

A Training Program For Deacons

William Shishko

Extracted from [Ordained Servant](#) vol. 9, no. 3 (July 2000), pp. 62-70

Introduction

The following outline presents the major headings and sub-points of the Deacon Training Program I have used for the preparation of men for the office of deacon in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Franklin Square, NY. I have used this program for over 15 years and have found no reason to significantly modify it even as we enter a new millennium. Customarily I go over this material in a sixweek period, using a "lecture" format followed by discussion. The accompanying prospectus presents the way I divide the material over the six-week period, together with the reading material which is required of the men who participate in this program.

The first half of the material gives an overview of Christian doctrine using various heads of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Unlike typical doctrinal overviews, however, this one seeks to use the confessional standards as a grid, through which principles for diaconal ministry are garnered. This is a unique approach to a field in which I have found that too often principles are developed by more or less sanctified imagination wedded to benevolent intentions rather than by a systematic study of the doctrines of the Scriptures.

The second half of the material deals with the deacon and his work, beginning with the character of the deacon as a man, then proceeding to general and more specific applications of the diaconal task. Particularly the last lesson in this second half is very much "Franklin Square OPC specific", but insofar as this congregation of now some 140 family units (including many single member households) in suburban Long Island, NY is representative of other congregations with Presbyterian government it will provide, I trust, a good example for others.

The material is given in outline form. The advantage is that the material is available in a more succinct form. The disadvantage is that undeveloped points may be less clear (or even unclear). I hope that these disadvantages are kept to a minimum. Perhaps at some future point I will have the time to transform the skeleton into a [complete] body. I encourage you to modify the material as you desire and use it as freely as you like. Where the contents are useful I give glory to the God of grace; where it is not I accept full responsibility.

May God bless you in your work of training deacons who, in their office, represent the great Deacon of His Church, Jesus Christ, cf. Matthew 20:27ff.

William Shishko

Deacon Training Program (*Program Prospectus*)

PURPOSES: The purposes of this series of classes are:

1. To give an overview of the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture and containing principles for the general work of the diaconate;
2. To provide an introduction to the qualifications necessary for those who serve

as deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

3. To present an outline of the responsibilities of those serving as deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Franklin Square.

TEXTS & HANDOUTS: Required reading will be from the following:

Westminster Confession of Faith, (Free Presbyterian Publications Edition)

Berkhof, Lous. *Summary of Christian Doctrine*(Eerdmans).

Berghoef, Gerard & Lester DeKoster. *The Deacon's Handbook*. (Christian's Library Press)

Coppes, Leonard J. *Who Will Lead Us?* (Pilgrim Publishing Company)

MacNair, Donald J. *The Living Church* (GCP)

Kuiper, R. B. *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Banner of Truth)

Deacon's Manual & Policy Manual (OPC, Franklin Square)

CLASS SCHEDULE: Classes will meet on the following Tuesday evenings from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. at locations to be established:

August 3, '99 — October 5, '99 — December 7, '99 — September 7, '99 — November 16, '99 — January 4, '00

CLASS OUTLINE:

WEEKS 1-3: AN OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE "*Deacons must...hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.*" (1 Tim. 3:8,9)

Week 1: God & Man

Required Reading: —WCF, I - VII, IX —Berkhof, pp 9 - 89

Week 2: Christ & His Work

Required Reading: —WCF, VIII, X - XVIII —Berkhof, pp 93 - 148

Week 3: The Church & Last Things

Required Reading: —WCF, XIX - XXXIII —Berkhof, pp 151 - 198

WEEKS 4-6: THE DEACON AND HIS WORK "*Let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless*" (1 Tim. 3:10)

Week 4: The Deacon as a Man

Required Reading: Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

MacNair, *The Growing Local Church*, pp 79-86, 195 (handout)

MacNair, *The Living Church*, pp 155-157 (handout)

Week 5: The Deacon as an Officer: General Considerations

Required Reading: Coppes, pp 105 -138 —Kuiper, pp 150-157 (handout)

Week 6: The Deacon as an Officer: Specific Applications

Required Reading:

Berghoef & DeKoster, pp 135 -181 —Coppes, pp 139 -154

MacNair, *The Growing Local Church*, pp 109-125 (handout)

OPC, *Franklin Square Deacon's Manual & Policy Manual*

I. THE DEACON AND DOCTRINE, 1 Tim. 3:8,9 "*holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*"

A. Deacons must possess a basic understanding of the fullness of the Christian faith as it focuses on Christ Himself. i.e., "*the mystery of the faith.*"

1. Office in the Church represents Christ in His offices.

2. The office is meaningless apart from the faith. The faith guides what is done through the office. The office presents the faith, e.g., Stephen, Philip.

B. This understanding must have become a part of the man, usually through time and experience coupled with regular feeding of the mind, i.e., "*holding the mystery of the faith.*"

C. It must be an understanding which inhabits a man who is truly *God's man*, i.e., "*in a pure conscience.*"—Cf. 1 Peter 3:16-21.

II. DOCTRINAL PROPOSITIONS WHICH MUST GUIDE THE ONGOING AND DEVELOPING WORK OF A DIACONATE (Based on various heads of the Westminster Confession of Faith, hereafter WCF)

A. WCF I: There must be a dogged determination to align every diaconal practice with the precepts and directives of Holy Scripture, cf. I:vi, 1 Tim. 3:16ff., 1Tim. 3:14ff.

1. Some areas: *How* is mercy to be shown? To whom? To what extent? What are the biblical principles that bear on issues like a church budget, salaries, the church building, areas of diaconal involvement, etc.

2. Necessitates: a. Private study, thought, and prayer. b. Diaconal consultation and intercession. c. Consultation with the session.

B. (WCF II) There must be a wise, sensitive, and increasingly obvious manifestation of various attributes of God in the work of the diaconate.

1. Redemption: Word & deed. Officers officially represent the words & deeds of the Redeemer. Deacons especially represent His deeds, e.g., Mk. 10:45, "I came not to be deaconed to, but to deacon."

2. Those diaconal deeds represent God! E.g., God-man = Servant. Deacons are servants. God is father to the fatherless & provider/protector of widows. Deacons do this, too, in the name of

Christ.

3. Other attributes: Holy sovereignty, with all advancing the Kingdom of God; Mercy, cf. Jn. 12:6, Gal. 2:10. Justice, 2 Thess. 3:10, etc. All have reflections in diaconal work.

C. (WCF III, V) There must be a wise, healthy, consideration of implications of both divine sovereignty and human agency in many of the more difficult matters deacons will face, cf. III:1, V:1,5.

E.g., Issues re. famine relief in certain regimes, cf. Rev. 6:5f. See James 5:14f, 1 Cor. 11:30.

NOTE: Always seek counsel from Elders. Need of ongoing communication with them.

D. (WCF VI) There must be an ever-present consciousness of the curse, sin, its multiple effects, and how best to deal with these.

I.e., Specific sin & the blanket effects of sin, e.g., poverty, needs of elderly & widows, cf. 1 Tim. 5:8-16.

E. (WCF VII) There must be an unashamed differentiation in our dealings with those who are inside or outside of the covenant of grace

Cf. Deut. 15:1-3, 7-11. Gal. 6:10. See Coppes, *Who Will Lead Us?* pp 138-149.

1. To Believers: Diaconal ministry is a demonstration of God's promised mercy to the people of God, e.g., Jesus feeding the multitudes.
2. To Unbelievers: God's goodness shown to them through the diaconate is designed to lead them to repentance, cf. Rom. 2:4. See Coppes, *Ibid.* p. 141.

F. (WCF VI) There must be a constant recognition that every "temporality" given to the diaconate is a trust from God.

Cf. Deut. 8:10, 18, e.g., Finances, building, church possessions, other acquired proper-ties, savings, etc.

G. (WCF VIII) Deacons must have an increasing appreciation of the person, work, and offices of Christ as the one mediator between man and God, cf. Matt. 16:13-18 (See J. Owen, Vol. 1, "The Divine Glory of Christ", 1 Tim. 3:15f, cf. vs. 9.

1. Person: Truly God. Truly man. (VIII:2)
2. Work: Humiliation. Exaltation (VIII:3)
3. Offices: Prophet. Priest. King.

Select Bibliography:

William Blaikie: *The Public Ministry of Christ; The Inner Life of Christ*

John Flavel, Vol. 1. *The Fountain of Life*

Henry Martyn: *The Shadow of Calvary*

John Murray: *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*

Octavius Winslow: *The Glory of the Redeemer*

Note: Ultimately and really, deacons represent and serve Jesus Christ. This is the nature of church office. Cf. John Sietsma, *The Idea of Office*, p. 57.

H. (WCF X-XV) Deacons must cultivate a growing understanding of the way of salvation, and a growing facility in presenting it to others. E.g., Acts 7 (Stephen); 8:26-35 (Philip); 1 Timothy 3:13

1. "Ordo Salutis" (X-XIII), cf. J. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*

NOTE: Special care in understanding justification. Sensitivity to adoption, cf. WCF XII.

2. Gospel Call: Saving faith (XIV) & Repentance (XV)

NOTE: Deacons will have opportunity to bring the Gospel to others in course of their work.

I. (WCF XVI) Deacons must be particularly aware of their responsibility to stir up others to good works. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10, Heb. 10:24, "paroxusmon".

1. Nature of Office: Heightened responsibility to do what applies to every believer.

2. Particular role of diaconal office: Love & good works.

3. Practical suggestions: a. Delegation. 2. Motivation (vs. mere sympathy). 3. Information. Cf. Berghoef & DeKoster, *Deacons Handbook*, pp 83-88, 143-146. 4. Communication.

J. (WCF XVIII) Deacons must give attention to the often deep and complex questions related to the issue of assurance of salvation.

1. Why?

a. Reality of Christian experience, esp. in churches that emphasize the necessity of vital/ experimental religion, e.g., 1 Peter 1:5-15.

b. Reality of diaconal ministry. Often (usually?!) on unexpected occasions.

2. How?

a. Give due personal attention to the issue of assurance of faith and salvation.

b. Give special attention to the benefits of assurance, cf. XVIII:3 c. Minister to others those texts and insights that have been most helpful to you, cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7.

Select Bibliography:

William Guthrie, *The Christian's Great Interest*

Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*

Thomas Hooker, *The Poor, Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ*

K. (WCF XIX:2,5,6) Deacons have an official responsibility to give special attention to the details of the Old Testament law and to regularly make legitimate application of these to their diaconal labors. Cf. Relation to proposition A above.

1. Examples: Tithe (Deut. 14:22-29, etc.); Indebtedness (Deut. 15:1-6); Generosity to the poor (Deut. 15:7-11, etc.) Inheritance questions (Deut. 21:15-17); Usury (Deut. 23:19f.)

Cf. James 1:27, Deut. 14:29. 1 Cor. 9:9-11.

2. The "Theonomy" Question, cf. G. Bahnsen, R. Rushdoony, etc.

NOTE: Importance of considering these questions jointly with the Elders.

L. (WCF XXI:8) Deacons should be especially sensitive to ways in which works of mercy can be done on the Sabbath. 1. Diaconal Works & the Sabbath, e.g., Mk. 2:23-28, 3:1-5, etc. Official leadership here, as with Christ.

2. Practical Suggestions: Visits and tapes to shut-ins, nursing home ministries, food & hospitality to visitors, needy, etc. This should be led by the deacons.

NOTE: This is one of the most neglected aspects of Sabbath keeping in the Reformed community.

M. (WCF XXV:3) No view of the diaconate and its work may ever be permitted to blur the ministry of the word as the distinct and primary work of the church, cf. Acts 6:2-4.

1. Warning: Errors of "equal primacy of preaching & deaconing"; deacons as social workers representing the Church, etc.

NOTE: Be careful to preserve the distinction between what deacons do as a diaconate and what Church members do individually and in concert with others, e.g., crisis pregnancy centers, Christian schools, Christian labor unions, etc.

2. Encouragement: Effective diaconal work encouraging the primacy of ministry of the Word will result in increased biblical diaconal work to an expanded church, cf. Acts 6:7

N. (WCF XXV:2) Deacons must be aware of the true population of the church they are called out to serve, and their correct responsibility to each particular member or family.

1. Diaconal responsibility focuses on the Church, cf. Acts 6:1, Gal. 6:10.
2. Categories of "Church" to which deacons are responsible: Poor, widows, orphans, elders. Also, church needs beyond the local level,

e.g., presbytery, denominationally, internationally through church connections, etc.

NOTE: Always keep proper spheres of responsibility in mind, e.g., extended families, local churches, etc.

O. (WCF XXVI, esp. sections 1, 2) The application of our confessional doctrine of "The Communion of the Saints" should be a specific study and burden of the diaconate.

1. Language of Obligation, cf. 1Thess. 5:14, 1 Jn. 3:16-18, 2 Cor. 8 & 9, etc.
2. Extent of concern, cf. XXVI:2b, 2 Cor. 8 & 9.
3. Elements necessary for this: a. Conviction of responsibility. b. Determination to work at it. c. Prayerful wisdom and creativity. d. Patience!

P. (WCF XXXII, XXXIII) Deacons ought to have clear, experimentally cultivated views of man's eternal state and of the judgment to come.

1. Why? Ministry to comfort saints and to warn sinners is inevitable for deacons. Evangelistic work of deacons.
2. How? Meditation, cf. 2 Cor. 5:11. Make use of items like S. Rutherford's *Letters*, R. Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, sermons by J. Edwards, etc.

III. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR A DEACON:

A. Macroscopic View, Acts 6:3

1. "Good reputation" (" martus"): Legal import, i.e., "credible witness." Trustworthy.
2. "Full of the Holy Spirit": Godly; Representing the One filled with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, cf. Jn. 3:34. One clothed with the character of Christ.
3. "(Full of) wisdom": Ability to APPLY truth and godly insight in day to day life.

B. Microscopic View, 1 Tim. 3:8-13

"Likewise", i.e., "Likewise deacons MUST, cf. vs. 2: Non-optional qualifications. If this is disregarded by the congregation it is no less a denial of Christ's authority than a denial of the necessity of the new birth, cf. Jn. 3:7.

1. "Reverent" (" semnous"): Umbrella characteristic. Honorable, dignified, courteous. Commanding respect and trust.
2. "Not double-tongued: ("dilogous") e.g., "Forked tongue." Making commitments he is unwilling or unable to keep. One who is trustworthy and dependable. "His yes is yes!"
3. "Not given to much wine", e.g., Mediterranean customs of hospitality

included giving wine to guests. Must be manifestly self-controlled. Ill discipline in one area is indicator of ill discipline in other areas.

4. "Not greedy for money." Not obsessed with material gain. Weakness in this area could create distrust in those who know the deacon handles funds. It can also bring an analogous attitude toward regarding temporalities in the church, i.e., Empire building or stinginess vs. liberality.

NOTE: Constant need to balance sobriety with a benevolent spirit.

5. "Holding the mystery of the faith, cf. I & II above, with a pure conscience", cf. 4:2, 1 Peter 3:13-17.

I.e., One who does what is right regardless of the cost. One who does not give in to wrongdoing, knowing the cost. (Emphasize the importance of a pure conscience!)

6. "Tested": Passed the test, cf. Rom. 12:1,2. cf. Directive #3, C (below)

NOTE: The "provenness" comes first, not afterward!

7. "Women/wives": Not "deaconesses". Probably: Wife of deacons, cf. vss. 2, 12. Or: Women who assist deacons, i.e., unordained deaconesses.

- a. "Reverent": Commanding respect, cf. #1 above.

- b. "Not slanderers", i.e., Not "devils" (!), i.e., Malicious gossips, cf. Titus 2:3.

- c. "Temperate": Sober. Moderate. Careful. Both feet firmly planted on the ground!

- d. "Faithful in all things": Truly godly person. Woman who represents the faithfulness of Christ, the Faithful One.

8. Domestic Qualifications:

- a. "One wife husband": Not a playboy. No doubt about his faithfulness to his wife (if he is married). Remember that deacons have a special responsibility to minister to widows, including young widows. Great danger of temptation here.

- b. "Ruling children well" ("proistemi"): 1) To put one's self before; lead. 2) Care for: Caring leadership of children. The deacon manages his house with this concern in view.

- c. "Manages his own household well.": Including his wife! All is in order, e.g., bills are paid,

- d. Biblical priorities, godly home management.

NOTE: This is what deacons must provide for the church, "the household of God."

C. Basic Directives for Cultivating These Qualifications:

1. Diligence and regularity in exercises which develop personal piety.
2. Serious attention to the breadth of duties connected with home management.

NOTE: Home is nursery of the church. Officers are outstanding nurserymen.

3. Natural demonstration of these qualifications in the context of corporate church life.

NOTE: You do not make yourself a deacon. Neither does the Church. The Church must recognize the Deacon that Christ is making you.

IV. THE DEACON AS AN OFFICER: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The Biblical Backdrop: Acts 6:1-7 (I am presupposing that this is the origin of the diaconal office.)

i.e., this is "stage setting" for the "furniture (tables!) of present diaconal service.

1. The diaconate grew up out of the soil of practical necessity in the life of the early Christian church.

Cf. vs. 1a. The Church was growing! cf. Situation in which OT eldership/ judges began, Ex. 18.

2. The terrain was affected, frankly, by some of the most banal, aggravating effects of the curse, vs. 1b.

I.e., This is the real world of church life & diaconal work!

3. The diaconate originated for the purpose of relieving the other group of officers of certain "delegateable" official responsibilities so that what is primary in the church might be maintained, vss. 2.4. cf. "It is not pleasing/desirable". Not: "It is wrong."

NOTE: Never forget the primacy of the ministered Word of God in the Church, cf. Jn. 17:17, Rom. 3:2, 1 Tim. 5:17, 1 Tim. 3:15, 4:6, 11, 13-16, 2 Tim. 1:13ff., 2:15, 3:14-17, 4:1-5, etc.

4. The diaconate was established as an understood, accepted, and well-received outgrowth of orderly congregational life, vss. 3-5.
5. Deacons possessed/possess official authority for service in the Kingdom of God, vss. 3b, 6b

I.e., "appoint over this business" ("kathistemi": seat, authority over; to put in charge) —cf. Matt. 24:45, 47; 25:21, 23, Heb. 2:7, 8:3.

- a. Not to be understood as OVER those primarily vested with authority, i.e., Elders/Bishops.

I.e., This is acknowledged by responsibility of deacons to Session.

- b. Neither to be understood as WITHOUT AUTHORITY to act officially within a given sphere or spheres of responsibility. vs. 3b.
6. Normally the office carries with it divine blessing appropriate to the effects of conscientiously performed diaconal labor, vs. 7. i.e., Growth of word of God & multiplication of disciples. This came because the primacy of the ministry of the word of God was secured. The office of the deacon is a standing testimony to this.

Summary:

1. This does not detract from the general responsibility of every believer to serve. This type of general Christian service is effectively accomplished by making disciples by the Word of God.
2. We are dealing with an office, i.e., one vested with the authority of Christ specifically to exhibit His servanthood in the Church.
3. The diaconate is neither a "sub-pastoral function" nor a service that merely provides care for the needy. It is an office given charge of any temporality which would otherwise be managed by the Elders.

Cf. J. H. Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 201: *"It must be perfectly obvious to every candid mind that the entire secular business of the Church was entrusted to the Deacons; that one specific duty is mentioned, in accordance with the general method of Scripture, as a specimen of a class, and that the reason of the appointment determines the extent of the duty involved"*

—Leon Morris, BAKER'S DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY, *"The function of the deacons may well have been administrative and financial."*

4. The purpose of the diaconate: To preserve the primacy of the Word of God ministered in the Church, and (now) the Elder's work of prayer and the ministry of the Word.

B. The "Tables" of Actual Contemporary Diaconal Work

1. The Table of the Genuinely Needy Among God's People, cf. Coppes, pp 139-154, 105-138.
 - a. Esp. widows & orphans, (cf. Js. 1:27. OT references, e.g., Ex. 22:22, Deut. 10:18), those providentially impoverished (Gal. 2:9f., 2 Cor. 8, 9, etc.), handicapped.
 - b. Not to subsidize luxuries, options, etc.

NOTE: This serves to exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven among Christ's people, i.e., showing a Father who provides our needs (*not* our wants!)

2. The Table of the Church as an Organization.

I.e., "Church": Visible instrument through which the Word of God is spread. Something that, in its entirety, is to be "holy unto the Lord", cf. Zech. 14:20f, 1 Tim. 3:15.

- a. Its physical facilities, cf. 1 Cor. 10:31, etc.
- b. Its relation to State & Society, cf. Matt. 22:21, 2 Cor. 8:21.
- c. Its budget, cf. Biblical principles of liberal frugality and faithful reasonableness.
- d. Its public presentation, cf. 'Man *does* look on the outward appearance" (1 Sam. 16:7)
- e. Its functioning during public meetings for the purpose of stated ministry. e.g., Greeting at door, ushering, preserving order, heating & cooling of building, emergencies, etc.

NOTE: All must work for maximum furthering of Word of God.

3. The Table of the Pastor(s).

- a. Adequate compensation for Minister/ Teaching Elder, and consideration of his legitimate ministerial needs. NOTE: This is best done by asking him, and encouraging openness.
- b. Other "temporalities" delegated to them as necessary, e.g. issues regarding provisions for a minister's housing, provision for his "retirement" (medical insurance, etc.)

NOTE: This mandates close interaction with Elders as fellow officers.

4. The Table of the Lord, i.e., "The Lord's Table."

I.e., This serves to epitomize the official relation of the deacons to the stated ministry of the Word. (This is also true with deacons taking up the offering).

—Summary: The work of "official service".
Representing the "other side" of the Saviour's work
(Matt. 20:28)

—Cf. J. Owen, WORKS, Vol XVI, p. 147: "*Whereas the reason of the institution of this office was, in general, to free the pastors of the churches who labour in the word and doctrine from avocations by outward things, such as wherein the church is concerned, it belongs unto the deacons not only to take care of and provide for the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind; such as are providing for the place of the church-assemblies, of the elements for the sacraments, of collecting, keeping, and disposing of the stock of the church for the maintenance of its officers and incidences, especially in the time of trouble or persecution. Hereon are they obliged to attend the*

elders on all occasions, to perform the duty of the church towards them, and receive directions from them. This was the constant practice of the church in the primitive times, until the avarice and ambition of the superior clergy enclosed all alms and donations unto themselves."

V. THE DEACON: DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, YEARLY

NOTE: You are first a *man*, not first a *deacon*, cf. Acts 6:3. Beware of officiousness/ lordliness.

A. Daily:

1. Give habitual attentiveness to your personal communion with God and growth in grace, e.g., Bible reading, devotional reading, prayer. You must not leave your first love, cf. Rev. 2:4.

NOTE: This is necessary to keep you pliable in the hand of your Master.

2. Cultivate a "diaconal mindedness" before God and your fellow man.

- a. *Before God*: Especially prayer for the church and its members over whom you have specific responsibilities. This brings a reciprocal effect: It encourages your overall diaconal ministry with and to them.

- b. *Before Man*: Sensitivity to human situations. Holy meditation concerning how to deal with them.

NOTE: Seek, under Christ, to be a master of the "How", e.g., Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:25-37.

—Summary: Your "daily distribution", cf. Acts 6:1, must be as constantly in mind as is the ministry of the Word. Carry it about as a burden of your heart.

B. Weekly: Your involvement in regular congregational life.

1. Lord's Day meetings: The most heightened and obvious manifestation of diaconal ministry, because this time is the most heightened and obvious manifestation of the ministry of the Word.

- a. *Before Worship*: Lighting, heating, cooling, sound system, setting up for Lord's Supper and/ or baptism, general appearance of the building, ushering, urging silence before worship, etc.

- b. *During Worship*. Offering, being prepared for emergencies, knowing how to deal with any disruptions that may come, e.g., crying babies. Nursery. Heating & cooling, etc.

- c. *Following Worship*: Counting offering and being sure it gets to Treasurer, lighting off, general tidiness, locking doors, etc.

NOTE: Never forget role and authority of the deacon, particularly at this time.

2. The Prayer Meeting:

- a. Be sensitive to expressions of personal and congregational concerns bearing on the work of the deacons, e.g., illnesses, financial difficulties, etc.
- b. Be sensitive to expressions of possible diaconal matters beyond the local level, e.g., Ministers in distress, etc.

3. Periodic Evening Labors, e.g., Committee meetings, visits to needy, hospital visits, work at building.

4. Other Worthwhile Projects.

- a. Be careful not to over-extend yourself. Keep priorities of service: Family, Church, Other projects.
- b. Give continual consideration of your gifts and present needs. Seek your greatest usefulness, cf. Matt. 25:14-30. E.g., Service on Presbytery & GA level.

C. Monthly:

1. Attend the Board of Deacon's meeting, and come prepared for what is to be done.
 - a. Importance of minutes properly taken and recorded.
 - b. Importance of a docket/agenda, possibly presented in advance on paper. Keep this standard, but functional, cf. Robert's Rules of Order re. Agendas for business meetings.
 - c. Importance of motions, thorough discussion, consensus/ vote, carrying through on decisions made.
 - d. Wisdom of taking your time! cf. Prov. 19:2, "It is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, and he sins who hastens with his feet."
2. Never be reluctant to consult with the Session: Free, regular communications with Elders, cf. Like communication between husband and wife regarding their children! cf. FG, OPC, XI:5. OPC Franklin Square Deacon's Manual, pp 7,8.
3. Do not permit material concerns to gradually eliminate personal concerns.
 - a. Purpose of diaconal work: Relieve elders. Focus is on *personal* provisions.
 - b. Suggestions: Ask elders: "How can we be of help?" Give them time to consider and answer. Be sensitive to needs beyond the local level, cf. 2 Cor. 8,9, esp. 8:14.
4. Allow no tolerance for questionable, dishonest, or sloppy financial and legal practices. e.g., financial reports, payment of bills, complying with codes, etc. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:21.

5. Remember: You have an increasingly committed congregation with which to work.
 - a. Make mental and/or written notes of needs, gifts, people. Link them up! Do assessments. Develop and use committees as necessary, e.g., committee to work particularly with the elderly.
 - b. Never forget: "Church" is people not programs!
6. An increasingly prominent project: Information to encourage liberality by the congregation.

E.g., Report on Lord's Supper Sundays, Bulletin announcements/ inserts, prayer meeting, newsletter, etc.

I.e., Work to see the spirit of 2 Cor. 8, 9 increasingly present in the congregation.

D. Yearly:

1. Review Form of Government, church By-Laws, Deacon's Manual, Training Class notes, other relevant materials. i.e., A stirred pool cannot grow stagnant and usually will not get polluted!

NOTE: Share what you read & learn. Practice diaconal cross-pollenization.
2. Importance of self-assessment, goal-setting, and planning.
 - a. *Self-assessment*: Regarding your past performance individually as a deacon and corporately as a board.
 - b. *Goal-setting*: 1 yr. 3 yr. 5 yr. 10 yr. esp. re. temporal concerns, e.g., building improvements. e.g., Work days, capitol improvements, major renovations, manse improvements, etc. Be sure to include planning, i.e., 'How do we get there from here?' Use committees where that is necessary, appropriate, and helpful.
3. Be wisely frank with congregational reports.
4. Elect officers, e.g., President, Secretary, Treasurer. Be clear as to their responsibilities (These should be presented in church by-laws.)

Some Personal Questions for Those Men Considering the Office of Deacon

(Based on material in Acts 6:3 & 1 Timothy 3:8-13)

1. Do I regard myself as have a good testimony as a Christian, a Christian husband, a Christian father, a Christian church member, a Christian worker, and a Christian neighbor?
2. Do I manifest the marks of godliness that are an evidence of being "full of the Holy Spirit"? Is "reverence" a primary mark of my character?
3. Do I possess the sanctified "horse sense" to apply my Christian faith to day-by-day matters

of problem solving, stewardship, and interpersonal relations?

4. When I make a promise, do I keep it? Am I able to keep personal matters in confidence? Is my wife able to do the same?

5. Am I given to excess in any area of life? E.g., alcohol, spending, television or computer use, etc?

6. Am I a "lover of money", or do I use my earthly possessions as a steward so that I might honor God and serve others generously?

7. Do I have a pure conscience before God?

8. When I am given a task, do I fulfill the work to the best of my ability? Do I enjoy serving others? Am I willing to take on necessary tasks that I even regard as unpleasant?

9. Does my wife have a good Christian testimony, i.e., Is my wife known for her reverence, careful speech, moderation, and faithfulness in all things?

10. Am I marked by absolute loyalty to my wife, so that I can honestly say I am a "one wife husband"? Am I a *good* husband to my wife?

11. Do I rule my children and my house well? Do I take the necessary time and make the necessary decisions and actions to do so?

12. Am I willing to take and make the necessary time to serve conscientiously as a deacon?

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