodox Presbyterian Church of California, Maryland would like to publicly thank and acknowledge the work of Pastor Bill Shishko of Franklin Square OPC, New York for providing to Grace and Peace a landmark copy of their Deacon's guidelines. We used this landmark document as a guide in creating our own set of guidelines for the orderly work of deacons at Grace and Peace. Thank you Brother, and may our Lord and Savior continue to bless you and your preaching and teaching to grow His kingdom, world without end, Amen.

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PURPOSE

The Session of Grace and Peace finds it appropriate to distill by good and necessary consequence from Scripture principles and guidelines to the Diaconate of Grace and Peace.

DIACONATE SERVICE

The Deacon is first and foremost a servant to Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, and to the Church [the Bride of Christ]. Deacons are ordained into service by the Congregation with the approval and consent of the Session. A key principle from Scripture is the subordination of the Diaconate to the Elders.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, ‘It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.’ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” (Ref: Acts 6: 1 – 6 [KJV])

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Ref: Acts 6:7)

One may reasonably observe three scriptural truths from the text cited in Acts.

1. The Apostles, who led the early church, “appointed” deacons. Those who have the authority to appoint are clearly above those appointed; hence, deacons submit to the authority of the Session
2. The Deacons “assist” the Session by absorbing duties and responsibilities that would otherwise deprive the elders of their primary purposes which include the following as outlined in the OPC Book of Church Order, Chapter X:
 - a. Leading the church in the service of Christ
 - b. Watching diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals
 - c. Visiting the people, especially the sick,

- d. Instructing the ignorant
 - e. Comforting the mourning,
 - f. Nourishing and guarding the children of the covenant
 - g. Praying with and for the people.
 - h. Paying particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and to help him in his labors
3. When the Diaconate and Session work together in their appropriately called roles, the church “grows” (Acts 6:7)

The Book of Church Order, Chapter XI, describes the role and service of Deacons as follows, quoted herein.

1. The Scriptures designate the office of deacon as distinct and perpetual in the church.
2. Deacons are called to show forth the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy
 - a. ...toward the saints [fellow church members] ...
 - b. ...and to strangers [“neighbors”, as referenced by Christ in Luke 10:27]...
 - c. ... on behalf of the church [whatever the deacon does is for Christ, through the church].
3. To this end they [deacons] exercise, in the fellowship of the church, a recognized stewardship ...
 - a. ... of care [to include prayer, gospel teaching, listening to, weeping with, etc.] ...
 - b. ... and of gifts [material aid to include money, food, etc.] for those in need or distress.
4. This service is distinct from that of rule [the rightful role of Ruling Elders] in the church.

Deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church must meet and comply with the guidance rendered in 1 Tim 3: 8 – 13 [KJV]. These requirements include and are quoted herein:

1. “Deacons must be grave, not doubletongued,
2. Not given to much wine,
3. Not greedy of filthy lucre;
4. Must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience
5. First be proved [inspected and assessed by the Session]

6. Be found blameless [determined by the inspection of the Session]
7. Having wives that are grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things [hence, the Session evaluates and assesses a prospective Deacon's wife]
8. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."

We believe that these qualifications as to life and doctrine find due expression in the ordination vows which the Directory of Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church require of all prospective deacons. While we believe that Scripture does not contain warrant for the ordination of women as deacons or as deaconesses (1 Tim 3:12¹; Acts 6: 3², 5), Scripture nevertheless does make clear that women do have important roles in the church the performance of which may justifiably cause them to be given the appellation "deaconesses" (Rom 16: 1 - 4³, Acts 9:36⁴).

TO WHOM THE DIACONATE RENDERS SERVICE

While we recognize that Scripture by no means excludes any one group or groups from being within the purview of Christian concern (Matt 25: 34 – 40)⁵, we also recognize that it has not pleased God to give us the resources to meet the needs of all of those with whom the deacons may come in contact. As a result, we believe we are called upon to establish priorities in the application of church resources. Based upon the exhortations that we do good unto all men,

¹ "Let deacons each be the husband of one wife ..." (1 Tim 3:12) [ESV] – Hence, Deacons are male

² "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report ..." (Acts 6:3) [KJV] – Again, male

³ "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well." (Rom 16: 1 – 4)[ESV] – Notice that women also serve and are equally as important as men

⁴ "Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity." (Acts 9: 36) [ESV] – "Good works" implies "Diaconate labor"; hence, a plausible title of 'Deaconess'

⁵ "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'" (Mat 25: 34 – 40) [KJV]

especially unto those who are of the household of faith (Gal 6:10)⁶, we believe those priorities to be the following (in order):

1. To members of the household of faith and their families in the congregation;
2. To members of the household of faith and their families in the "extended congregation",
 - a. Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic
 - b. To other presbyteries
 - c. To the OPC denomination as a whole;
3. To members of the household of faith in such other denominations as are obedient to the Scriptures and to the extent that the Board of Deacons is able to ascertain and approve the end use to which its tangible assistance may be put; and
4. To those outside the household of faith insofar as the Board of Deacons is able to ascertain and approve the end use to which its tangible assistance may be put and insofar as the Board of Deacons is satisfied that such assistance is or will be accompanied by a proclamation of the Gospel agreeable to the Scriptures.

STEWARDSHIP OF FUNDS AND TALENTS

Deacons are to be active rather than passive stewards of church resources. They are not to be satisfied with merely collecting and spending church funds. Deacons are called to the following:

1. To make at least quarterly a Deacon's Report to the Session
 - a. To be held in confidence so as to keep confidential names of those whom Deacons have helped
2. To keep an orderly record of Deacon's meetings (when more than one Deacon is installed), to include:
 - a. Description of diaconate work (who was helped, how much was expended to include labors, gifts, funds, etc.)
 - b. Status of any follow-through work from on-going diaconate assistance
 - c. To be kept strictly confidential within the Diaconate, but from which a summary "stripped of identifying remarks" may be presented to the Session quarterly or whenever sought

⁶ "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal 6:10)[KJV]

3. To ensure (responsible for) monthly reporting of Diaconate inflows and outflows to the congregation
 - a. The Treasurer may be the best suited to keep track of Deacon funds in and out, but it is still the Deacon's responsibility to ensure that the Congregation is made aware of the health of the Deacon's fund
4. To exhort the congregation as frequently as required to give to the Deacon's fund
5. To exhort the congregation when required to give of their time and services for diaconate labor assistance (e.g. food drive, clothing drive, children's toy drive, work parties for widows or elderly on a fixed income budget, etc.)
 - a. This exhortation should be undertaken out of recognition that it is not possible for the Deacons to fulfill its scriptural service separate and apart from the active and willing involvement in diaconal matters of all members of the congregation (Eph 4: 4 – 7)⁷. In this sense, the Diaconate should view all the members of the congregation as "deacons" and "deaconesses" (1 Pet 4:10⁸).
 - b. Deacons recognize that the ministry of mercy sometimes calls for the body of Christ to "serve" the needy, at other times to "encourage" the downtrodden or the anxious, and at other times to simply show kindness and mercy to those who have never known kindness or mercy. All of these services can be accomplished by members of the congregation so gifted, under the guidance of the Deacons (Rom 12: 6 – 8⁹).

Of necessity this duty of exhortation to stewardship requires that the deacons have a close working knowledge of and familiarity with the members of the congregation and their families. How this knowledge and familiarity are obtained will depend in large part upon the personality of each deacon; nevertheless, the following practical suggestions are made:

1. Each deacon should have the name, address (business and home) and telephone number (business and cell) of each member of the congregation.

⁷ "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Eph 4:4 – 7) [KJV]

⁸ "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (Eph 4: 10) [KJV]

⁹ "In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." (Rom 12: 6 – 8) [NLT]

2. Each deacon should be aware of local community and service organizations outside the church that may be of assistance in time of need.
 - a. The responsibilities of the diaconate include maintaining a list of public services to include URL's, phone numbers, and addresses as appropriate.
3. The deacon should actively seek out contact with members of the congregation, whether through dinner invitations or less formal contacts or otherwise, as a means of overcoming the natural reticence of many to disclose problems they may have.
4. Each deacon should have immediate access to diaconal funds in case of emergency.
5. Each deacon should be aware of those persons in the congregation who may be able to provide food, clothing or shelter upon little or no advance notice.
6. The Diaconate is responsible for making the Congregation aware of the purpose of the diaconate.
 - a. The Diaconate should stress to the members of the congregation the confidentiality of the Diaconate, and encourage members to seek, without embarrassment, its assistance when needs arise.
 - b. To this end, deacons should be readily accessible and all members of the congregation should have the names, addresses and telephone numbers of each Deacon.

DEACONAL VISITS

The purpose of this section is to expand the thoughts touched upon in Item (3) above. The text, "The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy" by Cornelius Van Dam provides an excellent review of diaconal visits and is summarized below (Ref: Pages 174 – 190)

1. Diaconal visits are not the same as pastoral or elder visits; different purposes, different outcomes
2. There are three reasons for diaconal visits
 - a. Diaconate visits permits the deacon(s) to get to know the members of the church, especially new members who joined the congregation after the deacon was installed. The primary motive of getting to know members of the church is to ensure that they understand the purpose of the diaconate.
 - b. Diaconate visits allow deacons to discover needs within the church, not always monetary. Some common examples are presented below:
 - i. The deacon may discover that loneliness is a problem (e.g. recently widowed, recently divorced, bachelor/bachelorette, etc.). The solution

may be to arrange church visits, or to point the member to Christian activities in the community.

- ii. A member may be in need of a particular service such as home repairs, car repairs, lawn service, reputable plumber/electrician, etc., but does not know to whom to turn. The solution may be to find a knowledgeable Christian in the church, sister church, or other church in the community who can offer references or suggestions.
 - iii. A member may desire prayer but feels uncomfortable placing a prayer request in the Lord's Day service. Praying for those who suffer is a call to all deacons.
- c. Diaconate visits may allow a deacon to discover hidden or useful talents available within the church. The author points out that the whole of the church is charged with helping the church, the members and "neighbors", not just the deacons. Thus, it is right and salutary for deacons to ask church members (during a diaconate visit) "what skills or talents do you have that the church could use the serve the church or our neighbors?"

INTERACTION BETWEEN SESSION AND DIACONATE

As outlined in the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Session of the Congregation is responsible for the total work of the church, including the work of the Diaconate.

1. As such, the Session is the sole policy-making organ of the church and alone may speak officially for the church and congregation. The Board of Deacons, in contrast, has a more limited jurisdiction.
2. We note the express authority of the session to overrule diaconal decisions.
3. All personal visits to members of the congregation by deacons for the purpose of determining diaconal needs should be made known to the Session a priori. The Session may make the determination that an elder should take part in such a visit¹⁰.
4. Similarly, members of the diaconate should be ready and willing to respond to a call from the Session to accompany one or more members of the Session on sessional visits.

¹⁰ Diaconal needs may be a result of improper living outside of the word of God in conformity to the beliefs of the OPC. Should this be the case, then the meeting may lead to "Church Discipline" which is the rightful domain of the Elders.

5. Any situation deemed by the Diaconate to constitute a continuing and institutional participation by the church must be brought to the Session for approval

DUTIES OF DEACONS

The duties assigned to deacons are presented below in two categories; currently assigned by the Session, and potential (meaning future) duties that the Session may assign. This second list is not meant to be exhaustive. The purpose for identifying this potential future list is to prepare the Diaconate (mentally) for that which could reasonably come to pass. And at any time, the Session could elect to expand the assigned duties, to include those not captured in the “potential” category.

CURRENT DUTIES ASSIGNED BY THE SESSION

1. Minister the diaconal needs to the “Household of Faith” and to “our neighbor” [See “TO WHOM THE DIACONATE RENDERS SERVICE”, Items (1) & (2)]
2. Ensure (be responsible for) greeter service is provided each Lord’s Day. This may be implemented by the Deacons using sign-up sheets either weekly or monthly, or the Deacons may do it themselves, but the responsibility to ensure that Greeters are on-station falls to the Diaconate
3. Ensure (be responsible for) communion bread for each Lord’s Day in which the Sacrament of Communion is being offered is provided prior to Church service. This may be implemented by the Deacons using sign-up sheets either weekly or monthly, or the Deacons may do it themselves, but the responsibility to ensure that communion bread is provided falls to the Diaconate
4. Ensure (be responsible for) weekly bread pickup at the local Panera store. The store presently closes at 9:00PM each Saturday. Pickup volunteer(s) must be in the store 15 minutes prior to closing. The volunteer(s) must complete the Tax Donation form that Panera requires. The Grace & Peace OPC “Employer Identification Number (EIN)” is 20-5010683. Ensure volunteers have this EIN code. Panera pickup may be implemented by the Deacons using sign-up sheets either weekly or monthly, or the Deacons may do it themselves, but the responsibility to ensure that Panera bread pickup is performed falls to the Diaconate
5. Present at least quarterly a Report of the Deacons to the Session.
6. Maintain Deacon Minutes of Meetings within the Diaconate. When only one deacon is serving, the deacon shall still maintain records of diaconate work.

POTENTIAL DUTIES THAT COULD BE ASSIGNED BY THE SESSION

1. Count monies and gifts offered (collected) by the church following worship services, or be responsible to ensure counters are on-station
2. Organize church meals following church service on designated Sunday's, or help with facility set-up for church meals, etc.
3. Ensure (be responsible for) transportation to church and back of members who cannot drive themselves to church (either temporarily or permanently)
4. Visit a nursing home(s) with a regular periodicity (e.g. act of kindness, act of mercy, opportunity to share the gospel message, etc.)
5. Represent the church at functions or events wherein church representation is required and which none of the Session members are available (e.g. children's choir in our church building, Vocation Bible School or Choir Camp held at our church, etc.)
6. Ensure (be responsible for) food is provided and/or overnight accommodations are arranged for visitors to the church (e.g. Hosting of the Presbytery, a visiting pastor who will be preaching at our church on the Lord's Day, hosting a fellow OPC communicate member who is coming to town and asks the Diaconate, Pastor, or Session for help with accommodations, etc.)
7. Assisting the Pastor with Wedding ceremonies held at our church (e.g. Greeter, seating, clean-up after guests leave, or as assigned per the event)
8. Assisting the Pastor with Funeral ceremonies held at our church (e.g. Greeter, seating, clean-up after bereaved mourners leave, or as assigned per the event)
9. Teaching adult bible school in the case that we have too few elders to shoulder the burden

RULES FOR DEACONS OF GRACE & PEACE OPC

This section outlines rules that the Diaconate has agreed to bind themselves to until and unless changed by the Board of Deacons or the Session. These rules are hereby set into place to help ensure good working order of all deacons in the church.

1. Cash disbursements by any deacon may not exceed \$25 without consent of the Board of Deacons.
2. Any Deacon may, on his own authority and good judgement, expend up to \$150 to offer aid (other than cash) to any person or family

3. The Board of Deacons, on their own authority and good judgement, may authorize a deacon to expend up to \$400 to offer aid (other than cash) to any person or family. This does not apply when the Board of Deacons is limited to one deacon.
4. Any desired expenditures exceeding \$400 for a person or family, or continuing expenditures whose total exceeds \$400 for a person or family (e.g. \$50/month for a year exceeds \$400), shall be presented to the Session for approval. When only one deacon is serving on the Board of Deacons, the limit shall be \$150 above which the Session must approve.
5. No deacon shall ever visit or meet with a woman, either privately or publicly, without the wife of a deacon or elder being present at the meeting.
 - a. Some leeway is given towards “helping” widows or single women in the church whom we all know (vice “meeting a woman for the first time” who is not known by the church), for menial assistance such as yard work, simple maintenance (cleaning gutters, changing hard-to-reach light bulbs, etc.), and other such honorable activities of diaconate labor
6. The Grace & Peace OPC Debit Card assigned to Deacons, which draws solely from the Deacon’s fund, shall be used wherever possible to ease the administrative burden of financial record keeping
 - a. Each use of the Deacon’s debit card shall have associated with it a report identifying the amount expended, general purpose of expenditure, and date of expenditure

GUIDANCE TO DEACONS

This section of the manual is devoted to applying lessons learned from the diaconates across the OPC. These are lessons shared by Deacons most recently at the 2022 Deacon’s Summit held at Wheaton College outside of Chicago, Illinois.

Always Help, Never Hurt

Van Dam’s book, “The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today’s Ministry of Mercy” explains the diaconate goal of always helping/never hurting the following way.

Loving one’s neighbor shows itself by providing a helping hand as well as showing responsibility. Van Dam notes that our Lord expected the poor to work for their food and drink. He gives multiple examples. One example was of Ruth who labored from early morning to late at night to glean food from the fields for her and her mother-in-law. The corollary is that lazy poor were not to be assisted because such relief would only encourage their “indolent, ungodly behavior.” Put another way, giving assistance to such people would not help them, so it would not be showing love to them (since love always helps). The author ties this to diaconal work

such as helping people to balance budgets when they live beyond their means, or find themselves in too much debt, etc.

Root Cause Analysis

The role of the Deacon is always to help, never to hurt. Unfortunately, some who seek diaconate assistance are not forthcoming or forthright in the presentation of facts necessary for the deacon to form a “right solution”. Hence, giving money or paying a bill may actually enable the victim to continue in their wrongful patterns of behavior. Consider a person seeking help paying an electric bill. Why don’t they have funds? How much do they make and where do they spend their money? Do they gamble? Do they drink too much? Are they purchasing movies or video games, but have not enough for the electric bill? Maybe it was simply a hot month (July) and the AC ran too much causing an unusually high electric bill.

To this end, each Deacon must learn to become a detective to get at the facts. While many deacons may feel uncomfortable asking for financial information to include pay and expenditures, these are fair questions if someone is seeking financial assistance from the church. Deacons are called to be good stewards of limited resources.

Diaconate Assistance to Church Members

Keeping in mind the above section dealing with “root cause analysis”, a deacon may quickly discover that a fellow church member is having financial difficulties due to a pattern of ungodly living. This quickly devolves into the area of “church discipline” which is the domain of elders. Since Deacons keep diaconate matters confidential, some church members may be willing to meet with a deacon but not an elder. This is a fine line to walk. It may be best to conduct a private meeting just between member and deacon, but the deacon may have to report suspicions of improper living to an elder. This may prompt the second meeting to include elder & deacon, but the risk is the member may discontinue further discussions. Each deacon will have to learn to walk this line.

Diaconate Assistance to Members of Other Churches

A fellow member may be aware of a Christian in need and may engage or refer the needy to the deacon. Or the deacon may come into contact with a fellow Christian who makes known a need (financial or otherwise). When said need is a member of another church, we recognize that each church “should” care for their own flock. In this event, should it occur, the deacon is well advised to contact the church to which the need belongs. As stated above in the subsection “Root Cause Analysis”, we advised all deacons “to become a detective to get at the facts”. And we warned that not all who have needs are either forthcoming or forthright in the salient facts behind the request. With this in mind, it is fair and right for the Deacon to reach out to the church claimed to verify membership. If “yes”, then the deacon may be warranted to work with the owning church. Perhaps they have inadequate resources... If “no”, then the need falls into the category of “Diaconate Assistance to Neighbors” (see below).

Diaconate Assistance to Neighbors

St Mary's County (Maryland) contains many neighborhoods that one might deem "less than desirable". The need for evangelistic outreach is great, and diaconate assistance is one means of sharing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to reach the unpreached. This outreach happens whenever the deacon offers assistance "in the name of Jesus Christ who died for our sins, that we might not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Simple assistance such as buying a meal, helping pay for groceries for someone who has come up short, or who needs some gasoline in their vehicle to get themselves home can go a long way towards satisfying an immediate and urgent need. Remember, if all we do is "help someone", then we are nothing more than "do-gooders". Whatever we do, we do for Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. It is our obligation to ensure the recipient of aid knows this. They will know because we will tell them so, and announce it boldly. An invitation to attend our church should quickly follow. If "yes", get their name and contact information and offer to pick them up. If female, remember not to pick them up without your wife or the wife of another deacon or elder present in the car.

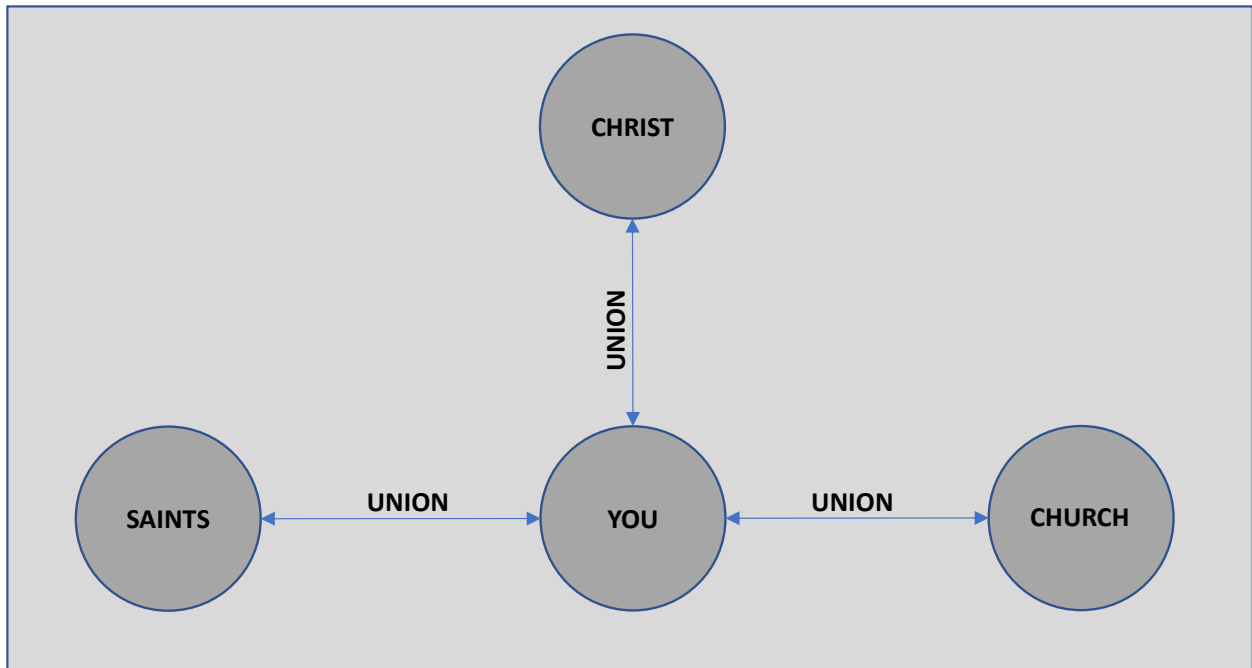
As a general principle, Deacons should not offer more than token assistance in the immediate moment (such as buying a meal, paying for gas, helping with a grocery bill, etc.). We simply do not have the resources to help all of the afflicted within the county. If the "neighbor" is willing to attend church and actually does so, then a furtherance of discussion of assistance would be warranted. Those who might be "turning to Christ" should be introduced to an elder or Pastor for additional Christian counseling.

A MODEL OF DIACONATE WORK

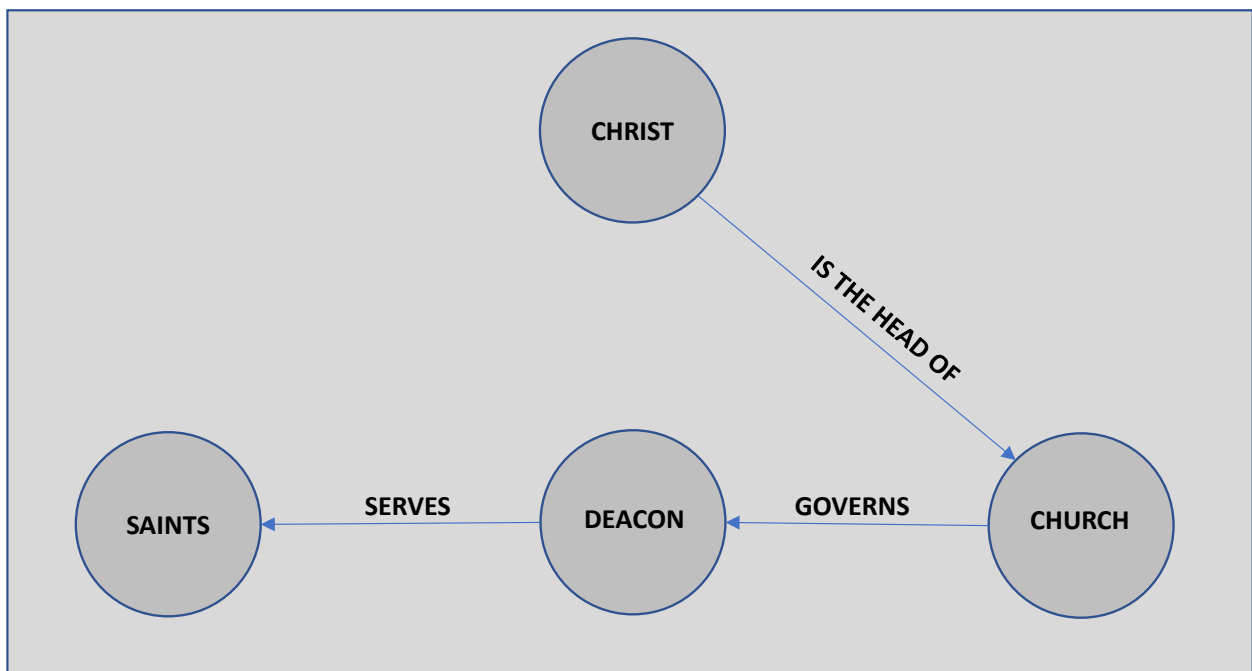
Chapter XXV of the Westminster Confession of Faith describes the visible church as "the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation"; hence, a church member has union with the church.

Chapter XXVI of the Westminster Confession of Faith professes that all saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit have fellowship with him. Fellowship is union with Christ.

Chapter XXVI continues with, "And, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces"; hence, we have union with one another in the church. This is depicted below.



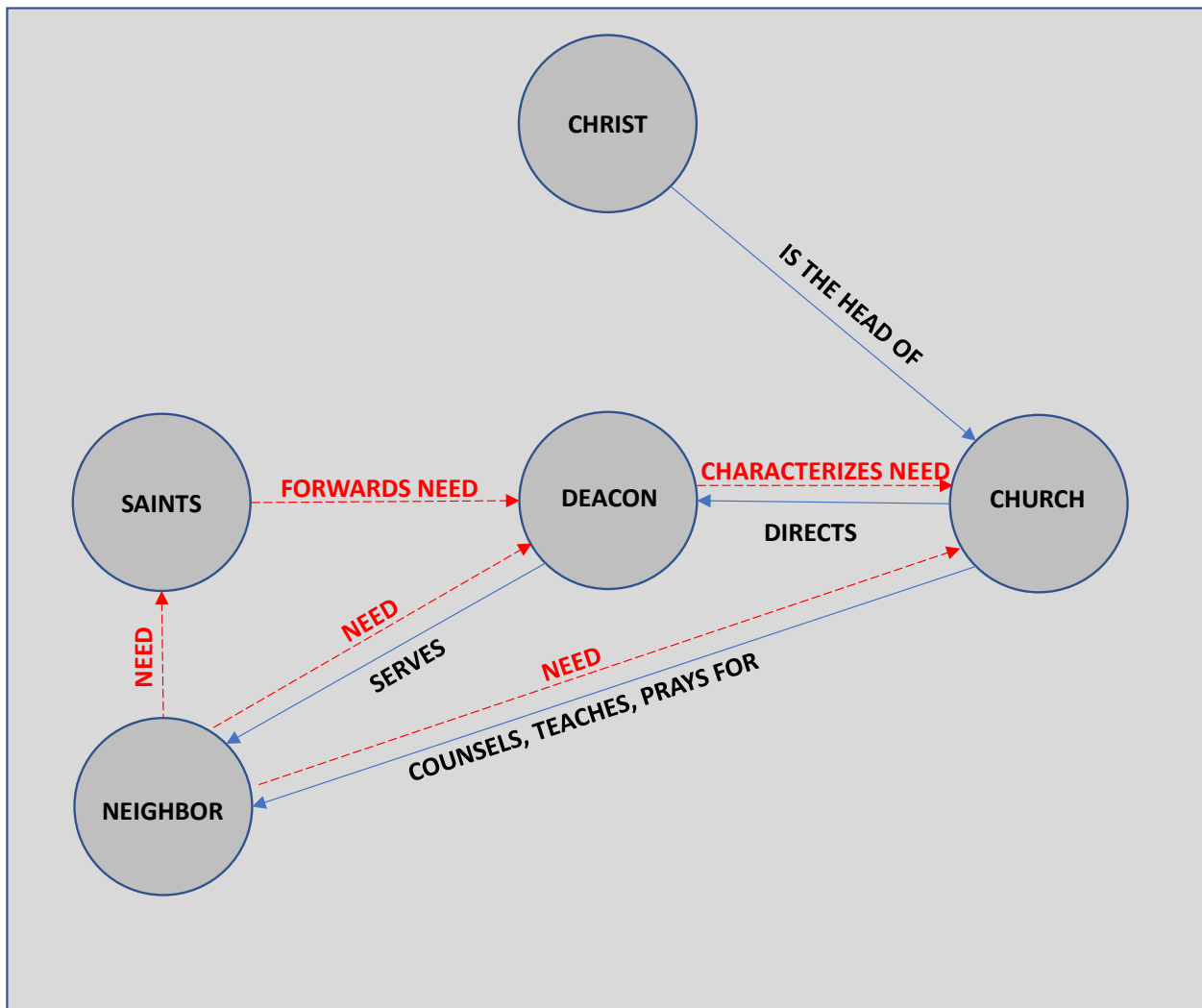
If we apply this model to the Deacon, we get the model shown below.



This model clearly shows that everything the Deacon does is for Christ, through the Church. If Christ or the church is removed, then the deacon is simply serving himself with feel-good gestures of helping others. We see this in social media when people on short term mission trips take selfies helping others with posts like “Feels good to help others less fortunate”. You can almost picture them patting themselves on the back. This violates the principle that Jesus

taught in Matt 6:3, “But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” [NLT].

The model above is not complete. In Luke 10, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Jesus asked the expert ‘what is written in the law?’ to which the expert replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Luke 10:27)[NIV]. But the expert asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29)[NIV], and Jesus rendered the famous parable of the good Samaritan. We may conclude that “neighbors” must be in the diaconate model and present the following.



A neighbor (one outside of the church) may make a need known to one of the saints (members of the church), to a deacon, or to the church itself (e.g. by visiting the church and making known their need). If a saint is aware of the need, they should know of the diaconate’s mission and forward the need to the deacon. The deacon will characterize the need to the session (the church leadership) seeking direction. The church will consider the matter taking it to Christ in

prayer and supplication since Christ is the head of the church. The deacon may then be directed to serve the neighbor, and the elders and/or pastor may meet with the neighbor to counsel, teach, and/or pray over and for. In both models, whether the deacon serves a saint or a neighbor, the service is for Christ through the church.

We conclude with emphasis that Christ is the reason for all that we do, and the church is Christ's divine instrument on earth to fulfill his Kingship. We have no need for deacons who serve themselves, to make themselves feel good. This is truly of ministry of mercy without credit, Amen.

REFERENCE MATERIALS FOR NEW DEACONS

1. "Summary of Christian Doctrine", Louis Berkhof
2. "The Deacon's Handbook", Gerard Berghoef & Lester DeKoster
3. "Who Will Lead Us?", Leonard Coppes
4. "The Growing Local Church", Donald J. MacNair
5. "The Living Church", Donald J. MacNair
6. "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself", Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
7. "The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy", Cornelis Van Dam