

Rev. Ron Pearce



“The Ministry
that Deacons Need”

Rev. Ron Pearce has pastored the Church of the Covenant OPC in Hackettstown, NJ for over 40 years. He and his wife, Linda, had been helping with the church since the fall of 1980. The Lord prospered the work, and in 1981 the congregation called him to help establish Church of the Covenant. He was ordained by the Presbytery of New Jersey on November 6, 1981, and he retired as pastor emeritus, April 17, 2022. He continues to serve the church and presbytery in his retirement.

Ron graduated from Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia in 1980 with the Master of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees. Ron and Linda have three children, two daughters-in-law and seven grandchildren, all nearby, so they enjoy being a part of their lives.

The Good Samaritan; the Rest of the Story
Luke 10:38–42

- I. Christ Is Not Contrasting What Is Sinful to What Is Holy
 - A. Martha Was a Believer with Mary and Lazarus Jn. 11:25

 - B. Martha Was Attending to Legitimate Needs
 - 1. Legitimate Needs. Bible Doesn't Teach Dualism

 - 2. Legitimate Service. It Was Good for Martha to Provide for the Group to Eat

 - 3. Legitimate Time. It Was a Great Illustration of the Good Samaritan Lk. 10:36–37

- II. Christ Is Contrasting What Is Good to What Is Best
 - A. Mary Had the Right Priority

 - B. Martha Received the Rebuke— Why?
 - 1. For Her Attitude to Mary

 - 2. For Her Unbalanced Priority 10:40
 - a. Point is not for Martha to stop serving and listen to Jesus

 - b. Point is not that Martha was doing too much

 - c. Point is that Martha was being called to do her service with the same *love* for Christ as Mary had. Martha, keep focused, *why* are you doing all this service and hospitality?

- III. Christ Is Challenging Us to What Is Necessary
 - A. Caution: We Can Get Overwhelmed at All the Needs

 - B. Caution: We Can Get Distracted by Pressing Needs

 - C. Caution: We Can Forget *Why* We Are Working to Meet Needs

One thing is necessary, and it is finally not a THING at all, it is a PERSON, the Lord Jesus himself.

Stated in the positive: personal relationship to Christ and love for Christ must be the reason and focus for all work and ministry.

Stated in the negative: legitimate demands of service, ministry and needs are not the priority unless done for Christ and out of love for him.

“O God, make me more earnest for Thy glory; and may I act more from real love and gratitude to my redeeming Lord.”
—William Wilberforce

Seth Long



“Ministry to the Spiritually Immature”

Seth Long is an elder at Neon Reformed OPC in Neon, KY. Additionally, he also serves as Vice President of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and has been on the Administration and Finance Subcommittee, Aid Request Subcommittee, and the Disaster Response Subcommittee. He is the Executive Director of HOMES, Inc., a nonprofit with a mission to provide affordable housing solutions to families in Southeastern KY, from the very beginning. In his spare time, he works on their family owned and operated SouthDown Farm. On the farm they make Kentucky maple syrup and grow produce they sell in their CSA program.

He and his wife, Sheryl, came to KY from PA in 1991, volunteering as a carpenter with Mennonite Central Committee, helping folks with their housing needs. Thirty-three years and seven children later Seth and Sheryl are still serving in Letcher County, KY, an area known for persistent poverty. Along the way, they came to the Reformed faith. Coming to realize a need for a Reformed church in the region they, along with two other families, helped to establish Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church (NRPC) in 2000. NRPC is a special, long-term church plant of the OPC in a community where there is no Reformed presence. Though the mission work started with more “outsiders” than locals, today the Lord is blessing this church plant with steady growth; most of the members coming from the local community.

“Ministry to the Spiritually Immature”

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Rev. Stephen Tracey



“Ministry to, and with,
People with Disabilities”

Pastor Stephen Tracey was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1990 and has served as pastor of Lakeview OPC since 2001, after moving from Northern Ireland. He has also volunteered with Joni and Friends since 2015, and currently teaches an OPC Ministerial Training Institute course on Disability and the Church.

Pastor Tracey is a graduate of Queen's University, Belfast, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, and the University of Glasgow. He and his wife, Sharon, have four grown children, one son-in-law, two daughters-in-law, three grandsons, and one granddaughter.

OPC National Diaconal Summit IV

Ministry to, and with, people affected by disability.

Stephen Tracey

What are the barriers that get in the way of our ministry to, and with, people with disabilities?
“It is often easier for a person with a disability to get a beer at a bar than it is to enter a church to pray.” Attributed to John R Dunne

1. Issues of Accessibility

Ministry in this building—is it accessible?
(Entering, Sitting, Seeing, Hearing, Sensing)
See sample checklist. Several other checklists are available.

2. Issues of Communication

Ministry means listening. Hear what people tell you.
See sample disability etiquette.
Sight impaired
Hearing Impaired
Wheelchairs
Autism Spectrum

3. Issues of Attitude

Are we prone to judge first and be kind later?
What kind of church would we become if we simply stopped evaluating people from a human point of view rather than a chosen-in-Christ point of view?

Consider the impact of 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 upon our ministry.

“But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Luke 14:13-14



Irresistible Church Training

For Disability Ministry

Presented by



Disability Etiquette

Focus On the Person, Not the Disability

The Purpose of Disability Etiquette Unlike etiquette for taking tea with the Queen of England, disability etiquette is full of exceptions. There are no hard-and-fast rules. But guidelines, like handrails on a staircase, give people a greater degree of confidence to step forward boldly. Uncertainty about norms and appropriate language may paralyze someone and prevent them from entering into a friendship with a person with a disability! These recommendations should not be seen as barriers that restrict, but guidelines that empower! This guide is far from exhaustive, but as you use good judgment and ask heartfelt questions, you will find friendship with a new circle of people.

People-First Begin by using “people-first language,” putting the emphasis on the individual, not on the disability. It’s a subtle difference but speaks volumes! For example, say, “the woman who is blind,” rather than “the blind woman.” A people-first focus also includes how we talk to people with disabilities. Talk directly with adults and children with disabilities, rather than “through” spouses or caregivers. Talk “with” and not “at” an individual using age-appropriate language and tone. Like any relationship, time spent together builds trust and mutual understanding.

Engaging People with Particular Disabilities...



Visual Impairments

- Let the individual initiate a handshake or invite them to shake your hand. Otherwise they may be startled by an unexpected touch.
- Announce your arrival and departure, letting them know who you are until they can recognize your voice. Don't leave someone talking to themselves or force them to ask who they're talking to.
- When walking together, guide—don't pull. Allow them to hold on to your elbow or arm, rather than holding theirs. Or, put your hand on their shoulder. Ask them which side they prefer to be guided from.
- Don't assume! Ask, “How can I help you best?” Or, “May I help you across the street?”
- Communicate details such as approaching staircases, which side the handrail is on, and when you are nearing the last step.
- If they have a guide dog, do not touch or distract the dog unless you have permission. Guide dogs are often trained to be “on the clock” while wearing their harness.
- Vague statements such as “over there” or “right here” are not helpful. “To the left of your hand” or “right in front of you, waist high” are useful.
- Details matter, so ask if they'd like you to describe your surroundings, particularly the layout of the room, any upcoming obstacles and terrain, especially when moving onto grass, gravel, or a wet surface.



Ambulatory

- Be aware of the environment! Make sure wheelchair users have enough room to move freely.
- Treat their wheelchair as an extension of their body. It is not something to learn on, sit on, hang things on, or touch without asking.
- Do not assume that the individual needs you to push his or her wheelchair.
- Before helping someone out of a wheelchair, set the brake and turn off any power controllers.
- When speaking with someone in a wheelchair, be mindful of how high you are relative to their eye level. Standing further away, sitting in a chair next to them, or even kneeling can help alleviate neck stress.



Hearing Impairments

- Face the individual and speak at normal pace and pitch.
- Be sure the light accentuates your face and does not glare in the individual's eyes.
- Attract the individual's attention before trying to communicate.
- Use meaningful hand and body gestures.
- Remember, for those hard of hearing or fully deaf, language is largely a visual activity. If they can't see your mouth, they can't "hear" you!



Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism is a spectrum. If you've met one person with autism, you've met *one* person with autism!
- Individuals with autism may be apprehensive about social interaction.
- Individuals with autism like predictable routines. Tell them how long the current activity will last and what is coming next.
- Many individuals with autism are particularly sensitive to sensory input such as loud noises, scratchy textures, bright or flashing lights, and strong scents.
- Be positive and upbeat, even if the individual doesn't give you eye contact or a smile. Suggest new activity or location options without forcing decisions.



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Church Facility Accessibility Checklist

Basic Accessibility

- Is it possible to get from a parked car into the building without using stairs?
- Are 1 in 25 parking spaces handicap accessible?
- Do any platforms extend at least 1' beyond each side of the doorway they service?
- Are all fire alarms in working order?

Signage

- Is there a slightly raised and brightly colored abrasive strip to warn of open staircases?
- Are the signage letters and numbers sized for optimal reading at the required distances?
- Are permanent room signs located on walls adjacent to the door's latch side or on the nearest wall?
- Can a person approach signs within 3" without running into an object or standing in a swinging door?

Restrooms

- Is an accessible restroom located on every floor?
- Do entrance vestibules, doors and vision screens allow sufficient clearance for wheelchair passage?
- Is there at least one stall that is 36" wide or the preferred 42"?
- Do stalls have a turning space 5'x5' for easy wheelchair use?
- Are grab bars securely fastened to the wall on each side?

Worship Center

- Are sound levels adequate for persons with hearing impairments? Can the sound be amplified with an induction loop or mini-broadcasting systems?
- Is the lighting adequate to enable persons to worship? Can speakers or interpreters be easily seen without shadows?
- Are large print Bibles, hymnals and bulletins available?
- Are multiple locations provided for wheelchair seating?
- Can people take communion without climbing steps?
- Do ramps have smooth-surfaced handrails on both sides?
- Is at least one primary entrance to each building usable by individuals in wheelchairs?
- Are doorway openings 36" wide or more?
- Are doors operable by a single effort?
- Are there any automatic doors?
- Are door sills safe and free from safe inclines or abrupt changes?

Additional Items

- Does each floor have a disability accessible water fountain?
- If the facility has multiple stories, are there elevators?
- Are they easy to locate?
- Is the elevator door opening at least 36" wide?
- Does the church own a wheelchair accessible van?
- Does the church provide transportation for people who are unable to drive.

David Nakhla



“Your Diaconate and
Your Denomination”

David Nakhla serves as an elder at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA. He is also the OPC’s Committee on Diaconal Ministries’ first full-time Administrator as well as the OPC’s first Short-Term Missions and Disaster Response Coordinator. In this capacity, David has had the opportunity to interact with diaconal ministries at the local, regional, and denominational levels, as well as internationally by serving with six other men from six other countries on the Diaconal Committee of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

David grew up in an Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Southern California where he was ordained both as a deacon in 1997 and later as an elder in 2002. He married his wife, Faith, in 1995 and the Lord has blessed them with five children - three girls and two boys with ages ranging from 9 to 22. After 15 years working as an electrical engineer, in 2010 the Lord led him to full-time service in the church. In his spare time, David enjoys working on his home and being with his family.

Your Diaconate and Your Denomination

David Nakhla

Your Diaconate and Your Denomination

David Nakhla

Rev. Deryck Barson



“Ministry to the
Stranger”

Deryck Barson is the senior pastor of Bethel OPC in Wheaton, IL. After a few years as an entrepreneur and business owner, while being very involved in the life of the local church, Deryck moved with his wife Cathy and their 18-month old son Jed to midtown Manhattan to plant a church at the end of 1999. In God’s goodness and kindness, He blessed that work and established it even to this day. In 2011, the Barson family moved to the Philadelphia area for Deryck to continue his education, where he received the Masters and PhD degrees in Historical Theology from Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. During their time in Philadelphia, the Barsons worshipped at Tenth Presbyterian Church (PCA), where Deryck served as a minister for four years.

Deryck was born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa. As a teenager he had a passion for Christ and His church, and sensed a call to pastoral ministry. Now, he and his wife, Cathy, live in Wheaton, IL and have been blessed with three children, Jed, Tori and Abigail. They also have an Australian Shepherd puppy called Roxi.

“Ministry to the Stranger”

Rev. Deryck Barson

“Ministry to the Stranger”

Rev. Deryck Barson

Mike Cloy



“Disaster Response for the Local Church”

Mike Cloy is a Ruling Elder at Large in the Presbytery of the Southeast. He is a member of Landis, OPC in Marion, NC, where he serves on the provisional session of this mission work. He also serves on the provisional session of the mission work at Covenant OPC of the Low Country in Bluffton, SC. He serves on the OPC Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, the OPC Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel, the Presbytery of the Southeast Committee on Home Missions, and the Presbytery Committee on Diaconal Ministries. Mike served our nation for 27 years as a Regular Army Commissioned Infantry Officer. He led and commanded soldiers at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels in peace, combat, and disaster response operations. He is a graduate of the U.S Army Ranger and Special Forces schools and understands the complexities of leading in chaotic and ambiguous environments. With his military experience, Mike helped to start up the Presbytery of the Southeast Disaster Advanced Response Team (DART). Mike continues to serve those who served in the military as the chief of training for Veterans Services of the Carolinas (VSC). VSC assists homeless veterans and their families in becoming housed and employed. He also serves on the Catawba County Veterans Treatment Court, where he assigns Veteran Mentors to the veterans enrolled in the court to help them overcome their substance abuse and mental health challenges.

Mike is a lifelong learner and has earned four master's degrees in areas of counseling, education, strategic planning, and human services and is currently working on a master's in Bible and theology. Mike has been happily married for 41 years to Debbie, his high school sweetheart as they reside in Morganton, NC. They have two children, Melanie and Mason, both members of OP churches, and they are blessed with ten grandchildren.

Mike Cloy: Disaster Response for the Local Church

1. How Does the Office of Deacon Fit into Disaster Response?

2. How Does God Use Deacons to Bring and Sustain Peace in Worship?

3. Why Does God Need Peacemakers to Be a Spiritual Healthy Church?

4. What Can I do to Sustain Peace in Worship at My Church?

5. Where do I Start with Developing a Peacemaking Plan for My Church?

6. Where Can I Find Disaster Response Resources?

Rev. Eric Watkins



“Mercy Ministry in a
Social-Justice World”

Eric Watkins is the pastor of Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Marcos, CA, and was recently appointed the part-time Director for the Center for Missions and Evangelism at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He has been a minister in the OPC since 2001 and has planted two churches. His degrees include an A.A., B.S., M.Div. and ThM. In 2016 he completed his PhD from the Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands. His dissertation was on Preaching Christ from the Old Testament in a Postmodern Context and was published as *The Drama of Preaching: Participating with God in the History of Redemption* by Wipf and Stock. He has written extensively for *Tabletalk*, *New Horizons*, *Christian Renewal* and other publications on subjects related to social justice and the church, evangelism, and outreach. Pastor Eric has taught at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, FL, Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL, Gordon Conwell Seminary in Jacksonville, FL, Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, IN, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA, and Westminster Seminary California.

He is happily married to Heather; the two of them have four beautiful, adopted children. Eric’s pastimes include surfing, beach volleyball and playing guitar. He can be emailed at Watkins.1@opc.org.

“Mercy Ministry in a Social Justice World”
Rev. Eric B. Watkins, PhD
Harvest OPC, San Marcos, CA

*Please read beforehand if possible: <https://opc.org/GA/race.html>

**Note that the OPC, PCA, URCNA chapters on deacons are appended below.

***I can be reached at Watkins.1@opc.org

Section 1: Reflections on the 1974 report

1. What were the issues that led to OPC study report on Race Relationships in 1971 (when the study committee was first established)?
2. How do those issues reflect in our current day?
3. As a church, to what extent were those recommendations acted upon, particularly as they relate to mercy ministry?
4. How has the social justice movement effected the mercy ministries of the church?
5. How has the social justice movement affected young people in the church?

Section 2: Reflections on BOCO XI (Deacons)

1. What does Psalm 68:1-5 have to do with Acts 6:1-7?
2. Who are the potential “strangers” envisioned in BOCO XI.1?
3. What is s the difference between “need” and “distress”
4. What might be some of the “other forms of service” envisioned in BOCO XI.4?
5. How does our BOCO on the function of deacons compare with other NAPARC churches?

Section 3: Suggestions for what local churches (and their deacons) might consider

1. Is it fitting/proper/biblical to use diaconal funds to help people outside the church?
2. Where are those boundaries drawn?
3. How can our practice of mercy to “widows, orphans and strangers” be enhanced?
4. How might the work of deacons do “outreach” and not simply “inreach?”
5. How can deacons equip and encourage the church to share in this ministry?

Additional Thoughts/Questions:

Appendix A
OPC BOCO on Deacons

Chapter XI
Deacons

1. The Scriptures designate the office of deacon as distinct and perpetual in the church. Deacons are called to show forth the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy toward the saints and strangers on behalf of the church. To this end they exercise, in the fellowship of the church, a recognized stewardship of care and of gifts for those in need or distress. This service is distinct from that of rule in the church.
2. Those chosen to this office should be of great faith, exemplary lives, honest repute, brotherly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.
3. In order to facilitate the performance of the duties of their office the deacons of each particular church shall be constituted a board of deacons. The board shall choose its own officers from its membership.
4. The board shall oversee the ministry of mercy in the church and shall collect and disburse funds for the relief of the needy. Other forms of service for the church may also be committed to the deacons.
5. In the discharge of their duties the deacons shall be under the supervision and authority of the session. Accordingly, the board shall keep a record of its proceedings and of all funds and their distribution, and shall submit its records to the session once every three months, and at other times upon request of the session. If it seems to be for the best interest of the church, the session may require the board of deacons to reconsider any action, or may, if necessary, overrule it.
6. It is desirable that the session and the board of deacons meet together at regular intervals to confer on matters of common responsibility.
7. In a church in which there are no deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the session.

Appendix B
PCA BOCO on Deacons

CHAPTER 9

9-1. The office of deacon is set forth in the Scriptures as ordinary and perpetual in the Church. The office is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus; it expresses also the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need.

9-2. It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation. In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session. In a church in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.

9-3. To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.

9-4. The deacons of a particular church shall be organized as a Board, of which the pastor shall be an advisory member. The Board shall elect a chairman and a secretary from their number and a treasurer to whom shall be entrusted the funds for the current expenses of the church. It shall meet separately at least once a quarter, and whenever requested by the Session. The Board of each church shall determine the number necessary for a quorum. The Board shall keep a record of its proceedings, and of all funds and their distribution, and shall submit its minutes to the Session regularly, and at other times upon request of the Session. It is desirable that the Session and the Board of Deacons meet in joint session once a quarter to confer on matters of common interest.

9-5. Deacons may properly be appointed by the higher courts to serve on committees, especially as treasurers. It is suitable also that they be appointed trustees of any fund held by any of the Church courts. It may also be helpful for the Church courts, when devising plans of church finance, to invite wise and consecrated deacons to their councils.

9-6. The deacons may, with much advantage, hold conference from time to time for the discussion of the interests committed to them. Such conferences may include representatives

of churches covering areas of smaller or larger extent. Any actions taken by these conferences shall have only an advisory character.

9-7. It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need. These assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church (BCO 7-2) and, as such, are not subjects for ordination (BCO 17).

Appendix C

URCNA Church Order on Duties of Deacons

Article 15 – The Duties of Deacons

The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of continuing in prayer and supervising the works of Christian mercy among the congregation; acquainting themselves with congregational needs; exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy; gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, and distributing these offerings according to need; and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered as resources permit. The deacons shall ordinarily meet every month to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render an account of their work to the Consistory.