

Deacon's Manual

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I. INTRODUCTION

Definition Of Deacon

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Helen Keller

The question is often asked, what is a deacon? Another is, what can a deacon do? The word “deacon” describes an officer in a local church. It is derived from a Greek word meaning “servant” or “minister.”¹ The Bible employs the word “deacon” about thirty times. Each time the word occurs, it means a servant.² The word, in general, denotes service or ministry (Mark 10:43–45 [Jesus]; Acts 1:17, 25 [apostles]; Rom 11:13 [Paul]), and was applied to local Christian leaders, possibly as an official title (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12–13). In Romans 13:4 the word is applied to secular rulers.³ Hence, the term “deacon” is used for the office itself or for the collective body of deacons and deaconesses. As with many other biblical words used today in a technical sense, the words “deacon” and “deaconess” began as popular, nontechnical terms. Both in secular first-century Greek culture and in the NT they described a variety of services.

The biblical role of the deacon has been the subject of a long and a continued discussion. We should look, not at what history or denominations have said, but rather at what the Bible says about the word “deacon,” its function and qualifications, and the selection of deacons in the local NT church.⁴

The Origin of the Word

The word “deacon,” when related to the Bible, is best defined as “servant or waiter”⁴ “steward,” or “messenger.”⁵ The word is an “Anglicized form of the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning a “runner,” “messenger,” or “servant.”⁶ In at least two instances, the word indicated a baker and a cook.⁷ In religious usage, the word described various attendants in pagan temples. Ancient documents show “deacons” presiding

at the dedication of a statue to the Greek god Hermes. Egyptian deities, such as Sarapis and Sarapion, and the demotic text mention a deacon that suggests a hierarchy.⁸ Also, Serapis and Isis, Egyptian deities, were served by a college of “deacons” presided over by a priest.⁹

Its plural form is a deaconess, and the Greek is “*δίακονος*,” (*diakonos*)¹⁰ and its cognates occurs many times in NT, as do its synonyms [*ὑπηρέτης*, *huperetes*], and [*δουλος*, *doulos*], with their respective cognates. It may be said in general that the terms denote the service or ministration of the bondservant (*doulos*), underling (*huperetes*), or helper (*diakonos*),¹¹ in all shades and gradations of meaning both literal and metaphorical. The imagery of waiting at the table indicates that the office of the deacon is rooted in service, which is rendered to another. Service is an ideal throughout the Gospels. For instance, the teachings of Jesus (Mark 9:35; Matt 20:26; 23:11; John 12:26)¹² serve as a model for servanthood.

With this in mind, Christianity has from the beginning stood for filial service to God and His kingdom and for brotherly helpfulness to man, and hence, terms expressive of these functions abound in the NT. It behooves us to inquire whether and where they occur in a technical sense sufficiently defined to represent the institution of a special ecclesiastical office, from which the historical diaconate may confidently be said to be derived¹³ along with their cognates.¹⁴ That is to say, a deacon (or deaconess) “is a person in charge with the temporal affairs of the local congregation.”¹⁵ A very responsible chosen deacon is a blessing rendered to his local church. His servant leadership includes the practical and temporal affairs of the local church.

As stated above, the word “*diakonos*” or servant is used in John 2:5 to refer to “house-servants.” The habits of present day Oriental life make it extremely probable that the

¹Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 589.

²Bennier R. Crockett, Jr., “deacon,” in Mercer Dictionary of the Bible, ed. Watson E. Mills, Roger Aubrey Bullard (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 200.

³Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, Rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 2: 52.

⁴Bishop Robert Nichols, This Business: The Office of the Deacon (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2010), 5.

⁵Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 589.

⁶M. G. Easton, Easton's Bible Dictionary (EBD) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c 1897), s.v. “deacon.”

⁷Elwell Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 589.

⁸Anna Lucille Boozer, Amheida II: A Late Romano-Egyptian House in Dakleh Oasis: Amheida House B2 (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2015), 194.

⁹Donald F. Thomas, The deacon in a changing church (Pennsylvania, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 14.

¹⁰William Smith, Smith's Bible Dictionary (SBD) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), s.v. “deacon.”

¹¹James Orr, ed., The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999), s.v. “deacon.”

¹²Thomas B Dozeman, Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 116.

¹³James Orr, ed., The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999), s.v. “deacon.”

¹⁴W. A. Heidel, “deacon,” in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), Rev. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 1:880.

¹⁵Nichols, This Business: The Office of the Deacon, 5.

disciples of Jesus were themselves taking the place of those who graciously waited upon the guests.¹ In the context of John 2:5, “the servants apparently looked to Mary as the one responsible for providing more wine, for even “the ruler of the feast” did not yet know of the lack.”² Nevertheless, her next statement to the servants provides a perspective that would enable us to answer a qualified yes to that question. She told the servants, “Do whatever *he* tells you!” (2:5). The point of the story here is that the person in charge is no longer Jesus’ mother. Indeed, readers should notice that his mother completely fades out of the story from this point on. She has served the evangelist’s purpose of moving the focus to Jesus. The point of the story is not to focus on the mother.³

II. WOMEN AS DEACONESSES

Where did women fit into the ministry of the early church? Paul’s inclusion of references to women in ministry is striking when compared with the role of women in general in the first century. He commended Phoebe for her service in the church at Cenchreae, using the word “deacon” to describe her (Rom 16:1). He praised her as a “helper” (Rom 16:2), a word that denotes leadership qualities (cf. Rom 12:8; 1 Tm 3:4, 5). Some scholars have used that reference as an example of the early development of the office of deaconess. Others have interpreted it in a nontechnical sense, meaning that Phoebe functioned in a general role of service and thus was worthy of recognition at Rome. Whether “deacon” was used technically or descriptively, ministry for both women and men in the NT was patterned after the example of Jesus, who “came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Because of the large number of female converts (Acts 5:14; 17:4), women functioned in such areas of ministry as visitation, instruction in discipleship, and assistance in baptism. Deaconesses are mentioned in third-century documents as administering baptism to female converts.

Considering the rigid separation of the sexes in the Near East at that time, female participation in church ministry stands out in bold relief. A governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger (d. 113?), in his *Correspondence with Trajan* verified women officeholders in the church. Pliny also mentioned two deaconesses who were martyred for the cause of Christ.⁴

The Ministerial Association, in connection with the departments, promotes the training and equipping of deaconesses. However the pastor, in conjunction with the elder(s), have the primary responsibility for training the

deaconesses.⁵ Associated with a female name, this has led to the conclusion that there existed in the apostolic age, as there undoubtedly did a little later, an order of women bearing that title and exercising, in relation to their own gender, functions that were analogous to those of the deacons. On this hypothesis, it has been inferred that the women mentioned in Romans 16:6, 12 belonged to such an order. The rules given as to the conduct of women in 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3, have in like manner been referred to them, and they have been identified even with the “widows” of 1 Timothy 5:3-10.⁶

III. GENERAL USE OF DEACONS

In general, the word “deacon” and “deacons” signify the service of “slaves, underlings, and helpers.”⁷ Biblical writers in a general sense, in order to describe various ministries or services, used the same word. Not until later in the development of the apostolic church was the term applied to a distinct body of church officers. Among its general usages, “deacon” refers to a waiter at meals (John 2:5, 9); a king’s attendant (Matt 22:13); a servant of Satan (2 Cor 11:15); a servant of God (2 Cor 6:4); a servant of Christ (2 Cor 11:23); a servant of the church (Col 1:24, 25); and a political ruler (Rom 13:4).⁸

Selection of Deacons

There are various ways by which a church can select its deacons. It is a sacred responsibility and the church should take great care in the selection of deacons. Careful consideration should place only well-qualified men in that important office. A serious effort should be made to magnify the office through prayer. The selection of the deacon should not be done to magnify the person who is chosen, but rather God who is behind the calling.⁹ It is an office of service. Persons who cannot and will not serve are out of place when occupying the office of the deacon. Therefore, four possible methods are noted below, although some churches may discover other methods that, for themselves, meet with success.

First Method

The first method is called the “*principle of selection*,” which involves an earnest prayer that the right person may be chosen to the sacred office. Such a method is exemplified in the early church. Acts 1:24 records that when the early church needed a successor to Judas, the church “prayed, and said, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, she whether of these two thou hast chosen.” Paul and Barnabas were sent forth as missionaries as the church at Antioch “ministered to the Lord, and fasted” (Acts 13:2). When the seven men were chosen to minister to the neglected

¹H. D. M. Spence, “1 Timothy,” *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004), 82.

²“Servants” [John 2:5], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 5:922.

³Gerald L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001, c 1996), 25:156.

⁴Manfred T. Brauch, “Deacon,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Map on Lining Papers, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 590.

⁵Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 80.

⁶William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), s.v. “deacon.”

⁷Walter M. Dunnnett, and Alan F. Johnson, *ISBE*, 1:88.

⁸Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 589.

⁹J. D. O’Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1973), 33.

widows, we are told, “when they had *prayed*, they laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:6). The deacon board, the entire church, and all individuals in the church should pray earnestly when deacons are to be chosen, that God’s men will be selected.

Second Method

The most common method of choosing deacons is for the church to select a nominating committee which will submit the names of nominees for church action. Before the selection of any person for any office in the church, much thought, investigation, and prayer are required, but for the office of deacon, it is doubly important that this be done. In some churches, the board of deacons, through its representative on the nominating committee, suggests the names of the persons whose qualifications are such as to justify consideration. Nomination by a nominating committee followed by election by the church affords the opportunity to select those who are best qualified for this important post.

Third Method

A third method of obtaining deacons is that of inviting nominations from the floor at a church business meeting, without previous preparation. There are hazards in this method that may prevent the church from securing the best-qualified individuals for the office. It is conceivable that names could be put before the congregation as a reward for long membership, as a token of friendships, or for some selfish motive. Moreover, when more than one person is proposed for an office in an open business meeting, the loser is usually embarrassed and sometimes this leads to bad feelings.

Fourth Method

A fourth method sometimes practiced gives the board of deacons the responsibility of presenting the names of nominees directly to the church for action. The advantage of this procedure is that the deacons themselves are in the best position to determine the kind of person who is needed to fulfill the duties of the office. However, this method may leave the board of deacons vulnerable to a charge of self-perpetuation. Whether such a charge was later proved valid or invalid, the result would be an unwelcome bad feeling in the church.

In making the selection of deacons, certain practical considerations should be kept in mind. It is advisable that deacons have no other major office or responsibility. Because of the wide scope of deacons’ responsibilities, consideration might be given to selecting those who have specialized qualifications or skilled to perform special tasks. The church’s bylaws should clearly specify the method of selecting deacons.¹⁰ The Seventh-day Adventist church combines the first and the second methods of selecting deacons. These

¹⁰Harold Nichols, *The Work of the Deacon & Deaconess* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2014), 34-36.

methods have proven to be the most ideal and effective way of choosing deacons.

Number of Deacons

Many people see the selection of seven deacons in the early church (see Acts 6) at Jerusalem “as constituting the first board of deacons.”¹¹ On one hand, there are churches that maintain exactly seven deacons and hold that any other number is not biblical. In other words, many churches probably took the appointing of “the Jerusalem seven” as a pattern to follow, some even adopting the number seven. In a letter to the third-century pope Cornelius; for example, the Church of Rome was said to have maintained seven for the number of deacons.¹² On the other hand, such a view ignores the tremendous growth of the church and the changes that have occurred since that phase of history. In small churches, seven deacons are seen as too many; in many medium-sized and all large churches, a restriction to seven would seriously handicap the work.

In a large church however, the best and most logical method to “determine the number of deacons in a church is to decide how many members or families a deacon would serve.”¹³ Once the number of families has been decided, then choosing the number of deacons to serve the local church would be easy to provide to a nominating committee. Whatever the plan or organization may be, each local church should determine how many deacons are required to meet its needs. Deacons should be enough so that each one can do an effective *ministry*. The number of deacons should be specified during the nominating committee meeting and afterward approved at a church business meeting. Regardless of the number of deacons required for each local congregation, the “appointment of deacons through election brings similar blessings in church administration by relieving pastors, elders, and other officers of duties that deacons may perform well.”¹⁴ Ellen G. White supports this view:

The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in leading positions of responsibility in the church should be spent in dealing with the weightier matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart. It is not in the order of God that such men should be appealed to for the adjustment of minor matters that others are well qualified to handle.¹⁵

The responsibilities of deacons are great! In the above quotation, White makes an application of what Jethro

¹¹Nichols, *The Work of the Deacon & Deaconess*, 33.

¹²Brauch, “Deacon,” 590.

¹³Nichols, *The Work of the Deacon & Deaconess*, 33. Nichols suggests that providing each deacon with ten families would be sufficient enough or as he states, “for every fifty members with a minimum of three deacons,” (Nichols, *The Work of the Deacon & Deaconess*, 33).

¹⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 78.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 93.

proposed to Moses as he counseled him [Moses] to plan for a wise distribution of responsibilities or *a division of responsibility*. This, in turn, relieved Moses of the “wearing responsibility of giving consideration to many minor matters that could be dealt with wisely by consecrated helpers.”¹⁶ Likewise, those whom the church appoints, in this case the office of the deacon, should weigh matters seriously. They have been chosen to serve a weightier ministry which demands special wisdom and caring hearts. In harmony with this counsel, the church officers are carrying a great ministry and deacons are no exception in this matter.

Ordination of Deacons

The concept of ordination was so prominent that by the “late Middle Ages, being a deacon had become a step on the way of being ordained as a priest, that is, an elder.”¹⁷ The apostles in the NT indicated deacons should preach the Gospel and, when they were ordained, “the bishop placed a stole on his left shoulder and gave him the text of the Gospels to designate him a herald of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.”¹⁸ Nowadays, newly elected deacons cannot fill their office until an ordained pastor currently credentialed by the field/conference has ordained them. That is to say, local church members select the deacon and commission him to serve *subject* to laying on of hands¹⁹ (see Acts 6:1-6). In agreement with that, “the sacred rite of ordination should be characterized by simplicity and performed in the presence of the church.”²⁰ Don F. Neufeld confirms:

The deacon is elected to office by the church for a term of one year, and must be reelected if he is to continue in office. He must be ordained to his office by an ordained minister holding credentials from the conference. A deacon once ordained need not be reordained upon

reelection, provided he has maintained his church membership. If one who has been ordained as an elder is elected as deacon, he need not be ordained as a deacon, for his ordination in the one office qualifies him to function in the other as well. In a large church a board of deacons is organized, which is presided over by a head deacon.²¹

The deacon is chosen by the local congregation to serve for a period of one year. His office is subject to reelection by the end of that year. The local church must set a time for the ordination of deacons and deaconesses. Their effective service in the church is subject to ordination. In other words, deacons and deaconesses cannot function without being ordained. This ordination of deacons is done once in the life of the person. There is no need to re-ordain the person upon re-election as long as the individual has maintained his church membership. On that premises, “*once ordained a deacon always a deacon.*” In bigger congregations, a board of elected deacons is chosen to serve the church. The head deacon chairs this group of deacons and another deacon is chosen as a secretary.

IV. OFFICE OF THE DEACON

The purpose of choosing a deacon is to serve the local congregation with a very caring ministry. The deacon is to do the work of benevolence, visiting the sick and being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation.²² Some congregations specify a limited term of office for deacons but habitually reelect those whose terms expires. This is almost the same as having life deacons. Many churches have discovered that a rotation of the personnel on the church board is the most workable plan. In bigger congregations,²³ a term of office for a deacon is good for two years and the deacons are elected once every two years. The deacons’ office is thus subject to reelection once the two years have elapsed.

Origin of the Office of the Deacon

There is little question that before the end of the first century the general term for service or ministry became a kind of title for a position or office in the church. That development evidently went through several stages.

Some biblical scholars emphasize a relationship between the *hazzan* of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian office of deacon. The *hazzan* opened and closed the synagogue doors, kept it clean, and handed out the books for reading. It was to such a person that Jesus handed the scroll of Isaiah after finishing his reading (Luke 4:20).

¹⁶White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 92. Once I was talking to a young man who had been coming to the Church to get away from the problems of his own congregation. I asked him how things were going, and he told me that although there were a number of difficulties the chief problem was that his minister thought he had to do everything—preach, make decisions, evangelize, and so on. Moreover, what he decided was always what was done. He was unable to listen to anybody else about anything. I do not know whether that was actually true of this minister, but it is true of many ministers and congregations. A situation like that denies the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the whole body of Christ. It unduly exalts the minister, demeans the other members of the church, and impoverishes the body.

¹⁷Andrew Davis, Mark Dever, Benjamin L. Merkle, “Elders and Deacons” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark Dever, Jonathan Leeman (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2015), 230.

¹⁸Carolyn Marino Malone, *Facade as Spectacle: Ritual and Ideology at Wells Cathedral* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 146.

¹⁹Laying on of hands means ordination. Ordination is thus “the act by which the church sets apart an individual for a special function in the church by prayer and the laying on of hands. Three categories of church workers are ordained—ministers, church elders, and deacon.” See Don F. Neufeld, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (SDAE). 2nd rev. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), s.v. “ordination.”

²⁰General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 78. Elected elders need not be ordained as deacons because ordination as an elder covers this office.

²¹Neufeld, SDAE, “Ordination.”

²²Nichols, *This Business: The Office of the Deacon*, 5.

²³Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), Lalaan 1, Silang, Cavite elects church officers good for a period of two years instead of one year. Similarly, Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP), Silang, Cavite, follows the same pattern of choosing church officers each two years. The office of the deacon falls into this category.

Other NT scholars give considerable attention to the choosing of the seven (Acts 6:1–6); they see that action as a historical forerunner of a more developed structure (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–13; the two specific references to an “office” of deacon). Luke devoted considerable attention in Acts to the selection of a new set of church leaders. Overworked with a variety of responsibilities, the 12 apostles proposed a division of labor to ensure care for the Hellenist (Greek-speaking) widows in the church’s daily distribution of food and alms. “Seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3) subsequently became prominent in the Jerusalem congregation, doing works of charity and caring for physical needs.

Some scholars caution that the diaconate should not be exclusively linked to charitable works, since the Greek word used in Acts 6:2 is related to the word translated “ministry of the word” in verse 4. Those chosen to oversee the care for physical needs were people of spiritual stature. Stephen, for instance, “full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs” (Acts 6:8). Philip, appointed as one of the seven in Acts 6, “preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Philip also baptized (Acts 8:38) and is referred to as an evangelist (Acts 21:8).

Position of the Office of the Deacon

The position of the office of the deacon existed in the church for a specific purpose. The position of the office of the deacon refers to the apostles in 2 Cor 6:4;²⁴ to preachers in 1 Tim 4:6;²⁵ to government officials in Rom 13:14;²⁶ and all

²⁴Paul here speaks of his own service as an ambassador for Christ. He had suffered, labored, studied, and ministered the Word so as to avoid giving any occasion for offense (1 Cor 8:13; 10:32, 33; Phil 2:15; 1 Thess 2:10; 5:22; cf. 10:16). “Ministry” [2 Cor 6:3], SDABC, 6:873. As a servant of God, Paul with his co-workers is commending himself in regard to not his person but his ministry. Hence, there is no incongruity between his earlier comments on recommending himself (see 3:1–3; 5:12), for he never stresses himself but always his ministry. Paul risked everything to serve his God, and God supplied him in his needs during all the adversities he encountered. Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1953-2001), 19:214.

²⁵Men frequently aim at something else than to approve themselves to Christ; and consequently, many are desirous of being applauded for genius, eloquence, and profound knowledge. And that is the very reason why they pay less attention to necessary things, which do not tend to procure the admiration of the common people. But Paul enjoins Timothy to be satisfied with this alone, to be a faithful minister of Christ. And certainly, we ought to look on this as a far more honorable title than to be a thousand times called seraphic and subtle doctors. Let us, therefore, remember, that as it is the highest honor of a godly pastor to be reckoned a good servant of Christ, so he ought to aim at nothing else during his whole ministry; for whoever has any other object in view, will have it in his power to obtain applause from men, but will not please God. Accordingly, that we may not be deprived of so great a blessing, let us learn to seek nothing else, and to account nothing so valuable, and to treat everything as worthless in comparison of this single object. John Calvin, *1 Timothy: Calvin’s Commentaries* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), 1 Tim 4:6.

²⁶In respect to this, Christians were to be a separate people, and to show that they were influenced by a higher and purer desire than this grovelling propensity to minister to sensual gratification. It is right, it is a Christian duty,

Christians in Matt 23:11.²⁷ However, the term is used to spell out certain qualifications for this office, such as Phil 1:1 that distinguishes deacons from bishops and saints. Thus, the office is distinguished by the authority they have in a special area of service.

Purpose of the Office of the Deacon

The Bible gives a clear account and purpose of the office of deacon and nowhere else is this purpose repealed or challenged:

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of *food*.² And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”³ But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. (Acts 6:1-3 NAS).

This passage in Acts tells us the origin and purpose of the office of the deacon. Although this fact is not specifically stated in the passage, the spiritual qualities for these men and tradition all seem to suggest that this was the case. The word disciple is used here for the first time for Christians in the book of Acts. The disciples of the Gospels have become apostles and the term “disciples” has passed to the ordinary believer.²⁸ As the leaders of the community, the apostles proposed that the members choose seven men from among them to administer charity to the Hellenist widows.

Their purpose was to look after the affairs of the church. One would assume that the seven would take over the administration of charity among the Hellenist Christians and the apostles would continue to do so among the others.²⁹ The Christian diaconate thus contrasted sharply with the prevailing Greek thought of service, which was considered unworthy of the dignity of free men. (The Greek philosopher Plato wrote, “How can man be happy when he has to serve someone?”)³⁰

The primary purpose of this plan is to maintain close contact with all the resident members of the church. This type

to labour to make provision for all the real wants of life. But the real wants are few; and with a heart disposed to be pure and temperate, the necessary wants of life are easily satisfied; and the mind may be devoted to higher and purer purposes. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Romans*, ed. Robert Frew (London, UK: Blackie & Son, 1884-1885), 295.

²⁷Matthew sharpens the idea of equality and solidarity. To be brothers and sisters means renouncing one’s own prestige and the desire to get one’s own way. It means living positively for the community. With the words of the text it means service for which the one Master sets the standard with his life and death (20:28). Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester, *A Commentary, Translation of: Das Evangelium Nach Matthaus* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 107.

²⁸“Ministration” [Acts 6:2], SDABC, 6:188.

²⁹John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001, c1992), 26:181.

³⁰Brauch, “Deacon,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 590.

of ministry will help deacons discover whether or not all the members for whom they are responsible are regularly attending the services. Such information may be gained from the services. Moreover, if the church makes a record of attendance, the deacons should check records in the church office occasionally to verify their impression of which members have been absent, so that none may be overlooked.

Establishment of the Office of the Deacon

The office was established to free the apostles who performed the responsibility as the first pastors and prayed and delivered the Word of God to various multitudes. The apostles, in dealing with the benevolence ministry problem at the Jerusalem church, told the congregation, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables." But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," (Acts 6:2-4 NAS).³¹

The word translated task, duty, or business, is *χρεία* (*chreia*)³² in Greek. The word is misunderstood when it is interpreted to mean that the duty of the deacon is to oversee the direction and the business of the church. Such a business should be carefully viewed to ensure the proper application is achieved. The Greek does not have the definite article "the," instead, the word reads, "this business" not "the business." The business or task the writer may be referring to is "the business of benevolence."³³ It may be as Christopher James Davis suggests, the "business of distributing"³⁴ money among the poor saints. W. E. Vine concurs that the business is a reference to the "distribution of funds, signifies 'a necessity, a need,' and is used in this place concerning duty or business."³⁵ The men selected were known as deacons. The lesson to be learned from this is that the leaders and the people should unite in planning and providing for the necessary organization and officering of the church accordingly.

V. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

Preliminary Stage. As the church grew by the end of the first century, three offices were mentioned. These are: (i) The office of the bishop; (ii) The office of the elder; and (iii) The office of the deacon. At that time, the office of the deacon was considered the lowest in rank.³⁶ In time, inequality between the cleric and the laity grew. Such a perception brought challenges upon the church. When this distinction

began to take root, a hierarchical framework developed in the church. As a result, the clergy dominated the church and bishops dominated large congregations. This, in turn, led to bishops growing in power, and ultimately the papal ecclesiastical structure developed. Deacons assisted them, especially in social services and pastoral care.

Middle Ages. Associated with the "functions of deacons in the early church, the role of deacons suffered a major decline in the years 500-1500."³⁷ The "decline of the diaconate" was a title given by T. G. Jalland.³⁸ According to Jalland, the decline of the deacon's office took place when it was equated with that of the episcopate. Such a competitive spirit led to the decline of the office of the diaconate. In addition, it declined due to the fact that deacons "increased in number and [were reduced to] subordination to the presbyterate, [so] deacons became a third order."³⁹ The servant function that characterized the deacon's ministry in the early church fell into disfavor.

Deweese gives the factors which account for this decline: (i) A key reason for the decline is the Easter Church was an increased emphasis on the liturgical (worship) tasks of deacons; (ii) in the Western Church in the fourth century, a basic reason for the decline was the rise of the view of the ministry as a course of honors; and (iii) a further factor that led to the decline in the West was the restricting of deacons to just seven. In the meantime, the multiplications of deacons in the East worked to their detriment. The office of deacon in the Middle Ages was characterized by the abandonment of the ministry of service in favor of a political climb up the bureaucracy of the clergy.⁴⁰

Reformation Era. During the Reformation era, the concept of a deacon varied from one group to the other. The Reformation saw a huge difference between the ceremonial or political diaconate of the sixteenth century and that which they found in the NT. In the Roman Catholic system, the deacon is an assistant at the altar. He is counted as a member of the priesthood. The deacon performs certain ritualistic tasks such as reading the Scriptures and assisting the priest. On the other hand, he does not have the power to consecrate the sacramental elements. Neither can he pronounce absolution.⁴¹

³¹John F. MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2008), 234.

³²Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim, CA: Foundation 1998, 1981), "χρεία."

³³Nichols, *This Business: The Office of the Deacon*, 8.

³⁴Christopher James Davis, *Collection of Writings from Doctor Christopher James Davis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Irving Risch, 2016), 321.

³⁵W. E. Vine W. E., *Vine's New Testament Word Pictures: Matthew to Acts* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 831.

³⁶O'Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons*, 13.

³⁷Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979), 16.

³⁸T. G. Jalland, "The Doctrine of the Parity of Ministers" in *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy*, ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), 347-49. Roger Edward Reynolds, *Clerical Orders in the Early Middle Ages: Duties and Ordination* (London, UK: Ashgate, 1999), 16.

³⁹James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order* (Pennsylvania, PA: A&C Black, 1995), 104. Presbyterate, its origin of late 16th cent.: via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek *presbuteros* 'elder' (used in the NT to denote an elder of the early church), comparative of *presbus* 'old (man).'

⁴⁰Kate Ward-Turner, *Deacon Training: A Two-party Study Guide, a Self-study Plan and a Pastor-Directed Plan* (New York, NY: iUnivers, 2008), 56.

⁴¹O'Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons*, 14.

There was a great move from that of the medieval emphasis on the liturgical function of the deacon. Martin Luther in 1520 said, “the deaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of the distributing the church’s aid to the poor.”⁴² John Calvin concurred with Luther’s view regarding the role of the deacon. Thus, he writes, “scripture especially designates alms and taking care of the poor, and serves as stewards of the common chest of the poor.... Here then is the kind of deacons the apostolic church had, and which we, after their example, should have.”⁴³

Congregational Church. In the congregational setting, the office of the deacon has been seen to restore its initial notion as mandated by the NT. Neither the deacon nor the pastor has ecclesiastical authority. The effort is always to teach the idea of the priesthood of all believers (see 1 Pet 2:5). The authority is personal and not ecclesiastical. The authority a deacon may have is based upon his personal character and influence. Just as the pastor, so the deacon is a personal leader at work for the Lord. O’Donnell puts it well, “it is through the lowliness of service that the deacon is to rise to influence the church.”⁴⁴ Hence, the deacon is faithful to perform the task given to him by the church and humbly serve in the capacity to which he has been elected.

Later Developments. As the office of deacon became more firmly established, its duties could be defined as those of pastoral care. The poor and the sick received their service, not only physically but also with instruction and consolation. The homes of church members became familiar territory to a deacon or deaconess. A pattern of visitation was established to discover and then meet the needs of the church body at large. Although that included the administration of funds, it went far beyond it. Those who served as deacons and deaconesses undoubtedly became symbols of loving care for the church in general. Where the office of deacon fits into the larger pattern of church order within the NT is difficult to determine because of the obvious variety present during the formative years.

Seventh-day Adventists. The first reference to deacons in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is probably the mention of a committee of seven chosen in Washington, New Hampshire, in 1851 “to attend to the wants of the poor.”⁴⁵ In 1853 the *Review and Herald* mentions two men, one in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, and the other in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, who were named deacons to administer the ordinances during the absence of a minister. These were approved by a full assembly of the churches and set apart by Frederick Wheeler by prayer and the laying on of hands.⁴⁶ Similarly, the next year *Charles Glover* was chosen and set apart as a deacon in Sylvan, Michigan, and *Cyrenius Smith* in

Jackson, Michigan. Apparently, each church had only one officer, a deacon.

At first the office of deacon in the SDA Church seems to have combined the functions of deacon and elder. It was some time later that elders were appointed to carry the responsibilities outlined in Scripture, and deacons were assigned specifically to the temporal affairs of the churches.

It is generally thought that the incident mentioned in Acts 6:1–6 is a record of the origin of the office of a deacon in the Christian church. However, the seven men set apart are not called deacons; nevertheless, their duties and responsibilities corresponded closely to those of the deacons whose qualifications Paul enumerated in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. The NT shows that the office of a deacon implied more than caring for the material needs of the church.⁴⁷

VI. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DEACONS

The qualifications of deacons are essential to choosing perfect men to serve in that office. No man elected to the office of the deacon will possess all Biblical qualifications in perfection. On the other hand, each man elected should be a man of potential, who is yielding himself to growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. There are specific ‘coessential characteristics’ and ‘biblical qualifications’ in one chosen for the office of the deacon. The essential characteristics are: (i) of honest report; (ii) full of the Holy Spirit; (iii) full of wisdom; and (iv) full of faith. The biblical qualifications are: (i) grave; (ii) not double-tongued; (iii) not given to much wine; (iv) not greedy of filthy lucre; (v) a strong spiritual life; and (vi) proved.

Essential Characteristics

Of Honest Report. Literally, “attested,” or “having witness borne them,” that is, well reported among their fellows (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10).⁴⁸ The word is rendered “of good report” in Acts 10:22. They must be men of honesty and efficiency and acceptable to their fellows. The primary business of these men is to supervise the material issues of the church. Immediately, the charitable work is placed in their hands. It is necessary that they command the complete confidence of the people in the church and of the ones to whom they are to minister. Their good personalities certified by public testimony are essential to the proper accomplishment of their task. The apostles thus trusted the Holy Spirit to give the congregation collectively the wisdom needed.⁴⁹

Full of the Holy Spirit. One essential qualification of a deacon is to remember that *all church work is spiritual*. Nothing is secular in God’s work. Accordingly, the deacons must be men *full of the Holy Spirit*. It is noteworthy to realize

⁴²Ward-Turner, Deacon Training, 56.

⁴³Ward-Turner, Deacon Training, 56.

⁴⁴O’Donnell, Handbook for Deacons, 14.

⁴⁵Review and Herald 2:52, Nov. 25, 1851.

⁴⁶Review and Herald 4:199, Dec. 27, 1853.

⁴⁷Neufeld, SDAE, s. v. “deacon.”

⁴⁸“Of honest report” [Acts 6:3], SDABC, 6:189.

⁴⁹Stanley M. Horton, Acts: A Logion Press Commentary (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2001), 135.

that the general term “full of + genitive of quality is usually used to denote a long-term state of affairs, rather than an immediate effect.”⁵⁰ In relation to Acts 6:3, the Greek word for “full” is *πλήρης* (*plērēs*);⁵¹ the word comes from *πλήθω* (*plēthō*) (to be full) and has a full range of meanings: (i) abounding, (ii) covered, (iii) filled, (iv) full, and (v) mature. The phrase, “full of the Holy Spirit” is unique to Luke. It appears only once in the Bible, that is in Acts 6:3. “It was most important that for this first expansion in the organization of the church beyond the apostolate, the right men should be chosen.”⁵² Hence, the word means, “full, covered in every part, thoroughly permeated with, complete, lacking in nothing.”⁵³ Further, the word means “‘need, want, ... poverty,’ but also ‘business, employment, function.’”⁵⁴ To be full of the Holy spirit means that a life is thoroughly permeated with the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The idea speaks of complete dedication and wholehearted devotion to spiritual things. Next to a good reputation, each was expected to have the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, the apostles conceived of the Spirit’s working as being wider than simply the gift of prophecy and of tongues. It is written that God is full of mercy (Jam 3:17); and the Lord is “full of compassion” (Jam 5:11); Christ Himself was said to be “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1); Barnabas was a man “full of Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:24). Therefore, full of means to be wholly controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Full of Wisdom. The task committed to the selected deacon required that the person be competent in administration. The deacons needed a capability which would allow them to deal wisely in situations where human feelings had to be considered. This wisdom is not necessarily the wisdom of men learned through formal education. The apostle Paul indicated, “not many wise men after the flesh...are called” (1 Cor 1:26). This wisdom is born through the deep encounter of constant communion with Jesus Christ. Wisdom is of a high spiritual order which is derived from a relationship with God. This wisdom is promised to all believers who desire it and ask for it (Jam 1:5).

Full of Faith. Faith is of a tremendous importance in the Bible. Similarly, faith plays a very crucial role in the book of Acts (Acts 3:16; 4:4; 10:43; 11:21; 13:48; 14:1; 19:18)⁵⁵ though this characteristic is specifically ascribed only to Stephen (Acts 6:5). It is said, Stephen was full of faith (Acts

6:5), and Barnabas was “strong in faith” (Acts 11:24). It is implied as an attribute of the others. Surely, it is one trait that is desirable in a deacon today. The faith of Stephen was unique indeed. It appears that he had insights into the scope of the gospel that were far beyond others.

Therefore, the deacon is a person that is supposed to be controlled by the Spirit, faith, wisdom, and power. He is supposed to be a God-controlled man yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit, a man who sought to lead people to Christ. A spirit-filled deacon does not limit his ministry to the serving of the few in the church, but serves everyone he meets. He is supposed to be a missionary-oriented person.

Biblical Characteristics

The work of the **deacons** appears to have been supplementary to that of the overseers, so that the overseers are linked with the deacons (Phil 1:1). The deacons **likewise** require certain biblical characteristics, which presumably are particularly relevant to the nature of their work.⁵⁶ The first four virtues, with which he wishes them to be endowed, are of themselves sufficiently well known. Yet it ought to be carefully observed that he advises them to be:⁵⁷

Grave. The Greek of this word is *σεμνός* (*semnos*).⁵⁸ It is best translated “worthy of honor,” “dignified,”⁵⁹ “honest” in the sense “respectable,” “becoming the dignity of a man.” For example, H. D. M. Spence-Jones explains *ἄνηρ σεμνός* is a man who inspires respect by his conduct and deportment. It occurs again in v. 11 and in Titus 2:2.⁶⁰ O’Donnell refers to grave as a term derived from gravity that suggests dignity in a man. It refers to a trait in a man’s character which makes him worthy of respect. It portrays a dignified character who is serious minded about the things of God.

The term does not suggest a long-faced person, or a dour man, but rather a happy individual. According to O’Donnell, it means someone who does not take the work of God lightly. The word further denotes a special Christian quality that every deacon and church officer must possess.⁶¹ A good deacon, therefore, acknowledges that his ministry is a stewardship from God and he applies himself to it in a manner that wins respect.⁶² He must not be a person who is light and flippant concerning spiritual things.⁶³

Not Double-Tongued. Three qualities are noted using negative characteristics, the first of which is, ‘not double-

⁵⁰Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Oregon, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 167.

⁵¹Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “πλήθω.”

⁵²“Full of the Holy Ghost” [Acts 6:3], SDABC, 6:189.

⁵³Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti*, (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 517.

⁵⁴C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2004), 313.

⁵⁵Allison A. Trites “The Gospel of Luke,” in Tyndale Cornerstone: *Biblical Commentary*, ed. Allison A. Trites, William J. Larkin (Illinois, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 117.

⁵⁶Douglas J.W. Milne, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (London, UK: Christian Focus, 1996), 65.

⁵⁷Calvin, *1 Timothy*, 1 Tim 3:8.

⁵⁸Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “σεμνός.”

⁵⁹“Grave” [1 Tim 3:8], SDABC, 7:299.

⁶⁰Spence, “1 Timothy,” 52.

⁶¹John Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, with Special Reference to Ministers and Students* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner, 1870), 41. It is interesting to take Stephen and Philip as people of dignity.

⁶²O’Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons*, 25.

⁶³Roy E. Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Timothy* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 1998), 19.

tongued.⁶⁴ It is the first feature that ought not to be seen in a deacon's life. This word is unique, it occurs only here in the Bible. Its basic meaning is to say one thing to one man and another thing to another individual. That is, not to say one thing to one person and the contrary to someone else. Every church officer should be a peacemaker, not a scandal-bearer or troublemaker.

It may have been this word that prompted John Bunyan to name one of the characters in *Pilgrim's Progress* "Mr. Two-tongues."⁶⁵ The apostle Paul advises deacons/deaconesses not to be *double-tongued*; because it is a "vice which it is difficult to avoid in the discharge of that office, and yet ought, more than anything else, to be kept at a distance from it."⁶⁶ Such a vice is not even accepted in worldly circles. Spence-Jones quotes Theophylact when he explains this phrase well, he said, "thinks one thing and says another, and says different things to different people."⁶⁷ This shows that deacons/deaconesses have to be absolutely trustworthy and consistent in their speech, not giving out conflicting information to different people as they move around the homes of the members.⁶⁸ A deacon should be involved in visitation among members and prospects. A man who would have a "double-tongue" as he goes could spread havoc in a church. Such a person is not fit for the task of the deacon. Therefore, deacons/deaconesses must not allow themselves to be either depositories or vehicles of scandal and detraction. Their speech to rich and poor alike must be perfectly genuine and innocent.

Not Given to Much Wine. The second characteristic that a deacon should have is "*not given to much wine.*" *οἶνος* (*oinos*) is the Greek word used for wine here.⁶⁹ The phrase, "*not given to much wine*" is difficult to solve. Some hold that the apostle Paul here speaks of unfermented wine such as grape juice. Others say that Paul speaks of fermented wine, which defiles the body (see on 1 Cor. 6:19; 10:31). On the one hand, Samuele Bacchiocchi in his book *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages*, stated, "*oinos* in Greek and *yayin* have been used historically to refer to the juice of the grape, whether fermented or unfermented."⁷⁰ On the other hand, if Paul was speaking of

unfermented wine, such as grape juice, he would not have warned the deacons against it. Contrary to Bacchiocchi's view, I would prefer to use the phrase to refer to unfermented wine because of the general teaching of the Bible regarding intoxicating drink (see on Prov 20:1; 23:29–32; John 2:9).

Referring to the nature of the wine produced by Christ, Ellen White says:

The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which He gave to the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the grape. To this the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new wine 'in the cluster,' and says, 'Destroy it not: for a blessing is in it'. . . The unfermented wine which He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. Its effect was to bring the taste into harmony with a healthful appetite.⁷¹

The wine that Christ produced at the feast was pure grape juice. That grape juice was a symbol of Christ's blood to be shed on Calvary for all. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 65:8 spoke concerning it saying, "***Destroy it not: for a blessing is in it....***" The prophet Isaiah is using a figure of speech "deliberately evocative of the traditional metaphor of Israel as vineyard."⁷² This illustrates the attitude of God toward His people. While Israel sinned, not all were to be destroyed. The righteous among them were to be spared and restored to their land. The unfermented wine and its effect was to bring a refreshing taste to those who lacked.

In addition, those given to alcoholic drinking are susceptible to disease, such as, the way the brain functions; liver challenges (e.g., steatosis, cirrhosis, fibrosis); develop certain cancers (e.g., mouth, breast, liver, throat); and heart damage that includes: high blood pressure, stroke and an irregular heart beat. Too much alcohol can weaken the immune system, making the body a much easier target for sickness.

To deacons and deaconesses who partake of intoxicating wine, it is not only unhealthy but also immoral. It represents the violation of a biblical principle designed to ensure our health and holiness. Scriptures suggest that servants of God must abstain from intoxicating drink and even the appearance of any evil connected with it. Their drinking habits too are a concern for "not indulging in much wine."⁷³ To add, "there are wines so weak that they cannot intoxicate. But the word of God is like a strong wine and it does intoxicate."⁷⁴ By forsaking the *former* [weak wine] and

⁶⁴Milne, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 65.

⁶⁵"Not doubletongued" [1 Tim 3:8], SDABC, 7:299.

⁶⁶Calvin, 1 Timothy, 1 Tim 3:8. A young man once approached Socrates to ask if the philosopher would teach him the gift of oratory. His request was then followed by an incessant stream of words until, finally, Socrates placed his hand over the inquirer's mouth and said, "Young man, I will have to charge you a double fee." When the fellow asked why, Socrates replied, "I will have to teach you two sciences. First, how to hold your tongue, and then, how to use it." You cannot speak and learn at the same time.

⁶⁷Spence, "1 Timothy," 53.

⁶⁸Milne, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 65.

⁶⁹Thomas, New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic, "οἶνος." The Latin word for wine is vinum, the Hebrew word is yayin, and the German is Wein. R. Laird Harris, "יַיִן" in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1999), 375.

⁷⁰Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), 21

⁷¹Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 149.

⁷²Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, NY: Yale University Press, 2008), 275. The Hebrew word used for wine is Tirosh, from yarash, to possess = must, or new wine, so called because it gets possession of the brain. It occurs thirty-four times in the OT.

⁷³Armin W. Schuetz, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, *The People's Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1991), 56.

⁷⁴Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist

clinging to the *latter* [Word of God], we choose to serve God and the community in a better way. The Word of God saturates and intoxicates; a fact that cannot be hidden. As it is written, “two things a man cannot hide: that he is drunk, and that he is in love.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, let us abstain from drinking wine and choose to be in love with Jesus. Above all, may the words of Paul to the Ephesians be an admonishing appeal to every deacon and to all, to “... be filled with the Spirit,” (Eph 5:18).

Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre. The third characteristic that a deacon should possess is “*not greedy of filthy lucre.*” The phrase, *μὴ αἰσχροκερδέις*,⁷⁶ *may aischrokerdes*, literally translated from the Greek would be “not eager for base gain.”⁷⁷ The deacon does not use the privilege of his office to do favors for indirect personal gain.⁷⁸ Money is not his chief goal in life. If a deacon is greedy for monetary gain, he may misuse church funds or neglect his church duties in order to go out and get more of this world’s goods.⁷⁹ The deacon, like the minister, should guard the testimony before others by not representing a greedy desire for material things.

The “love of money” can be present in both the rich and the poor.⁸⁰ The Bureau of Engraving and Printing says it costs about \$15 to print a thousand bills, regardless of denomination. Thus to print a \$500 bill is as cheap as a \$1 bill. Whether one covets \$1 or \$500, the cost in one’s spiritual life is always the same. We remember that the Pharisees would “devour widows’ houses” in their desire for gain.⁸¹ Hence, “the deacon must be known for his honesty. Trusted disciples of Jesus too can succumb to money’s temptation.”⁸² It may be concluded at this point that the deacons/deaconesses are supposed to be responsible for holding and distributing the church’s finances and are to resist temptations to misappropriate the funds entrusted to their management.⁸³ The

deacon should be a person who gives earnest attention to the money entrusted to him by God. His aim should be, as Russell R. Cook indicated, to “fall in love with Jesus, but never fall in love with the things He may supply.”⁸⁴ Loving money for the things money can buy will cause not only the deacon, but all, to render a tainted service to God.

A Strong Spiritual Life. The life of the deacon should be characterized by “a strong spiritual life.” The words expressing the strong spiritual life are categorized by words such as, “mystery,” “faith,” and “clear conscience” (1 Tim 3:9). One of the biblical qualities a deacon should possess encompasses the word mystery. In ancient Greek, “mysteries consisted of a set of rites and ceremonies that were considered very sacred, and they were observed with the strictest secrecy.”⁸⁵ The word mystery is *μυστήριον*, (*musterion*), which means, “hidden thing, secret, mystery, confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary mortals.”⁸⁶ So, the word denotes “a secret that is revealed by God to His servants through His Spirit.”⁸⁷ The deacon should exemplify the biblical principles of the Christian faith in his daily life. Before God and man, the faithful deacon will stand unashamed with a conscience void of intentional wrongdoing.

The word faith comes from the Greek *πίστις*, (*pistis*)⁸⁸ which conveys “conviction of the truth of anything, belief”⁸⁹ or “firm persuasion.”⁹⁰ Nichol suggests that the word faith refers to “the whole body of Christian teaching. The deacon is to be not only a well-informed Bible student but also one who reflects the principles of the Bible.”⁹¹ The entire expression, “holding the mystery of faith” necessitates faith in order to fully understand it. Faith here is seen as a “spiritual activity rather than an intellectual exercise,”⁹² because spiritual things are spiritually discerned (see 1 Cor 2:14). In the words of Abraham Lincoln, “Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”⁹³ The deacon, henceforth, should not shirk from his duty, but should combine faith and works

Press, 1982), 202. May the words of Humbert of Romans, a 13th century Dominican preacher be a motivation, “Some Wines are weak and have no effect on you, but the word of God is strong wine ... and gets you drunk.”

⁷⁵Jonathon Lazear, *Meditations for Men Who Do Too Much* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 12. Billy Graham told a story of an old drunk who gave up alcohol. Every day, on the way to work, he would hitch his horse by a saloon, walk to the door, take a big sniff, and say, “I don’t need this any more.” Billy said if he kept doing that, the day would come when, in a weak moment, he would walk back into his old world. We cannot pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matt 6), if we walk into it ourselves.

⁷⁶Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “μὴ αἰσχροκερδέις.”

⁷⁷O’Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons*, 26.

⁷⁸“Not greedy of filthy lucre” [1 Tim 3:8], SDABC, 7:299.

⁷⁹Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Timothy*, 20.

⁸⁰Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers* (Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979), 823.

⁸¹O’Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons*, 26, 27.

⁸²Schuetze, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 56.

⁸³Milne, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 65. Balaam, Gehazi, and Judas Iscariot are the three prominent examples of professed servants of God being lovers of filthy lucre. Achan (Josh 7:21) is another (see ch. 6:10). When lucre is the price for doing wrong, it is “filthy.” When lucre is sought on occasions where none is due, it is “filthy;” and when the desire of even just gains is excessive, it ceases to be clean. See Spence, “1 Timothy,” 53. In handling money, deacons/deaconesses must remember this poem: “Money will buy: A bed, but not sleep. Books, but not brains. Food, but not appetite. A house, but not a

home. Medicine, but not health. Amusement, but not happiness. Finery, but not beauty. A crucifix, but not a Savior.” See Clarence E. Warner, *The Promises of God: A Daily Devotion* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 216.

⁸⁴Russell R. Cook, *Daily Devotions for Deacons: 260 Instructional and Inspirational Devotions* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2015), 36.

⁸⁵W. E. Vine, *Classic Reflections on Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 8.

⁸⁶Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “μυστήριον.” The word mystery is one of the many mysteries of Scriptures. The Mystery of Sin; The Mystery of Incarnation; The Mystery of Christ; The Mysteries of Scripture; The Mystery of the Faith; The Mystery of the Deity of Christ; The Mystery of Godliness; The Mystery of the Gospel; The Mystery of the Hardening of Israel; The Mystery of the Kingdom; The Mystery of the Resurrection Bodies; The Mystery of Babylon; The Mystery of Lawlessness; The Mystery of God’s will; The Completion of all Mysteries.

⁸⁷Cook, *Daily Devotions for Deacons*, 36.

⁸⁸Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “πίστις.”

⁸⁹Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 1 Tim 3:9.

⁹⁰Vine, *Classic Reflections on Scripture*, 14.

⁹¹“Faith” [1 Tim 3:9], SDABC, 7: 299

⁹²Vine, *Classic Reflections on Scripture*, 13.

⁹³Mark Water, *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 41.

together. Vine explains two things in relation to this expression. First, this faith is the body of the Christian doctrine. Second, faith was revealed in the person and work of Christ.⁹⁴ The deacon, therefore, should hold the mystery of faith, which is not to be kept but to be shared.

The third quality that a deacon should have is a clear conscience. The Greek for clear is “καθαρός” (*katharos*) meaning, “clean, pure, purified by fire.”⁹⁵ The word has the connotation to mean “free from any mixture with impurity, unblemished.” The church, in choosing deacons, must look for men who are knowledgeable Christians, whose faith clings to the truth as a matter of conscience.

Proved. The word proved is δοκιμάζω (*dokimazo*)⁹⁶ in Greek and literally means, “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not).” When the word is examined from the perspective of a blacksmith who works in metals, the word means “to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.”⁹⁷ John Philips correctly explains the word proved as “to test with the expectation that the test results will prove to be favorable.”⁹⁸ The same author, when he referred to deacons, said, “they are to be proved before they are promoted.” That is to say, deacons “are to be put to the test before being put in trust.”⁹⁹ It is a good thing for a church not to select and elect men so they may become deacons but rather to select and elect those who are already servants at heart.

In other words, the church should observe for a period of time the conduct of a prospective deacon and if he proves himself to be a blameless person, then appoint him to be a deacon. Paul does not believe, as some do, that the church should place unfaithful men in places of authority, hoping that responsibility will make them faithful.¹⁰⁰ While it is “of necessity men must bear responsibilities;” men should not strive “for the supremacy.”¹⁰¹ The nominating committee of the church should not choose individuals as deacons to make them better Christians, for “position does not give holiness of character”¹⁰² and “true greatness does not depend upon position, but upon purity and fidelity.”¹⁰³ The board should rather choose men who already possess the qualifications in harmony with 1 Timothy 3:10. In principle, the deacon should remember what was said to Solomon of old, “with the call to work comes the call to walk

circumspectly before his fellow men. He is to stand before God in the attitude of a learner.”¹⁰⁴ In accordance with that, the deacon should desire first and foremost to give himself wholly to the service of God. Therefore, the higher the position, the greater the responsibility the deacon has to bear.

V. DEACONS AND DRESS

Dress has been a controversial issue. How should the deacon appear in public? What dress should categorize his office? It seems dress has many types, styles, and customs throughout the Bible.¹⁰⁵ The terms dress and fashion have many different meanings. J. C. Flügel saw it as a means of preserving our modesty while simultaneously exhibiting ourselves as sexual beings, and the erotic potential of dress is certainly of major importance.¹⁰⁶ It further carries moral and political meanings.¹⁰⁷ It is usually referred to in such general terms as “inner garment,” “outer garment,” or “tunic.”¹⁰⁸ If we briefly consider Jesus and His disciples’ dress, we realize that they wore clothing of the simplest kind.¹⁰⁹ The dress of Christ and His disciples was very simple and was composed of inner and outer garments. In the ancient time, men and women wore these inner and outer garments.¹¹⁰

In relation to the dress of the deacon, first and foremost, it should be contextualized.¹¹¹ In past as well as in contemporary times, dress has been an issue of debate. The dress that deacons adopted became a means of changing opinion on the diaconate, and in turn was viewed as a controversial issue. “After the introduction of the green shirt with white clerical collar, currently the official dress for deacons, deacons encouraged each other to wear it in order to get the diaconate recognized as part of the ordained ministry.”¹¹² Similarly, the Hebrew man was regarded “improperly dressed without his cloak, and one was forbidden

¹⁰⁴White, Prophets and Kings, 31.

¹⁰⁵Edgar James, “Dress,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed., Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard Frederic Vos and John Rea (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975; 2005).

¹⁰⁶J. C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1930), 35.

¹⁰⁷Elizabeth Wilson and Amy De La Haye, “Introduction” in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning, and Identity*, ed. Amy De La Haye, Elizabeth Wilson (New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1, 2. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some European countries had laws to forbid competition between individuals relating to the sumptuousness and the extravagance of their dress. Christian moralists condemned the rich dress as evidence of sinfulness, worldliness, and vanity.

¹⁰⁸Hazel W. Perkin, “Fashion and Dress,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Map on Lining Papers, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 773.

¹⁰⁹James, “Dress,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*.

¹¹⁰J. Alswang and A. and van Rensburg, *New English Usage Dictionary* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999, c1995), s.v. “dress.”

¹¹¹As in Egypt and Babylon, it was forbidden for priests to wear woolen clothes (Ezek 44:17). They were not allowed to wear sandals in the Temple (Exod 3:5; 29:20). See D. R. W. Wood, *New Bible Dictionary* (Illinois, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 283.

¹¹²Helena Inghammar “The Development of Diaconal Ordinations in Sweden in the Light of Social History,” in *Rites of Ordination and Commitment in the Churches of the Nordic Countries: Theology and Terminology*, ed. Hans Raun Iversen (Njalsgade, DK: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 226.

⁹⁴Vine, *Classic Reflections on Scripture*, 15.

⁹⁵Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “καθαρός.”

⁹⁶Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic*, “δοκιμάζω.”

⁹⁷Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), 1 Tim 3:8.

⁹⁸John Philips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2004), 93.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Timothy*, 20.

¹⁰¹Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 31.

¹⁰²Ellen G. White, *Christian Leadership* (Washington, DC: Pacific Press, 1985), 14.

¹⁰³Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Time*, December 13, 1899, 5.

to demand another's mantle as a loan or pledge."¹¹³ So it is with the dress of the deacon today, his dress must be well fitting and contextualized.

However, "religion never appears so lovely as when she wears the dress of perfect simplicity."¹¹⁴ Church attires differ from one culture to the other. The choice of colors varies from one person to another. Men and women's dress must be distinguished (Deut 22:5), not so much by kind, however, as by detail and quality of materials.¹¹⁵ That is to say, the woman's dress was distinct; the Mosaic law forbade a man to wear woman's clothing and a woman to wear the garment of a man. Men and women should be dressed "modestly and decently in suitable clothing."¹¹⁶ Thus, dress is important as it speaks volumes and projects the personality of the wearer. We are what we wear.

This is precisely why the apostle Peter urges wives to take time and care to develop their spirits, which he calls "the hidden man of the heart." Because the human spirit is the life-force of any person, he advises women to not only fix their hair and their faces but to also beautify their spirits, even though the spiritual aspect is invisible to the natural eye. The apostle declares that this "hidden man of the heart" is "incorruptible" in 1 Peter 3:4a, which refers to something that is incapable of decay or something that is incapable of suffering the effect of wear, tear, and age. The word "incorruptible" may suggest that the "hidden heart of the man" will never grow old or experience the effect of aging as a result of sin.¹¹⁷

Dress and worship

Worship should not be made into a fashion show where expensive dress is on display to impress and win the competition. George B. Prude puts it well in his book, *A Letter to the Churches of America*, when he said, "the church should never make an idol god out of clothes and bow down and worship pieces of cloth. Throw me in the fiery furnace if that's what must be done, but I will not bow and worship pieces of cloth that have no spiritual power or value."¹¹⁸ The dress should be "decent and in order" as revealed in the Scriptures. It should be intended for worship and not adornment purposes. Church members should guard themselves against "love of display" that has "made this world

as a den of thieves and robbers."¹¹⁹ Furthermore, deacons should refrain from the idea of *dress to impress*.

While Ellen G. White emphasizes the concept of dress, she cautions us not to do so to the expense of stealing the parents' time from their children. She advises us that we can spend less time on dress, "but never, never neglect"¹²⁰ our children. Regarding dress on Sabbath, she says:

Many need instruction as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have a special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending service in God's house. While we should not conform to worldly fashions, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment.

Dress is important and each person including deacons must enter the church with proper clothing. There should be special clothing specifically for Sabbath. The common clothing that is used during the week should not be worn on the Sabbath. While we are admonished to dress well, we should not conform to the worldly fashions. We are to be neat and trim, yet without worldly adornment. It can be stated at this point that there should be specific dress requirements for the church. The deacon, therefore, from this time forth, must not wear his common clothes that are worn throughout the week. Dress should be appropriate for the gender wearing it, free from worldly appearance, dress that is properly worn, dress that is proper in size for the person wearing it, dress that is free of screen-printed offensive language and symbols, and dress that covers one's body appropriately and not suggestively.

VI. DEACONS AND PUBLIC/COMMUNAL PRAYER

When most people are asked to perform church duties that involve public speaking,¹²¹ they are overcome with stage fright and also struggle to organize their public prayer. Lack of organization and preparation prevents pastors, elders, and deacons from performing their church responsibilities skillfully. Organizing and preparing for public or congregational prayer has become a wide river to cross.¹²² If a person knows how to pray privately, this does not mean that he can pray publically.¹²³ Many people struggle with prayer

¹¹³Perkin, "Fashion and Dress," 775.

¹¹⁴Matthew Henry, Thomas Scott, *The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible: Acts-Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), 470.

¹¹⁵Edgar C. James, "Dress," *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard Frederic Vos, and John Rea (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2005).

¹¹⁶Barbara Geller, "Transitions and Trajectories" in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 430.

¹¹⁷This section is taken from Youssry Guirguis, "The Use of the Hebrew Word Samak in the Context of the Ordination of Joshua." *Revisiting SDA Church Ministries* (Journal of AIIAS African Theology Association, Vol. 4, 2013- 2014), 69-80.

¹¹⁸Servant George B. Prude, *A Letter to the Churches of America: Churches Standing on the Word of God* (Pennsylvania, PA: Dorrance, 2013), 79.

¹¹⁹White, *Prophets and Kings*, 651.

¹²⁰Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 192.

¹²¹Jane E. Vennard, *A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice* (Herndon, VA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 1. Stage fright can overcome many people while publically ministering, speaking, teaching, or preaching. For more information, see Grace Burford, "A Buddhist Reflects (Practices Reflection) on Some Christians' Experiences with Buddhist Spirituality: A Response" in *Christians Talk about Buddhist Meditation, Buddhists Talk About Christian Prayer*, ed. Rita M. Gross and Terry C. Muck (New York, NY: A&C Black, 2003), 57.

¹²²R. T. Kendall, *Did You Think to Pray: How to Listen and Talk to God Every Day About Everything* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma Media, 2001), 88.

¹²³Walter L. Banks, *How to Pray & Communicate with God* (Chicago, IL: Urban Ministries), 127.

while at the pulpit. The majority would like to pray but do not know exactly what to say. Prayer is a powerful aspect of a relationship with God. Therefore, many people use the acronym **A.C.T.S** to organize their daily private prayers as well as their public prayers.

A.C.T.S. – A Model for Organizing Prayer and Worship

The acronym A.C.T.S stand for the following:

A= stands for *adoration* in which we praise and speak well of God.

C= is *confession* in which we admit our faults and our need for God’s grace.

T= is *thanksgiving* in which we express gratitude for God’s blessings in our lives.

S= stands for *supplication* in which we ask God for the help and blessings we need.¹²⁴

Most people have found the A.C.T.S model to be very user-friendly. It is seen as a well-balanced prayer model for private and public spheres. Therefore, the deacon, likewise, is encouraged to adopt this model as a guide to his public prayer ministry. The model should be adapted in alphabetical order. That is to say that the deacon, while praying publically, should first begin with “adoration,” second, “confession,” third, “thanksgiving,” and fourth, “supplication.” More importantly, he should write everything down as he plans to lead in communal prayer. It is better to read a “sound prayer” than to pray an ambiguous prayer. If the **A.C.T.S. model** is followed, it is better to adopt the order suggested.

A.C.T.S. Prayer sample

A= Adoration: (Pss 84:1-3; 40:1-3; 16:11; Rev 5:12-14)

Dear heavenly father, we honor your name. Our whole being glorifies your holy name. We know that You are all loving and all caring. We wait patiently for You, O Lord to incline Your ears to us. You are our salvation.

C=Confession: (Matt 6:9-13; Jer 31:34; Ps 139:23-24; 1 John 1:8-9; Ps 51:10-13)

Heavenly father, search our hearts and purify us from within. You know our thoughts and the hidden sins of our hearts. Forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This is our appeal.

T=Thanksgiving (Pss 100:4-7; 118:21; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Chr 16:23; Acts 4:12).

Thank you, Lord, for all that you do for us. Thank you for dying on the cross to save a sinner such as myself. Thank you for our families and friends. Thank you for the chance to learn at this institution. Thank you for Christian education. Thank you for everything.

S= Supplication: (Matt 6:11-13; Col 4:2; Rev 1:4-6; Rom 10:1; Heb 10:19-25).

Please, Lord, help us to be better Christians. Help us to be more loving and caring. Help us to be able to do well in our various duties. We beg you that you may use the person whom you have chosen to speak to us today. May you speak in him and through him that we may be blessed at the end of the service. Help us as a congregation to give attentive hearts. In your precious and holy name, we pray, Amen.

VII. DUTIES OF THE DEACON

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* lists five duties that a deacon must do. In other words, the work of deacons involves a wide range of services for the church, including:

Assistance at Services and Meetings—Deacons are usually responsible for welcoming members and visitors as they enter the church and for assisting them, where necessary, to find seats. They also cooperate with the pastor and elders for the smooth functioning of all meetings.

Visitation of Members—In many churches visitation is arranged by distributing membership by districts and assigning a deacon to each district with the expectation that he will visit each home at least once a quarter.

Preparation for Baptismal Services—Deacons make necessary preparations for baptismal services.

Assistance at Communion Service—At the service of foot-washing, the deacons or deaconesses provide everything needed, such as towels, basins, water, and buckets. After the service they see that the utensils and linen are washed and properly stored.

The remaining bread and wine should not be consumed, but disposed of in a respectful manner by deacons and deaconesses following the Lord’s Supper.

Care of the Sick and Aiding the Poor and Unfortunate—Deacons and deaconesses are charged with assisting the sick, poor, and the unfortunate and should keep the church informed of their needs and enlist the support of members. Money should be provided for this work from the fund for the poor and needy. The treasurer, on recommendation from the board, will give to the deacons or deaconesses whatever may be needed for use in needy cases.

Care and Maintenance of Property—In churches where the responsibility for the care and maintenance of church property is not assigned to a building committee, deacons and deaconesses have this responsibility.¹²⁵

VIII. DUTIES OF DEACONESSES

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* lists five duties that a deaconess must do. Deaconesses serve the church in a wide variety of activities, including:

¹²⁴Jim Marian, *Worship Services for Youth Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 65.

¹²⁵Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 79.

Greeting and Visiting Guests and Members—In many churches, deaconesses assist in greeting guests and members at meetings and in visiting members in their homes when they cannot attend services.

Assistance at Baptisms—Deaconesses ensure that female candidates are cared for both before and after the ceremony. They also give such counsel and help as may be necessary regarding suitable garments for baptism. Robes of suitable material should be provided. Where robes are used, the deaconesses should see that they are laundered and carefully stored.

Arrangements for the Communion Service—Deaconesses and deacons arrange for everything needed for this service and see that everything used is cared for afterward.

- Before the communion service begins, deaconesses set the communion table, including preparing the bread and wine, pouring the wine, placing the plates of unleavened bread, and covering the table with the linen provided for that purpose.
- Deaconesses assist in the service of foot-washing, giving special aid to women visitors and new members.

The Care of the Sick and the Poor—Deaconesses assist deacons in caring for the sick, needy, and unfortunate.

Care and Maintenance of Property—In churches where the responsibility for the care and maintenance of church property is not assigned to a building committee, deacons and deaconesses have this responsibility.¹²⁶

Deacons/ Deaconesses NOT Authorized to Preside.

Deacons/ Deaconesses Not Authorized to Preside—Deacons/ Deaconesses are not authorized to preside at the Lord's Supper, baptism, or business meetings and are not permitted to perform the marriage ceremony or officiate at the reception or transfer of members. If a church has no one authorized to perform such duties, the church leader shall contact the conference for assistance.

IX. SUMMARY

The word deacon and its cognates conveys the idea that a deacon is a servant. Biblical "deaconing" is not characterized by power and prominence but by service to others. In imitation of Jesus' life, the deacon or deaconesses follows the servant pattern. The deacon can fill the gap between the church and the world. He is called to be an effective agent and instrument of service amongst believers and non-believers alike. Polycarp's words are outstanding as he emphasizes, "Deacons should be blameless in the presence of His righteousness, as deacons of God and Christ and not of men; not double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate in all things, compassionate, diligent, walking according to the truth

of the Lord who became a minister (deacon) of all."¹²⁷ Deacon's service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave relationship to one's Savior (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20).

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¹²⁶Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 81.

¹²⁷Water, The New Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations, 250.

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