Growth Without Neglect: Equitable Care and Accountable Leadership in Acts 6:1-7

Sibalwa Cobby, Americo Jamba, Gibson Sikapite

Rusangu University, Monze, Zambia

***Corresponding Author**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.101000709

Received: 30 October 2026; Accepted: 04 November 2026; Published: 20 November 2026

ABSTRACT

Acts 6:1–7 narrates how the Jerusalem community responded when Hellenistic widows were overlooked in daily assistance. This constructive practical-theological study combines narrative exegesis, focused Greek analysis, and a bounded comparison with Deuteronomy 26:12–15, James 2:15–17, and 2 Corinthians 8:18–21. The narrative supports recognition of neglected need, communal participation, and entrusted responsibility. Its favourable ending can imply resolution, while the canonical comparison supplies theological grounds for reviewing delivery when it remains uncertain. Against selected frameworks for Christian stewardship, public accountability, programme evaluation, and practical theology, the article specifies a distinct judgment at the level of an individual undertaking. A church may record a commitment as fulfilled when evidence proportionate to the risks supports delivery, barriers material to access or receipt have been assessed and addressed, and the recipient has a credible route to request reconsideration. A decision matrix distinguishes fulfilment, unresolved delivery, and other dispositions such as informed refusal or a justified revision of scope under scarcity. Two hypothetical cases show how payment, inaccessible service, and changing need affect the judgment. The proposal is a theological and operational synthesis whose effects on access, trust, and administrative burden remain to be tested.

Keywords: Acts 6:1–7, Hellenistic widows, diakonia, equitable care, ecclesial accountability

INTRODUCTION

Acts 6:1–7 places increasing discipleship beside neglected provision. Hellenists complain against Hebrews because their widows are being overlooked in daily assistance. The Twelve convene the disciples, propose differentiated responsibilities, and commission seven selected men. The episode shows that a spiritually identified community can require institutional correction without abandoning its mission.

The complaint concerns the material conditions of belonging to a growing religious community. A ministry can distribute substantial resources and still overlook people whom its arrangements make difficult to reach. The appointment of trusted leaders is therefore a meaningful response, but the question of what the appointment achieves deserves separate attention. In a contemporary church, a payment record, a leader's report, and a recipient's account may support different judgments about the same promise of care.

This article asks when a congregation has sufficient grounds to record a particular commitment to care as fulfilled. It argues that such a judgment depends on credible evidence about what the church undertook and what reached the recipient, alongside a fair response to barriers and an accessible way to challenge the decision. Acts 6 supplies the narrative pattern of recognition, participation, and delegated responsibility. The canonical comparison supplies the normative grounds for review. The contribution is a case-level decision rule that connects these theological grounds to how a church records, explains, and reopens decisions about assistance.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Textual Corpus

The study combines qualitative narrative interpretation, focused Greek analysis, and constructive theological ethics. Acts 6:1–7 is the principal unit because it contains the complaint, deliberation, selection, commissioning, and mission summary. Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 establish the preceding pattern of provision; Acts 6:8–10, 8:5–6, and 21:8 test interpretations against Stephen's and Philip's subsequent activity.

The English reading text is the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible (2021). The Greek text follows the SBL Greek New Testament (Holmes, 2010), with forms cross-checked against the MorphGNT dataset (Tauber, 2017). Wallace (1996, pp. 541–545, 654–655) supplies the syntactic categories for the imperfect and genitive absolute. Morphological identification, syntactic function, and contextual inference are treated as separate interpretive steps. The English glosses of individual Greek expressions are the article's own.

Deuteronomy 26:12–15, James 2:15–17, and 2 Corinthians 8:18–21 form a bounded canonical comparison because they address material provision, enacted assistance, and entrusted administration. They are used to construct a contemporary Christian ethic, not asserted to be Luke's demonstrable literary sources. Their different historical settings remain distinct.

Criteria for Evaluating the Interpretation

Three criteria guide evaluation. Explanatory adequacy requires attention to the complaint, response, and positive ending. Evidential fit requires conclusions proportionate to the textual evidence. Practical relevance requires an ethical rationale for contemporary procedures rather than attributing them directly to Luke. These distinguish the theological justification of a recommendation from evidence of its effectiveness: an ethically defensible arrangement can still perform poorly and require revision.

Inclusion, Exclusion, and Source Handling

The original purposive review and citation tracing, dated 15 October 2026, used terms concerning Acts 6:1–7, Hellenists and Hebrews, widows, the seven, diakonia, commissioned ministry, and ecclesial accountability. The available record identifies those terms and source types. It contains no platform-level query log or screening counts for that initial review.

A bounded supplementary search used web search to locate records on Google Books, publisher sites (Baker Academic, Zondervan Academic, Eerdmans, Wiley, and University of California Press), the CDC evaluation site, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) standards site, and an online copy of Keener's commentary. Eight targeted searches named Keener, Gaventa, Wallace, Osmer, Bovens, the CDC framework, Pitkin, and ECFA. The first two returned links per query yielded 16 links for screening. Seven distinct works were retained from that set for direct use: Keener, Wallace, Osmer, Bovens, CDC, Pitkin, and ECFA. Alternate records or formats were consolidated at work level. The Gaventa records were set aside because the accessible material did not substantiate a passage-specific claim. Further targeted checks located a directly readable Polhill excerpt and verified publication details and links for cited works. The reported count applies to the bounded supplementary set. Inclusion required direct relevance to Acts 6, Greek syntax, representation, or an explicit accountability or evaluation function. Excerpts and publisher descriptions support only claims visible in those materials. English-language access and search ranking limit the coverage.

Analytical Procedure and Limitations

The analysis first identifies actors, plot, need, responsibilities, and reported outcome. It then compares interpretations of identity, ministry, and office before constructing the ethical argument for review. Each conclusion is classified as textual observation, qualified historical inference, or normative proposal.

Alternative readings test whether communal approval establishes equal voice, whether appointment demonstrates delivery, and whether subsequent growth identifies an intervention's effects.

The narrative supplies no distribution records or direct testimony from the widows. The targeted searches and citation tracing support a selective comparison. They cannot establish how frequently a comparable completion rule appears across ecclesial traditions. No human-participant data were collected. The criterion's feasibility and effects in congregations remain open empirical questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hellenists, Hebrews, and the Interpretation of Communal Difference

Hill (1996) scrutinises the inherited reconstruction of opposed liberal Hellenists and conservative Hebrews. The issue is whether Luke's distinction can sustain a broader theory of uniform ideological factions. Pao (2011) likewise recognises the importance of language preference while questioning stereotyped theological contrasts. He places the seven's later preaching within the problem of narrative coherence rather than treating it simply as an inconsistency in Luke's account.

Keener (2013, pp. 1253–1255, 1260) treats rapid growth and limits of supervision as plausible conditions for the neglect and situates the two groups in a chiefly linguistic and cultural distinction. Polhill (1992, commentary on Acts 6:1) also emphasises linguistic and cultural distance and reads the neglect as inadvertent. Hill's critique of sharply opposed factions supports caution about reading fixed theological blocs into the episode. The evidence also leaves the degree of intention open. The complaint identifies a pattern affecting a particular group, while Luke supplies too little about the distribution process or its agents to adjudicate motive. For the ethical argument, a credible report of unequal access warrants attention before its cause is settled.

Scriptural Provision and the Limits of Idealisation

Friedl (2016, pp. 188–194) reads Jerusalem's communal provision through Deuteronomic social law, linking Acts 4:34 with Deuteronomy 15:4 and placing Acts 6 within that social vision. This supplies a theological context for material assistance beyond administrative efficiency. His reading nevertheless invites a distinction between an ecclesial ideal and evidence that every distribution fulfilled it.

Diakonia: Commission, Context, and Compassion

Collins (2014) challenges the assumption that diakonia inherently means benevolent, humble service. Gooder (2006) substantially accepts the interpretation of many occurrences as commissioned activity. These arguments require interpreters to examine the responsibility entrusted rather than derive an entire theology of ministry from an English gloss.

Breed (2017), however, argues from Mark 8–10 that divine commission and compassion belong together in Jesus' ministry. The disagreement requires a distinction between lexical meaning and contextual ethical significance. A word need not encode compassion in every occurrence for a narrative to give the activity a compassionate purpose. Applied to Acts 6, this approach attends both to the authorisation of the seven and to the neglected need that explains their appointment.

The Seven: Deacons, Precursors, or a Particular Ministry Group?

Three positions should be distinguished: the seven are the first deacons; they anticipate a later office; or they constitute a particular ministry group whose identity should not be equated with the diaconate. Sell (2010, pp. 58–59) proposes a pattern of temporary ministry-team formation. Breed (2019) similarly cautions against deriving a later office's full content from Acts 6 or service vocabulary alone.

Selection, practical responsibility, and commissioning explain the attraction of the first two positions, but continuity of features does not establish historical identity. Luke does not call the seven diakonoi, and Philip is

later identified as an evangelist and one of the seven (Acts 21:8). The present study therefore leaves the office's development unresolved. Its ethical argument depends on entrusted responsibility, not a settled title.

Intersecting Exclusion and the Contribution's Scope

Stone (2024) connects the Hellenistic widows with intersecting questions of race, gender, and class in Spirit-filled communities. Her womanist Pentecostal approach challenges analysis that treats these dimensions separately and privileges institutionally prominent voices. Contemporary racial categories should not simply be imposed on ancient linguistic identities. Nevertheless, her argument directs attention to how several forms of disadvantage can shape a person's access to care simultaneously.

Stone's analysis affects whose account should count in review. A representative may share a language with recipients and still miss barriers associated with disability, literacy, age, or dependency. The contemporary assessment therefore needs ways to hear from people poorly served by usual channels, including through interpreters, private consultation, or a trusted intermediary chosen by the recipient. These are applications of Stone's critique. Historical conclusions remain bounded by Luke's account, which reports the Hellenists' complaint without quoting the widows.

The proposed criterion therefore treats a credible report from an affected person as grounds for inquiry and asks whether the institution's response improved access in that case. Aggregate distribution figures can help detect patterns, while the people affected can identify barriers that routine records fail to capture.

Accountability, Evaluation, and the Unit of Judgment

Bovens (2007) defines accountability through a relationship in which an actor must explain and justify conduct to a forum that can ask questions and judge it. This helps specify who should hear a challenge and why reasons matter. It leaves the substantive test for fulfilment to the practice being examined. The ECFA standards offer a closer ecclesial comparator. Their provisions on governance, financial oversight, transparency, and giver intent address responsible stewardship within their membership context (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability [ECFA], n.d.). A congregation can comply with a donor restriction and accurately record the payment while the intended recipient still lacks the promised assistance. The proposed criterion adds a judgment about receipt or accessible delivery and makes the recipient's account relevant to that judgment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024) framework already emphasises credible evidence, equity, collaborative engagement, and acting on findings. Those commitments support attention to access and correction. Its guidance addresses the design and use of evaluations across programmes, leaving case disposition to the particular service. Osmer's (2008) descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic tasks similarly help congregations move from understanding a problem to shaping practice. Those tasks guide inquiry and discernment. The present proposal specifies a decision within the pragmatic task, namely what should count as evidence that an accepted commitment has been discharged and when contrary evidence should reopen it.

The resulting synthesis has a specific unit and consequence. The unit is a defined undertaking to a recipient or household. The consequence is whether the church may record it as fulfilled, should continue corrective action, or may close it with a different, explicitly justified disposition. A programme evaluation may draw on these decisions, and an accountability forum may review them. The contribution lies in giving those decisions a common theological rationale and operational test. The comparison concerns the named frameworks and makes no claim to priority across all case-management or ecclesial traditions.

Analysis And Discussion

Growth and Neglect: The Limits of Grammatical Inference

The genitive absolute πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν (plēthynontōn tōn mathētōn) situates the complaint during the increase of disciples (Acts 6:1). Wallace's discussion of the construction supports reading the participial

phrase as circumstantial, with its more precise relation supplied by context (1996, pp. 654–655). A causal reading therefore needs a historical and narrative argument beyond the form. The imperfect passive παρεθεωροῦντο (paretheōrounto) portrays the neglect as in progress in the narrative setting. The reference to daily assistance makes repeated neglect plausible, while the verbal form by itself leaves the frequency and duration unspecified (Holmes, 2010; Tauber, 2017; Wallace, 1996, pp. 541–545). The passive leaves the responsible agent unexpressed. Neither motive nor the distribution mechanism follows from the morphology.

The Hellenists' complaint receives an organised response. This neither validates every complaint nor makes its presentation irrelevant. It does suggest that an uncomfortable report can disclose a significant need. Morrison's (2014) review of organisational voice illuminates the contemporary cost of withheld information, without establishing Luke's characters' psychological states. A fair reporting process must permit investigation while allowing administrators to explain decisions and correct errors.

Shared resources and differentiated visibility

The preceding accounts of shared possessions make the complaint especially significant. Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 depict provision in relation to need; Acts 6:1 identifies people who are not being adequately included within that practice. The narrative movement is from a general account of communal sharing to a specific failure of access. The latter cannot be explained away by appealing to the generosity of the former. Generous contributions and unequal receipt are compatible possibilities because resources pass through social relationships and practical arrangements.

Mukuka (2025) identifies cultural literacy as a means of challenging preconceptions and enabling inclusive conversation within moral leadership. Here that concern sharpens the distinction between resource availability and distributive visibility. A community may know what it has received while knowing less about those who struggle to obtain assistance. This raises a contemporary question about how needs become known, without reconstructing Jerusalem's distribution mechanism. Reliance on familiar relationships may make articulate or socially connected members easier to notice. Quiet withdrawal can then be mistaken for absence of need. An ethical response must consider how its knowledge of recipients is formed, rather than assume that a publicly available service is equally accessible to everyone.

Apostolic Priority, Table Service, and the Particular Need

The Twelve's statement in verse 2 creates a real interpretive tension. *Οὐκ ἀρεστόν ἐστιν* (*Ouk areston estin*) evaluates leaving the word of God to serve tables as inappropriate for them; *καταλείψαντας* (*kataleipsantas*) identifies the relinquishment at issue (Holmes, 2010). The wording therefore expresses more than neutral task allocation: it prioritises proclamation within the Twelve's responsibilities. It need not establish that recipients' material needs are morally inferior. The assembly is asked to secure a qualified response to precisely those needs rather than abandon them.

Functional differentiation and rhetorical prioritisation operate together. The speech protects a particular apostolic responsibility, while verses 3–6 confer recognition, spiritual qualifications, and public commissioning on another undertaking. A hierarchy of apostolic commitments is compatible with this presentation; a universal hierarchy of human worth or ministerial dignity is not demonstrated by it. The narrative does not entirely dissolve the asymmetry: the Twelve initiate the arrangement and define their continuing role. Contemporary application should acknowledge that authority rather than redescribe the assembly as a meeting of interchangeable functions.

The repeated service vocabulary in verses 1, 2, and 4 links activities without making them identical. Collins's (2014) lexical caution prevents an automatic equation of every occurrence with humble benevolence; Breed's contextual argument (2017, pp. 367–368) prevents commissioned activity from being detached from compassion. Neither approach licenses deciding the ethical standing of practical care from a single gloss. In this episode, its importance emerges from the acknowledged complaint and the responsibility assigned to meet it.

Pao (2011) makes the seven's subsequent preaching an interpretive problem for a rigid opposition between waiting and proclaiming. His table-fellowship focus invites reading provision within Luke's wider presentation of communal belonging. A purely managerial reading risks making tables incidental to mission. Conversely, treating every table reference as an identical theological symbol could obscure the concrete distribution at issue. Read alongside Luke 14:12–24 and Acts 2:44–46, the episode permits material inclusion and witness to be mutually significant without erasing differentiated assignments. Stephen and Philip subsequently preach; the need that prompted their selection remains materially specific.

That specificity appears in *ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης* (*epi tēs chreias tautēs*), responsibility over this particular need or matter (Acts 6:3). The appointment's purpose therefore matters to its interpretation. This connection anchors the later ethical construction; it does not establish that Luke reports a modern follow-up procedure.

Selection, authority, and the limits of representation

The future active *καταστήσομεν* (*katastēsomen*), concerning appointment, and the aorist middle *ἐξελέξαντο* (*exelexanto*), describing the community's selection, distinguish responsibilities within the process (Acts 6:3, 5; Holmes, 2010; Tauber, 2017). Their significance lies in the actions and subjects Luke identifies, not in a grammatical proof of modern democracy. Apostolic initiative and communal involvement operate together.

All seven have Greek names, and Luke identifies Nicolaus as a proselyte from Antioch (Acts 6:5). Keener (2013, commentary on Acts 6:5) finds the concentration of Greek names significant, while noting that such names were also used more widely among Jews. Cultural connection is plausible. The names alone cannot establish the identity of every appointee or the widows' influence on the selection.

Pitkin's (1967) distinction between descriptive representation and acting for those represented clarifies what is at stake for a contemporary congregation. Familiarity with a group may help an appointee understand a concern. Substantive representation also depends on whether affected people can raise concerns, have them considered in decisions, and challenge a response without jeopardising assistance. The use of Pitkin is analogical: Acts reports communal selection and apostolic commissioning, while the proposed safeguards address present institutions.

Delegation and the Continuing Responsibility of the Community

Delegation changes who performs a responsibility; it need not remove the community's concern for the purpose being served. In Acts 6, the assembly participates in selection and the apostles commission the appointees. This public character makes the response a communal undertaking rather than an informal favour performed by isolated individuals. Contemporary application can therefore distinguish the appointee's responsibility to act from the wider institution's responsibility to provide support and respond when the arrangement becomes inadequate.

This distinction is particularly relevant when volunteers carry welfare duties. A congregation may entrust a task while withholding the time, resources, or information needed to perform it. In such a case, personal diligence cannot by itself repair institutional underprovision. Fair accountability asks what the responsible person could reasonably do, what obstacles were reported, and what support was available. It should not transfer every failure to the most visible volunteer or make recipients responsible for navigating an arrangement they did not design.

The Mission Summary: Implied Resolution and its Limits

The strongest alternative reading deserves recognition: complaint gives way to an approved proposal, public commissioning, and renewed growth. This narrative progression can reasonably imply that the disruption has been successfully addressed. Verse 7's expanding word, increasing discipleship, and priestly response reinforce Luke's favourable presentation. An interpretation that treats the episode as a failed intervention merely because individual deliveries are unreported would therefore misread its trajectory.

The mission summary gives readers grounds to infer a successful response, while the reported outcome is growth of the word and discipleship. Luke offers no account of a subsequent distribution to the affected widows. A contemporary church that reports higher attendance or greater spending therefore still needs case-relevant evidence when a promise is disputed. This distinction between narrative implication and evidence of delivery sustains the application even on a strongly positive reading of verse 7.

Canonical Premises and the Justification of Review

The canonical comparison supplies the positive theological grounds for review. The argument draws on three distinct claims about the purpose, enactment, and administration of provision.

First, Deuteronomy 26:12–15 connects allocation to specified recipients, including widows, with their eating and being satisfied. The subsequent declaration before God concerns fulfilment. The relevant premise is that designated provision should reach those for whom it is intended. Its limit is equally important: the declaration is not independent verification, and the passage prescribes no modern audit. It establishes the material purpose against which an undertaking is understood.

Second, James 2:15–17 contrasts reassuring speech with assistance to people lacking clothing and daily food. Its premise is that concern must take practical form when such assistance is called for. The passage does not require a follow-up interview or make every unsuccessful effort faithless. It does, however, prevent announcements from settling a question about whether bodily help was supplied.

Third, 2 Corinthians 8:18–21 associates entrusted administration with recognised colleagues and integrity before God and people. Its premise is human answerability for the handling of resources. Its limit is that financial probity does not itself demonstrate recipient outcomes. Accurate accounts and responsible companions address important questions without answering every question about access or receipt.

Together these premises give rise to a conditional obligation. When a church has accepted a defined responsibility and has credible reason to doubt that the promised help reached its recipient, feasible inquiry is part of carrying out the undertaking. The obligation is strongest where the potential harm is serious, where a barrier is preventable, or where similar reports recur. Its warrant is the material purpose of provision and the community's responsibility for administering it. Its form depends on what can be learned without disproportionate intrusion or delay.

Accountability before God and Accountability to Recipients

Accountability also has several audiences whose information needs differ. Donors may reasonably ask how resources were used, governing bodies may need to assess compliance with agreed criteria, and recipients may need reasons for a decision affecting them. None has an unlimited claim to another person's private circumstances. An institution can publish general allocation principles and aggregate expenditure while reserving case details for authorised review. Transparency should therefore be designed around a justified purpose and an appropriate audience, rather than equated with making every welfare record publicly available.

This also guards against a transactional understanding of church assistance. Recipients should not have to display gratitude, affirm leaders publicly, or demonstrate institutional loyalty as evidence that the programme is successful. Their dignity is not created by the distribution process. A church may ask for information necessary to assess a need or confirm delivery, but it should distinguish that legitimate inquiry from demands that protect its public image. The moral purpose of review is correction and responsible learning, not the production of favourable testimony.

Proportionality applies to how evidence is gathered. A brief confirmation through a channel chosen by the recipient may settle a routine question. A dispute involving a missed medical appointment or recurring unequal access may require independent corroboration and escalation. Any request for information should have a defined purpose, an accessible alternative when possible, and restricted access. People may give an account of what happened without publicly disclosing the circumstances that made them eligible for help.

The Accountable-Care Framework and its Completion Criterion

Recognition, participation, and responsibility describe the response narrated in Acts 6. Review is the contemporary ethical proposal supported by the canonical comparison. Table 1 translates this proposal into decisions a congregation can explain and reconsider.

Table 1 Decision Matrix for Closing a Commitment to Care

Case evidence	Disposition	Action and review
Delivery supported and material barriers addressed	Fulfilled	Record what was delivered and how it was confirmed. Communicate the outcome and the review route.
Receipt uncertain, accounts conflict, or a material barrier remains	Open for action or review	Protect urgent needs. Assign a reviewer and response time. Seek proportionate evidence and correct the barrier where feasible.
Recipient freely declines an accessible, adequately explained offer	Closed as informed refusal	Record the disposition with minimal detail. Respect the decision and explain how to request assistance again.
Scarcity or changed circumstances require a justified revision	Revised commitment or closed with unmet need	Explain the decision and record partial delivery, the remaining need, and any referral. Give a route to challenge the revision.

Note. The matrix concerns a defined undertaking. Serious or time-sensitive concerns call for prompt protective action while the case is assessed. Dispositions and review dates are recorded with only the information needed for care and accountability.

Define the undertaking at the outset by recording the assistance agreed, the person responsible, its timing, and a safe contact route. Proportionate evidence is the least burdensome information sufficient to support the particular decision in view of urgency, foreseeable harm, and disagreement. A routine handover may be established by a brief private confirmation or a reliable delivery record. A credible conflicting account requires inquiry. The reviewer may compare the recipient's account with a provider record, a witness, or other available evidence, taking account of each source's limits. Lack of a signature or reply is insufficient on its own to determine either delivery or refusal.

A barrier is significant when it plausibly changes whether the person can obtain the agreed help in time, use it safely, or receive it without a substantial or unequal burden. The decision should identify the barrier and document a correction, an agreed accessible alternative, or the reason it could not be remedied. Appropriate reconsideration requires a known and safe contact route, a named decision-maker who can review relevant evidence and authorise corrective action, and a response time tied to urgency. Where the original handler is implicated, another person should review the concern. The recipient should receive an accessible explanation and know how to raise credible new evidence, a material factual error, or a barrier missed in the initial decision.

Proportionality, Scarcity, and Difficult Cases

Scarcity may warrant narrowing a promise prospectively, making a referral, or agreeing on partial assistance. Reasons should identify the allocation rule and available resources while protecting other recipients' privacy. Where an accepted commitment must change, the church should communicate the revision and record what was delivered and what remains unmet. Recording a justified revision as its own disposition preserves a

truthful account of the original undertaking and allows later review of whether scarcity falls disproportionately on a particular group.

In the first hypothetical case, a congregation undertakes to arrange transport to a clinic by a specified time. The treasurer can show payment, while the recipient reports that the vehicle never arrived. The alleged failure of transport is material because it could prevent timely access to care. The case stays open while a designated reviewer checks the conflicting accounts and arranges an urgent alternative if possible. If later evidence establishes that transport reached the person in time, the reviewer can explain a finding of fulfilment. If the appointment was missed and a replacement trip is arranged, the record should show the original failure and the remedy. If a later appointment creates a distinct need, it can become a new undertaking.

In a second hypothetical case, a widow declines a food parcel after learning that recipients must collect it publicly at a time when she depends on someone else for transport. The ministry first checks privately whether timing, transport, or disclosure makes the offer inaccessible. If a discreet home delivery is accepted and confirmed, the undertaking can be marked fulfilled. If the recipient freely declines an accessible alternative after receiving enough information to decide, the record can close as informed refusal. If no safe alternative is available, the record should show the unresolved barrier and the action taken, with a contact route for reconsideration. Each disposition carries a different implication for later evaluation of access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation should begin with a small, clearly bounded ministry, such as visitation or emergency assistance. Before introducing new forms, leaders should map the existing route from a request to a decision and then to action. A discussion with people who have used that route can identify where responsibility becomes unclear or communication stops. This initial mapping establishes which problem the revised arrangement is intended to solve.

The congregation should then agree who may make routine decisions, which cases require referral, and who will consider a concern involving the usual decision-maker. Members should receive an accessible explanation. Training can use realistic scenarios to clarify when confidentiality requires protection, when information may be shared for assistance, and when a conflict of interest requires another person to act.

A limited record should identify the undertaking, the responsible contact, and any agreed point for checking progress. The record should be available only to those who need it for the task. When a concern is resolved, the institution should decide what information must be retained and for how long. Retention should support legitimate continuity and accountability without preserving sensitive details indefinitely merely because they were once collected. Members should know who can access their welfare information.

After an initial period appropriate to the ministry, those responsible should examine a small selection of completed and unresolved undertakings. The selection should include a difficult case and, where ethically feasible, a person who stopped using the service. The purpose is to discover whether the new arrangement addressed its identified problem. Findings should inform a specific decision to continue, adjust, or discontinue a procedure rather than produce a report with no assigned response.

A pilot should examine whether cases with reported barriers received timely corrective action, whether recipients could use the review route, and what documentation cost volunteers and recipients. Compare case records with confidential accounts where consent and safe access allow. Patterns of unresolved exclusion should inform resource allocation. Closure counts alone cannot show which promises were fulfilled, changed, or closed after refusal.

IMPLICATIONS

For theological education, the analysis provides a way to connect biblical interpretation with institutional judgment. Students can be asked to identify the evidence for a historical claim, explain the theological warrant for a practical proposal, and assess the consequences of alternative procedures. This encourages accountable

reasoning: an attractive recommendation must be supported at each stage of the argument rather than authenticated by attaching a biblical reference.

For research, the framework generates questions about reporting access, participation, role clarity, and unresolved needs. Future studies should include people who stopped requesting assistance, not only leaders and current recipients. Claims about numerical growth would require a separate causal design.

A further research priority concerns disagreements about what was promised. Before comparing accounts of delivery, investigators should establish whether leaders and recipients understood the undertaking in the same way. An ambiguous promise can produce conflicting but sincere judgments about fulfilment. Interviews should therefore distinguish expectations, agreed commitments, actions taken, and experienced consequences. Examining these stages could show whether a difficulty arose from communication, execution, or an unsuitable response to the underlying need. This would make the framework more useful for diagnosis while preserving the distinction between conceptual justification and evidence gathered from actual ministries.

CONCLUSION

Acts 6:1–7 portrays a church responding to neglected material provision through communal deliberation and entrusted ministry. Its positive narrative resolution is consistent with a constructive ethic of review. The canonical comparison grounds that ethic in the purpose of reaching intended recipients, the practical character of assistance, and the answerability of those who administer it.

The article's contribution is a decision rule for particular promises of care. It gives evidential and procedural content to a judgment that financial stewardship and programme-level evaluation may inform. Recording fulfilment, continuing corrective work, and documenting justified alternative dispositions answer different questions. Keeping those decisions visible makes it possible to respect informed refusal, account honestly for scarcity, and respond to continuing need. Congregational pilots can assess whether the rule improves correction and access at a proportionate cost.

REFERENCES

1. Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework. *European Law Journal, 13*(4), 447–468. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0386.2007.00378.x
2. Breed, G. (2017). Diakonia: In conversation with John N. Collins. *Ecclesiology, 13*(3), 349–368. https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-01303005
3. Breed, G. (2019). The essence and content of the work of the diakonos according to the New Testament. *Scriptura, 118*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.7833/118-1-1450
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, November 20). *CDC Program Evaluation Framework.* https://www.cdc.gov/evaluation/php/evaluation-framework/index.html
5. Collins, J. N. (2014). *Diakonia studies: Critical issues in ministry.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199367573.001.0001
6. Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. (n.d.). *ECFA standards.* https://www.ecfa.org/about/standards/
7. Friedl, A. (2016). The reception of the Deuteronomic social law in the primitive church of Jerusalem according to the Book of Acts. *Acta Theologica*, Supplementum 23, 176–200. https://doi.org/10.38140/at.v0i23.2775
8. Gooder, P. (2006). Diakonia in the New Testament: A dialogue with John N. Collins. *Ecclesiology, 3*(1), 33–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744136606067678
9. Hill, C. C. (1996). Acts 6.1–8.4: Division or diversity? In B. Witherington III (Ed.), *History, literature, and society in the Book of Acts* (pp. 129–153). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511555176.007
10. Holmes, M. W. (Ed.). (2010). *The Greek New Testament: SBL edition.* Society of Biblical Literature and Logos Bible Software. https://www.sbl-site.org/resources/digital-texts/sbl-greek-new-testament/
11. Keener, C. S. (2013). *Acts: An exegetical commentary: Vol. 2. 3:1–14:28.* Baker Academic.

12. Morrison, E. W. (2014). Employee voice and silence. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*, 173–197. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091328
13. Mukuka, C. K. (2025). A missiological perspective on moral leadership and social justice. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9*(9), 7825–7835. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000637
14. *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible.* (2021). Bible Gateway. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%206%3A1-7&version=NRSVUE
15. Osmer, R. R. (2008). *Practical Theology: An Introduction.* Eerdmans. https://www.eerdmans.com/9780802817655/practical-theology/
16. Pao, D. W. (2011). Waiters or preachers: Acts 6:1–7 and the Lukan table fellowship motif. *Journal of Biblical Literature, 130*(1), 127–144. https://doi.org/10.2307/41304191
17. Pitkin, H. F. (1967). *The concept of representation.* University of California Press. https://www.ucpress.edu/books/the-concept-of-representation/paper
18. Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26). Broadman Press.
19. Sell, P. W. (2010). The seven in Acts 6 as a ministry team. *Bibliotheca Sacra, 167*(665), 58–67. https://www.galaxie.com/article/bsac167-665-04
20. Stone, S. (2024). Overlooked by the Spirit-filled: Womanist Pentecostalism and the case of the Hellenistic widows. *Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, 44*(1), 26–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/27691616.2024.2334051
21. Tauber, J. K. (Ed.). (2017). *MorphGNT: SBLGNT edition* (Version 6.12). https://github.com/morphgnt/sblgnt
22. Wallace, D. B. (1996). *Greek grammar beyond the basics: An exegetical syntax of the New Testament.* Zondervan. https://zondervanacademic.com/products/greek-grammar-beyond-the-basics