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ABSTRACT

A MINISTRY FOR DEACONS AND DEACONESSES OF THE
MT. CALVARY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
THAT REFLECTS THE MINISTRY OF THE
DEACONS IN THE FIRST CENTURY
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

by

Vincent E. White, Sr.

Adviser: Kenley D. Hall

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Theological Seminary

Title: A MINISTRY FOR DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES OF THE MT. CALVARY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH THAT REFLECTS THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACONS IN THE FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Name of researcher: Vincent E. White, Sr.

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Kenley D. Hall, D.Min.

Date completed: December 2010

Problem

The work of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is reflective of the tradition and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the role of deacons and deaconesses since its early history. The church has provided very little training for these officers. Therefore, the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church have not been adequately informed of their identity as spiritual leaders who are responsible for looking after the social needs of the widows, sick, and poor. They are to manage conflicts and solve relational problems that arise among the members, teach and preach the Word of God, and nurture the members of the church. These responsibilities were carried out by the

deacons of the first century Christian church, and should be carried out by the deacons and deaconesses today.

Method

Research was done of the New Testament account of Jesus' servant model for ministry and the ministry of the deacons that served the first century Christian church. This theological foundation along with a literature review provided a framework for developing and implementing a ministry for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that would reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church.

Surveys were mailed to 103 of the 179 non-Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city of Huntsville as supplemental research. The purpose of the surveys was to identify "best practices" among other churches in both the training and the ministry of both deacons and deaconesses that were built upon a similar theological foundation.

Results

The project challenged the status quo ministry of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church, and sought to create a "new structure" that would better meet the needs of the church. A number of areas that troubled the deacons and deaconesses were addressed. Opportunities were created and these officers were empowered to change their "troubled areas." The following opportunities were created: (1) they were assigned to work with the elders on visitation teams, (2) given opportunities to speak at mid-week prayer meetings, (3) given opportunities to conduct Bible studies, (4) given opportunities to serve as Bible workers, and (5) given

opportunities to disciple new members. A few of the deacons and deaconesses took advantage of these opportunities and got involved. This was a major factor in the increased number of baptisms at the conclusion of the project. There were twenty persons baptized in 2008 when the project ended, versus four in 2005 when the project began.

Conclusions

The deacons that served the first century Christian church were ordained to take care of the needs of the poor, to solve problems that arose in the church, and to teach the Word of God. Although the New Testament reveals little information about the existence of female deacons or deaconesses, based upon the context of 1 Tim 3:11, the Greek word translated as “wives” should be translated as “women,” meaning women deacons, and not wives of deacons. Also as early as the third century, clear evidence substantiates that female deacons/deaconesses existed. Some of the evidences are documented in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (third century), the *Apostolic Constitutions* (late fourth century), inscriptions written on the tombstones of female deacons/deaconesses during the fourth through the seventh centuries, and current literature from both Protestant and Catholic writers. According to these sources, female deacons/deaconesses ministered to the needs of the female members of the church, cared for the poor and sick women, assisted women at baptisms, greeted the women entering the church and directed them to their seats, and taught them the Word of God.

According to the literature review, there are four important roles in which deacons and deaconesses should function. They are to function as (1) teachers of God’s Word,

(2) care givers to the sick and needy, (3) conflict managers, and (4) physical plant managers.

Unfortunately, due to the tradition and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, have been affected subconsciously by several underlying factors that have made it very difficult for them to become motivated to embrace these roles and change the status quo. The underlying factors are: (1) very little was recorded about the work of deacons and deaconesses during the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, (2) other departments were established that eventually supplanted the role and function of deacons and deaconesses, (3) deacons and deaconesses have been marginalized and relegated to take care of the church facilities, collect tithes and offerings, and serve during Holy Communion and baptism, and (4) the church discontinued the ordination of deaconesses for almost a century but is in continual discussion about the ordination of female elders and female pastors. Though unintentionally, the church has been sending a negative message over the years to these officers concerning their value and identity as spiritual leaders. Seventh-day Adventist deacons and deaconesses have become accustomed to this form of ministry and find it difficult to change.

In order to overcome this, I recommend that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church become intentional in its efforts to restore deacons and deaconesses to their biblical position as spiritual leaders of the church. When electing people to serve as deacons and deaconesses, elect those who meet the biblical qualifications so that they will have the spiritual gifts and commitment to fulfill the responsibilities required of that

office. Do not limit these officers to collecting tithes and offerings, serving during Holy Communion and baptisms, and cleaning the church, but utilize their leadership skills by electing each deacon and deaconess, as is possible, to serve as the leader of at least one other department in the church, such as: Personal Ministries leader, Community Services director, Dorcas Society leader, Women's Ministries leader, Sabbath School superintendent/teacher, etc. Those deacons and deaconesses that may not be elected to lead other departments should be encouraged to assist. Assign deacons and deaconesses along with the elders to departments to serve as liaisons for the pastor. Assign them along with the elders to visit the members. Assign them along with the elders to facilitate mid-week prayer meetings. Train them to serve as Bible workers for the church. Train them to resolve conflicts. Provide them with sufficient resources to care for the sick and needy. Empower them to serve as the physical plant managers.

My recommendations to the Seventh-day Adventist Church are (1) to provide training for deacons and deaconesses beyond what has been traditionally given, (2) invite pastors and elders to attend deacon and deaconess training sessions so that they can better understand the role of these officers and the value that they have to contribute to the work, (3) place as much emphasis on the development of these officers as is placed on the development of local elders, women, singles, children, and youth, (4) sponsor retreats and summits for them, (5) produce a quarterly magazine and a handbook for them, so that the concepts presented in this project be taught to the deacons and deaconesses of newly organized churches in the field so the current trends will not continue to be perpetuated. I also recommend that further study be done on the broader implications of this systemic problem that is the result of the church's hierarchal structure.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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To my wife, Audrey

who has been a source of encouragement to me,
and the main supporter of my interest and work in the
area of deacon and deaconess training. She is a wonderful
Christian, wife, mother, and friend

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I am grateful for the mentoring of the deceased (2004) Elder Eric C. Ward, former pastor of the Oakwood College (now University) Seventh-day Adventist Church, Huntsville, Alabama. While assisting him, I grew to respect and appreciate the sacred work of deacons and deaconesses.

Thanks to Elder Steve Norman, Communication Secretary of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, for recommending me to Elder Joseph W. McCoy, former president of the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to conduct a training seminar for the deacons and deaconesses of our conference on January 22-24, 1999. It was that event that challenged me to study the work of these officers.

Finally, thanks to Elder Wayne Martin, a close friend and colleague, who informed me that he had enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Leadership Cohort at Andrews University Theological Seminary and invited me to accompany him on this journey. The journey has been an exciting learning experience for me.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

I was assigned to pastor the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church in Huntsville, Alabama on July 23, 2005. The church has a book membership of 580 members, with a weekly attendance of 250-300. It is located in a rapidly growing city that has four other Seventh-day Adventist churches and several others in neighboring cities. Many denominational workers and other Seventh-day Adventists migrate to this area to retire. Because of the Oakwood Adventist Elementary School, Academy, and University, many parents relocate here to give their children a seamless Christian education. Due to these dynamics, the church receives most of its new members through membership transfers rather than baptisms or profession of faith.

Mt. Calvary was founded in 1979, the year that I began my studies at Oakwood University (it was Oakwood College then). My wife, son, and I were charter members of this church. I was fortunate as a student to serve as an assistant pastor from 1980 to 1982. I was also privileged to serve as pastor to two churches in the neighboring communities of Harvest and Athens from 1995 to 2000. This is my third time residing in this area. Therefore, my wife and I were excited about returning to pastor this congregation.

The deceased Elder Eric C. Ward (2004) was the founding pastor of the Mt.

Calvary Church. He pastored the church for five years, while also serving as the pastor of the Oakwood College Church. It was while working with him at these churches, especially Oakwood, that I developed a deep respect and admiration for the ministry of deacons and deaconesses. I observed how they served the congregation with dignity. They dressed uniformly and were highly visible throughout the church. They moved with precision when they collected the tithes and offerings and served the Lord's Supper. They were always willing to assist the pastoral staff and members. They worked diligently to provide an atmosphere that enabled the visitors and members to enjoy their worship experience. They also kept the Oakwood College Church secure and immaculate at all times.

Throughout my ministry, I have had an interest in working with deacons and deaconesses. I have tried to duplicate the experience that I just described at every church that I have pastored. Therefore, I want the same for the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church.

My passion is to train and motivate the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church to develop their ministry so that it will impact the growth of the church spiritually and numerically. I want to help them to rediscover their biblical roots and get excited about what God has called them to do. I want their influence for good to be felt throughout the congregation. I want to challenge them to cease following the status quo. I want them to return to the biblical model of ministry for deacons and deaconesses as conflict managers, social workers, care givers for the sick, spiritual counselors, Bible teachers, and soul winners. It is with this passion that I pursue

this project for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to develop a ministry for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that will reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church.

Statement of the Problem

The work of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is reflective of the tradition and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the role of deacons and deaconesses since its early history. The church has provided very little training for these officers. Therefore, the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church have not been adequately informed of their identity as spiritual leaders who are responsible for looking after the social needs of the widows, sick, and poor. They are to manage conflicts and solve relational problems that arise among the members, teach and preach the Word of God, and nurture the members of the church. These responsibilities were carried out by the deacons of the first century Christian church, and should be carried out by the deacons and deaconesses today.

Justification for the Project

The current ministry performed by the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is limited to collecting tithes and offerings,

preparing for and serving during the Foot Washing and Holy Communion services, assisting candidates at baptismal services, and maintaining the upkeep of the church.

Other departments and individuals of the church are carrying out responsibilities that belong to the deacons and deaconesses. This has caused these officers to become uncertain about what their roles are.

There is a lack of spiritual growth among the membership and a lack of kingdom growth through baptisms at the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. The major cause for this is the infighting that has occurred over the years.

Expectations from this Project

This project will give the deacons, deaconesses, and members of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church a greater awareness of the multifaceted ministry of deacons and deaconesses. It will affirm the spiritual nature of the “call” to serve as a deacon or deaconess. It will affirm the gifts that God has given to these officers. It will inform these officers of their duties and responsibilities. It will help them to understand that the church needs them to successfully fulfill its mission. This project should also change the members’ perspectives of deacons and deaconesses, give them a deeper respect and appreciation for their ministry, and cause them to become more sensitive and supportive of the deacons and deaconesses.

This project will challenge the deacons and deaconesses to become servant-leaders that provide for the physical, social, and spiritual needs of the church members that are most vulnerable. The members that are most vulnerable include the widows, orphans, sick, poor, elderly, single parents, unemployed, bereaved, physically and

mentally handicapped, substance abusers, homeless, and battered and abused victims.

This project will improve the quality of life of the members.

This project will empower the deacons and deaconesses to manage conflicts and address relational problems that arise in the church among the members. This has the potential of reducing the infighting within the church.

This project will inspire the deacons and deaconess to teach and preach God's Word through personal and public evangelism. This includes sharing their faith with non-members, giving them Bible studies, leading them to make a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and working as Bible workers in evangelistic meetings. This would increase church growth through baptisms.

This project will involve the deacons and deaconesses in discipling newly baptized members and nurturing established members. This would include the development of a New Member Ministry, visiting members, teaching the Scriptures at mid-week prayer meetings, teaching the Sabbath school lessons, and conducting Bible study groups among church members. These activities would increase the spiritual growth of the membership.

This project will help me develop my leadership and equipping skills as a pastor, and provide strategies for other pastors to lead their deacons and deaconesses into a broader minister.

Finally, this project could be a resource to help the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America at the conference, union, and division levels. It could assist the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America to provide training for deacons and deaconesses beyond what they have been given traditionally.

Delimitations

There are four delimitations to this project. The first one is that I decided not to disclose to the church board, congregation, deacons, or deaconesses that I was going to conduct this project. Although I told them that I was working on a doctoral degree, I was afraid that telling them about the project would skew the outcome. My logic was that some of the deacons and deaconesses would cooperate because they wanted to help me, and others would not cooperate because they were not interested. I wanted the outcome to be based solely upon their genuine desire to embrace the principles that I would share with them, and their willingness to implement the principles for the purpose of improving their ministry. I felt that an objective approach would produce an unbiased training program that could be replicated by other pastors in working with their deacons and deaconesses. However, I did mention the project to the board of elders so that they would understand why I was spending time meeting with the deacons and deaconesses. I eventually told the deacons and deaconesses at a retreat that I took them on.

The second delimitation is that I chose not to hold the deacons and deaconesses to the level of accountability that I would have held them to if the environment in which I was working was supportive. My decision was based on the assumption that if it was perceived that I was being too persistent, the project would be viewed as a selfish undertaking. Therefore, the deacons and deaconesses did not follow-through on assignments that they agreed to accomplish.

Third, the survey that I used was not tested for its validity and reliability. It was used in this project to get an idea of the kinds of training and ministries that churches of other denominations have in place that involve deacons and deaconesses. Therefore, I did

not think that the survey needed to be tested.

The fourth delimitation is that I did not include any of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city in the survey. The reason why I did not include them is because I am familiar with their general practices. My familiarity with their practices is due to the interaction that I have had with the pastors, deacons, and deaconesses in the city throughout the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists that have attended training seminars that I have conducted for them in the past.

Limitations

There are three limitations to this project. First of all, this project only reflects the results of deacons and deaconesses who have served in this office for years at a long established Seventh-day Adventist church. It does not reflect the greater outcome that could possibly be realized by a newly formed group of deacons and deaconesses in a newly established Seventh-day Adventist church where both members and officers are open to following the biblical model, and are not resistant to change.

The second limitation is the environment in which the project was conducted. During a church board meeting, certain influential board members voiced their opinion that my receiving a doctorate would benefit me and not the church. Shortly afterward, complaints were made to my conference president that I was spending too much time on my studies. Therefore, there was an unsupportive environment for this project.

Finally, out of the 103 surveys that I mailed to the non-Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city, only eleven responded. Of the eleven respondents, only three had both deacons and deaconesses serving their congregation, six had only deacons, and two

had neither deacons nor deaconesses. This low response rate of 10.67% is problematic because it does not give a true representative sample.

Definitions of Terms

Terms utilized within the report as they apply to this report are as follows:

Deacon refers to an officer in the Seventh-day Adventist church elected “to serve in eminently practical ways, caring for several aspects of church services, as well as for church property.”¹ They participate in visiting church members, preparing for baptismal services, assisting at Holy Communion, and caring for the sick and the poor.

Deaconess is the female counterpart to deacon.

Denominational Workers are persons that hold official credentials issued by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and are employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Evangelical refers to “a Christian church believing in personal conversion and the inerrancy of the Bible especially the four Gospels. Marked by ardent or zealous enthusiasm for a cause.”²

Formal Worship is a “dignified service that is not governed by the spontaneity of the moment or the spontaneity of the officiant. . . . It accepts the constraint of the consistent and predictable pattern.”³

Friendship Evangelism refers to being friendly and performing acts of kindness

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *Church Manual* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 2005), 55.

²“Evangelical,” <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=evangelical> (accessed February 19, 2009).

³John Freed, “Liturgical Worship: Assets and Liabilities of the Formal Model,” The Freed School Blog, entry posted July 25, 2006, http://freedschool.blogspot.com/2006_07_01_archive.html (accessed February 19, 2009).

to break down barriers so that the gospel can be shared.

Inreach refers to ministries that nurture church members by meeting their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs.

Outreach refers to ministries that nurture non-church members by meeting their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs.

Seamless Christian Education is the ability to attend Seventh-day Adventist schools from primary to university level without having to relocate.

Description of the Project Process

Theological reflection was centered on three areas. The first area is Jesus' ministry as a servant-leader. The second area is the role and function of deacons in the first century Christian church. The third area is the involvement of women in the first century Christian church who served as female deacons.

Current literature was reviewed. This included books and articles relating to the ministry of deacons and deaconesses from the first century to the twenty-first century. Research was done to discover the role that deacons and deaconesses played in the early Seventh-day Adventist church. Implications were drawn from the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church and applied to the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A survey was mailed to 103 of the 179 non-Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city of Huntsville. The churches' head deacon, head deaconess, pastor, or pastor's designee was requested to fill out the survey and return it to me for tabulation. Ministries that are being used by these churches that are in harmony with the biblical principles

followed by the deacons of the first century Christian church were identified and considered for use by the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A training program was developed and used to train the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. The purpose was to train and empower the deacons and deaconesses to manage conflicts, solve relational problems, teach the Word of God, and nurture the members of the church.

The program began with the presentation of a series of seven sermons delivered to the congregation at the divine worship services on Sabbath for seven weeks. The series was entitled *The Life of the Early Church*. The sermons were taken from the book of Acts. The goal was to highlight the principles that the members of the first century Christian church used that caused them to grow spiritually and numerically. The Mt. Calvary church members were challenged to implement those principles. Special emphasis was given to the role that the first century deacons played in church growth.

The deacons and deaconesses were taken through three training seminars. The first one was conducted at the church on September 25-27 and October 3, 2005. After church elections and new deacons and deaconesses were elected, I refined the training program and presented it to them at a weekend retreat at The Cliff House Christian Retreat, Woodville, Alabama, May 18-20, 2007. The last training took place at another weekend retreat on the campus of Oakwood University, February 29-March 1, 2008. The following topics were covered during the seminars: *The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Problem Solvers*; *The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Soul Winners*; *The Biblical Qualifications of the Deacon and Deaconess*; *The Work of the*

Deacon and Deaconess; Serving During the Services of the Church; Visitation Techniques; Providing Quality Care for Families in Crisis; Telephone Ministry; and Welcoming and Nurturing New Members.

Finally, an evaluation was done at the conclusion of the project. It consisted of comparing the inreach and outreach ministries done by the deacons and deaconesses in 2005 when the project began, with the inreach and outreach ministries done by them at the end of 2008 when the project ended. The areas that were evaluated were: membership visitation; assistance given to widows, orphans, sick, poor, and other vulnerable persons; personal and public evangelism; baptisms; and the discipling of new members.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY FOR DEACONS AND DEACONESSES

Introduction

The ministry of Jesus as a servant provides the foundation for a theology of ministry for deacons and deaconesses. Jesus defined His ministry in terms of service by stating that He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt 20:28). The Greek words for “to be ministered unto” (διακονηθῆναι) and “to minister” (διακονῆσαι) come from the root word διακονέω which is derived from the word for deacon (διάκονος). This implies that deacons and deaconesses are people whose ministry is to render service to others. They are called to follow the example of Jesus, who, in His earthly ministry, was the “Deacon” par excellence.

The deacons of the first century Christian church were elected based upon spiritual qualifications—an “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). These qualifications enabled them to carry out their responsibilities of solving relational problems among the members, caring for the needs of the poor, and teaching the Word of God. Scriptural evidence and extra-biblical sources indicate that female deacons or deaconesses served the first century Christian church. They ministered to the

women, especially to those who were poor and sick. Deaconesses have continued to serve in various church denominations throughout the centuries.

Although very little is written about the work of deacons and deaconesses in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, these officers did exist, and still do. The church has always recognized and embraced the theological grounds for their ministry. However, the major challenge is that the other departments that the Seventh-day Adventist church has created are carrying out many of the responsibilities that the deacons and deaconesses did in the first century Christian church. Therefore, these officers are required to do very little today.

This chapter will present the following topics: Jesus' Model of Ministry as a Servant, The Role of Deacons of the First Century Christian Church, Female Deacons of the First Century Christian Church, and The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses in the Early Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Jesus' Model of Ministry as a Servant

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah, when writing about the first advent of Jesus, described His life's ministry as a servant. In Isa 61:1-2, he identified Jesus' ministry as a servant to the meek, brokenhearted, captives, and those that mourn. In Isa 53:11, God, through the prophet, referred to Jesus as "my righteous servant [who will] justify many; for he shall bear their iniquity." Throughout His life on earth, Jesus fulfilled these prophecies concerning Himself. He ministered to the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of those He came in contact with. Most of Jesus' ministry was devoted to nurturing and training His disciples and healing the sick. Ellen G. White stated,

During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching. His miracles testified to the truth of His words, that He came not to destroy, but to save. The Saviour made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of His work. He imparted earthly blessings, that He might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of His grace.¹

As Jesus went about healing the afflicted and preaching the gospel, He took His disciples along with Him. This was His method of training them for their future work of ministry. As their faith in Him increased and they learned to follow His instructions, He sent them out to do as they had seen Him do. Upon returning from one assignment that He sent them on, they rejoiced that they had accomplished the same results that they had seen Him accomplish—devils were subjected to them through His name. His response to them was, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17, 20).

There was an important lesson for His disciples to learn in this response. Jesus wanted them to recognize the self-destructive danger that comes with the love for power. Commenting on this text, Ellen White stated, “Rejoice not in the possession of power, lest you lose sight of your dependence upon God. Be careful lest self-sufficiency come in, and you work in your own strength, rather than in the spirit and strength of your Master. Self is ever ready to take the credit if any measure of success attends the work.”²

The concept that Jesus was trying to instill in His disciples was that ministry is not about power, control, and greatness as viewed by worldly standards, but it is about service to God and humanity. He stated this principle succinctly on the occasion

¹Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (1905; repr., Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1942), 19-20.

²Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (1898; repr., Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 493.

when His disciples were jockeying for positions of power in His kingdom. He said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:25-28).

Here, Jesus indicated that His life’s mission was to serve others rather than being served Himself. This was His model for ministry. The Greek words for “to be ministered unto” (διακονηθῆναι) and “to minister” (διακονῆσαι) come from the root word διακονέω which is derived from the word for deacon (διάκονος)—masculine and feminine. It is when the article is used with the word that the gender distinction is made—ὁ διάκονος (masculine), ἡ διάκονος (feminine). The word for deacon (διάκονος) means “one who renders service to another; an attendant, servant.”³

D. Edmond Hiebert, commenting on the above passage of Scripture, says,

Jesus taught that believers must voluntarily serve other believers, motivated and inspired by His own example of service (Matt. 20:26-28; Mark 10:45). The terms thus came to denote loving service to brothers and neighbors, which is to be the distinguishing mark of Christ’s followers. Jesus taught His disciples that instead of lording it over others, they must be willing to serve others (Matt. 20:25-26). Such service was a way to greatness among them, ‘Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant’ (διάκονος); Matt. 20:26). Those who aspire to be leaders must voluntarily stoop to serve.⁴

Henry Webb states,

³Harold K. Moulton, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, rev. ed. (1978), s.v. “διάκονος.”

⁴D. Edmond Hiebert, “Behind the Word ‘Deacon’: A New Testament Study,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (April-June 1983): 157.

The primary model for all Christians is Jesus Christ himself. He “left you an example, so that you would follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21, GNB). Jesus came to serve.

All Jesus’ followers were to serve by providing ministry in his name. The title *diakonos* (servant) applied to every Christian, but the apostle Paul also used it in a special sense for specific church leaders (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3). Translators chose not to translate literally in those situations but to make a new English word *deacon* out of the Greek word for servant. Thus deacons carry both the name of Christ and the name of servant.⁵

Ellen White shared this insight on Jesus’ life as a servant. She says,

Among His disciples Christ was in every sense a caretaker, a burden bearer. He shared their poverty, He practiced self-denial on their account, He went before them to smooth the more difficult places, and soon He would consummate His work on earth by laying down His life. The principle on which Christ acted is to actuate the members of the church which is His body.⁶

Herein lies the connection of the life ministry of Jesus as a servant with all who have determined to follow Him. He has called them to a self-denying ministry of service. Therefore, the challenge that He presented to His followers when He was here on earth is applicable to His present day followers. The challenge is, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt 16:24).

Hiebert states that “in His earthly ministry Jesus Himself was the ‘Deacon’ par excellence. He set the example not only for deacons but for all believers.”⁷ James Monroe Barnett likens the deacon as a symbol of the church’s ministry. He says,

The origin of diaconate and its development in the first centuries reveals above all the deacon as symbol. He is the symbol par excellence of the Church’s ministry. In the deacon is seen the indelible character of *service* Christ put on his ministry and of

⁵Henry Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1980), 11-12.

⁶Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 550.

⁷Hiebert, 160.

servant on those who minister. He is the embodiment of the first principle of this ministry which is *sent to serve*.⁸

The Role of Deacons of the First Century Christian Church

The biblical account of the selection of deacons in the first century Christian church is recorded in Acts 6:1-8:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people (Acts 6:1-8).

Ellen White gave the background surrounding the selection of these deacons. She stated that “the early church was made up of many classes of people, of various nationalities.”⁹ This was due to the converting power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2 informs us that the Holy Spirit fell upon many of the dispersed Jews of every nation that had gathered at Jerusalem for this feast day. Among that group, were those commonly known as Grecians or Hellenistic Jews. There was a division between

⁸James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate—A Full and Equal Order: A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church’s Total Ministry and a Proposal for Renewal* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 141.

⁹Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 87.

the Grecian Jews and the Palestinian Jews. They were divided by their language and culture. One group spoke Greek and grew up absorbed by the Greek culture. The other group spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and grew up in Palestine. Despite the existing differences of these two groups, the Holy Spirit brought them together in harmony and in love. They were of one accord and had all things in common. They sold what they had and divided it among themselves. They visited each other daily and ate together with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:1, 44-46).

The unity of spirit was short lived as old prejudices of the past resurfaced. Feelings of distrust, jealousy, and suspicion brought about faultfinding and murmuring. Allegations were made that the Grecian widows were being neglected in the “daily ministrations.”¹⁰ The RSV translation calls it the “daily distribution” (Acts 6:1). Ellen White referred to it as the “daily distribution of assistance.”¹¹ However, the Greek word for “ministrations” is διακονία. This is the office and the work of a διάκονος (deacon).

As stated in the previous section of this paper, these words describe the life ministry of Jesus, according to Matt 20:28. It is from these words that we get the word deacon, which means to minister or to serve. Webb observes:

English Bibles usually translate the Greek word *diakonos* as “servant” or “minister.” However in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 the translators created from the Greek word *diakonos* a new English word, *deacon*. These passages seem to refer to specific church leaders or officers who were closely linked with bishops (pastors). Apparently, as the number of believers increased and new churches were begun, the congregations formalized the servant role into a more specific church office. The high

¹⁰Vincent E. White, Sr., *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses* (Huntsville, AL: AVA’s Book Publishers, 1999), xvi-xvii.

¹¹Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 88.

qualifications for deacons indicate that the New Testament congregations looked to these church leaders as examples in ministry to persons.¹²

Kenneth D. Catoe states that “diakonos literally means ‘through dust.’ Although the origin of the word is questioned, the concept of raising dust suggests a servant hastening to serve or to wait on his master.”¹³ Hiebert also mentions this questionable origin of the word; but adds, “More probably the verbal root was διήκω, ‘to reach from one place to another,’ akin to the verb διώκω, ‘to hasten after, to pursue.’ Then the root idea is one who reaches out with diligence and persistence to render a service on behalf of others. This would imply that the deacon reaches out to render love-prompted service to others energetically and persistently.”¹⁴

Therefore, as we trace the roots of the office of deacons, we discover that the reason that they came into existence was to serve and to share the responsibilities of the work. They came into existence because of a problem. Therefore, the primary function of the first century deacons was to solve problems that arose in the church. The *SDA Bible Commentary* gives this description of the problem of taking care of the poor:

Since there were no church buildings in that early day, nor indeed until nearly two centuries later, and since no money was needed yet for the salaries of ministers or the dispatching of missionaries, the funds donated were used for the support of the poor and needy. In any large congregation of five thousand to ten thousand, there would ordinarily be a large number of such members. But the transitional difficulty of entering the Christian fellowship, in a city as prejudiced against the Nazarene as Jerusalem was at that time, must have meant to many a dislocation in employment

¹²Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church*, 74-75.

¹³Kenneth D. Catoe, “Equipping Deacons for Ministry” (D.Min. dissertation, Drew University, 1989), 13.

¹⁴Hiebert, 153.

and serious social and economic disabilities. Doubtless the seven men had much work to do in taking care of the needs of the poor and the deprived in the congregations.¹⁵

David S. Dockery further describes this problem by saying,

A feature of early church life was readiness to meet the needs of the poor. The growth of the church, however, prevented this ministry from being carried out as well as it should have been. It was inevitable that with the development of different groups in the church and the difficulty of ongoing communication between these groups, someone would be overlooked.¹⁶

The deacons of the early church were not simply ordinary men, because the church was not confronted with an ordinary problem. The murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews over the distribution of assistance was simply the presenting or surface problem, which was symptomatic of a larger spiritual problem, that was even greater than their cultural differences.¹⁷ Ellen White described the problem as follows: “The enemy [Satan] succeeded in arousing the suspicions of some who had formerly been in the habit of looking with jealousy on their brethren in the faith and of finding fault with their spiritual leaders.”¹⁸ From this, it can be concluded that Satan had launched a spiritual attack against the church in an attempt to hinder it from growing and ultimately to destroy it. “Therefore, the church needed men ‘of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom’ (Acts 6:3) to look beyond the symptoms and see the real issues, then bring about resolution.”¹⁹

¹⁵“The Deaconate,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (1956; repr., Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 6:25.

¹⁶David S. Dockery, “Acts 6-12: The Christian Mission Beyond Jerusalem,” *Review and Expositor* 87 (Summer 1990): 423-424.

¹⁷Vincent White, xvii-xviii.

¹⁸Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 88.

¹⁹Vincent White, xviii.

The spiritual qualities required of the deacons of the first century Christian church strongly imply that their calling was a spiritual calling, and their responsibilities were far greater than just waiting on tables. Nancy Vyhmeister suggests, “Theirs was evidently a spiritual occupation, for the requirements were spiritual, personal integrity, and blamelessness.”²⁰

Although the evidence is clear enough for me to support the idea that the seven men selected in Acts 6 were deacons, others have suggested that they were not. Barnett presents this argument:

Further, the Seven are not called “deacons” here or elsewhere in the New Testament, and it is almost certain that they did not hold that office. Their office was unique and was not continued in the Church. The word “deacon” is, in fact, never used in Acts. André Lemaire in reviewing recent research on ministries in the New Testament reports that the majority of scholars support this conclusion: the Seven were not deacons. Irenaeus (c. 185) was the first of the early Church fathers to call the Seven deacons.²¹

Edward P. Echlin further adds: “Another reason for caution in referring to the seven as “deacons” in the clearly defined meaning of that office is that Stephen and Philip continued to preach and baptize, functions customarily performed at that time by the apostles and presbyters (Acts 6:8; 8:5).”²²

However, Harold Nichols’ view is not in opposition with Ellen G. White, as is Barnett and Echlin. He states:

It must be pointed out that the seven men chosen for the special tasks of caring for the widows and serving tables were not specifically called deacons in Acts 6. First, and foremost, they were called to perform a service. When the term “deacon” is used

²⁰Nancy Vyhmeister, “The Ministry of the Deaconess Through History,” *Ministry*, July 2008, 17.

²¹Barnett, 30.

²²Edward P. Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church: Past Time and Future* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1971), 8.

subsequently in the New Testament, it is generally assumed that it refers to men who were performing service similar to that which was assigned to the original seven who were selected. This assumption seems logical when it is understood that the Greek word from which “deacon” is derived usually describes the work of a servant. Whether or not there was a difference between the tasks described in the Book of Acts and that which might be called the office of deacon in the church seems today to be inconsequential. The fact is that these people performed the work of serving; therefore they may be called deacons, or those who serve.²³

Female Deacons of the First Century Christian Church

Although 1 Tim 3 provides undisputed evidence for the office of bishop and deacon, there are those who believe that verse 11 supports the existence of deaconesses in the first century Christian church. Vyhmeister is a proponent of this view. The text says, “Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (1 Tim 3:11). Vyhmeister states,

The Greek word, which can be translated “women” or “wives,” has been variously translated as “women,” “women deacons,” or “their [deacon’s] wives.”

The suggestion that the term refers to wives of deacons presents difficulties, for in the Greek there is no possessive. Whose wives were they? On the other hand, if one takes the context seriously, these women serve the church as do their male counterparts. Quite probably, these women were female deacons, as was Phoebe.

In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria (155-220) indicated that this text presented evidence for the existence of *diakonon gunaikōn* (“women deacons”). John Chrysostom and Theodoret, writing in the fourth and fifth centuries respectively, also understood these women to be female deacons.²⁴

Shirley A. Groh also believes that these women were deaconesses. She states, “In I Timothy 3:8 ff. Paul speaks of the duties of a deacon. Then in v. 11 he says, ‘The women likewise must be serious, no slanderer, but temperate, faithful in all things.’”

²³Harold Nichols, *The Work of the Deacon and Deaconess* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1964), 1-2.

²⁴Vyhmeister, “The Ministry of the Deaconess,” 18.

R.S.V. Many believe this refers especially to Deaconesses. They were to be cultured and devoted women.”²⁵

Robert M. Lewis agrees that the Greek word for “wives” can be variously translated—“wives,” “widow,” “bride,” or “any adult woman” (married or unmarried),²⁶ but he disagrees that these women are deaconesses. He suggests that the women of 1 Tim 3:11 are not “a select group of women known as ‘deaconesses’ which many consider to be a third office of the church [neither are they] . . . the wives of those men who are deacons and should reflect their husband’s godly character.”²⁷ They are “unmarried women committed unconditionally to the service of the church and who in meeting certain character qualities, have been enlisted to aid the deacons in the outworking of their office.”²⁸

Lewis further argues that if these women were limited to being the wives of deacons, those wives that could not assist their husbands because of large family responsibilities would cause their husbands to be disqualified to serve as deacons. Lewis points out that because married womens’ ministry is centered in the home (1 Tim 2:9-15; 5:8, 14, 16; 2 Tim 3:14-15; Titus 2:3-5), whether they are married to a deacon or any man, the women mentioned in this passage are unmarried.

²⁵Shirley A. Groh, “The Role of Deaconess Through the Ages,” December 1955, <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/GrohRole.pdf> (accessed October 13, 2008).

²⁶Robert M. Lewis, “The ‘Women’ of 1 Timothy 3:11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (April-June 1979): 168.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 167.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 175.

Lewis' final argument is that, "with the detailed qualifications for both elder and deacon so plainly spelled out, why a parenthesizing of the deacons' female counterpart? If these women held a full third office of the church, why do they not merit a paragraph of their own?"²⁹

Although Lewis presents an interesting case, however, taking the context seriously as Vyhmeister suggests, I concur with Vyhmeister that these women were female deacons. As to Lewis' argument that if these women were female deacons/deaconesses, they would have merited a paragraph of their own, my response is that the male dominated society in which they lived seldom gave women the recognition that they merited. Therefore, to parenthesize what was expected of them was not unusual behavior.

It is probable that most of the first century deaconesses were unmarried or widows. Citing the Apostolic Constitution, Groh says that "a deaconess shall be 'a pure virgin' or 'a widow once married, faithful and worthy.'" This is natural since family cares prevent full concentration on the job of Deaconess, and in the 2nd century A.D. this was no small job."³⁰

Although the ideal was that deaconesses be unmarried, there were exceptions to this. Philip Schaff states that Prisca (Priscilla) probably served as a deaconess.³¹ She was married to Aquila. She assisted him in their tent making business, traveling with the apostle Paul, and teaching God's Word (Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26). She had the ability to perform multiple tasks, and Paul did not limit her. Paul presents singleness as the ideal

²⁹Lewis, 171-172.

³⁰Groh.

³¹Philip Schaff, *Apostolic Christianity (A.D. 1-100)*, vol. 1 of *History of the Christian Church* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 500-501.

status for both men and women that do the Lord's work. This is because of the distractions that are associated with marriage. However, Paul recognized that there are those that need to be married, and he did not restrict their involvement in the Lord's work (1 Cor 7:32-40). Therefore, married women who desire to serve as deaconesses today are not to be excluded. They must, however, seek God's guidance on how to balance the demands of the home with the responsibilities of this office.

There are also other Scriptures that indicate that female deacons or deaconesses existed in the first century Christian church. In Rom 16:1-2, the apostle Paul stated, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

The Greek word *διάκονον* used in this Scripture is the accusative case (the object of a verb) of *διάκονος*, and is translated in English as "deacon or deaconess, whose official duty was to superintend the alms of the Church, with other kindred services."³² The *SDA Bible Commentary* states that "the use of this term suggests that the office of 'deaconess' may already have been established in the early Christian church. At least Phoebe was in some sense a servant or minister in the congregation at Cenchreae."³³ Vhymeister states that "Theodoret (393-460) noted Phoebe as 'a woman deacon, prominent and noble. She was so rich in good works performed as to have merited the

³²Moulton, s.v. "διάκονος," "διάκονον."

³³"Servant," *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:649.

praise of Paul.”³⁴ Paul described Phebe as “a succourer of many.” According to Maurice Riley this means “a helper of many (one who shields from suffering, goes out to the aid of one in distress).”³⁵ Groh likens the role that Phebe played as a succourer to today’s social worker. She says, “We note that her [Phebe] work as a ‘helper’ or ‘Succourer’ of many both spiritually and physically, no doubt ran much in the path of a social worker of today, of course the religious motivation made her office primarily one of the church, but it was felt also in the social order of things.”³⁶

Nichols concurs with the idea that deaconesses were present in the first century Christian church. He says,

In the New Testament church, when seven individuals were chosen to minister to widows and serve tables, all of them were men (cf. Acts 6:1-6). Nevertheless, the New Testament does record the presence of women workers in the churches. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi: “Help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel. . .” (Phil. 4:3). In the letter to the Romans Paul wrote: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may . . . help her in whatever she may require of you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Rom. 16:1-2). These references imply that many, if not all, early churches had in them women who served and were called deaconesses.³⁷

Philip Schaff states that “Paul mentions Phoebe as a deaconess of the church of Cenchreae, the port of Corinth, and it is more than probable that Prisca (Priscilla), Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, whom he commends for their labor in the Lord, served in the same capacity at Rome.”³⁸

³⁴Vyhmeister, “The Ministry of the Deaconess,” 18.

³⁵Maurice Riley, *The Deaconess: Walking in the Newness of Life*, 2nd ed. (Newark, NJ: Christian Associates Publications, 1993), 1.

³⁶Groh.

³⁷Nichols, 86-87.

³⁸Schaff, 1:500-501.

Schaff also indicates that “deaconesses, or female helpers, had a similar charge of the poor and sick in the female portion of the church. This office was the more needful on account of the rigid separation of the sexes at that day, especially among the Greeks and Orientals.”³⁹

Groh gives this vivid picture of the deaconesses’ caring for the sick:

When we stop to remember that there were no hospitals, we can begin to imagine what a big job is implied even in the words saying that the deaconess “administered to the poor and sick.” No provisions were made for the sick except by this one woman worker. Imagine even a small out-break of flu with only deaconesses to administer help and probably care for sick mother’s families yet, too. This is a full time job. People’s physical surroundings had to be set in order that Christ might better work in their hearts. In addition to this social work and nursing, the deaconess had the more strictly religious duties of teaching, doorkeeping, and assisting at baptisms. Here was no small task, and it required, as one author said, ‘A gifted individual with personal endowments of a religious kind’ plus much courage to perform all these tasks.⁴⁰

Riley further substantiates the existence of deaconesses in the early church. She states that,

Many if not all, early Christian churches had women, who served as, and were called deaconesses. During the first five Christian centuries, some of the help rendered by the deaconess was to assist the presbyter in the baptism of women: greet the women parishioners, direct them to their seats, and maintain order among them. This was according to a document called the apostolic constitution in church discipline, doctrine, and worship. It also stipulated that deaconesses were to be ordained for the ministrations toward women. She was referred to as the assistant to the deacon, and was to be present at all interviews between women and the priest, bishop or deacon.⁴¹

In addition to declaring that deaconesses existed in the early Christian church, Riley also states that they were ordained to carry out their ministry. Charles W. Deweese makes this observation concerning their ordination:

³⁹Schaff, 500.

⁴⁰Groh.

⁴¹Riley, 1.

Deaconesses were evidently not ordained in the first three centuries. Such ordination, whenever it began, was an eastern custom, for churches in the West did not ordain women. A fourth-century eastern writing presented a suggested procedure for ordaining a deaconess. After she passed a careful preliminary examination, the bishop was to lay hands upon her in the presence of the presbyters, deacons, and other deaconesses. The bishop then ended the service with an ordination prayer.⁴²

Schaff recorded the prayer, taken from the *Apostolic Constitutions* (late fourth century),

Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and woman, who didst fill Miriam and Deborah and Hannah and Huldah with the Spirit, and didst not disdain to suffer thine only-begotten Son to be born of a woman; who also in the tabernacle and the temple didst appoint women keepers of thine holy gates: look down now upon this thine handmaid, who is designated to the office of deacon, and grant her the Holy Ghost, and cleanse her from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, that she may worthily execute the work intrusted to her, to thine honor and to the praise of thine Anointed; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be honor and adoration forever. Amen.⁴³

Riley, likening deaconesses to “Angels of Mercy,” refers to Phoebe and Dorcas as biblical examples of such.⁴⁴ Luke gives us the account of Dorcas in the Book of Acts. “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. When he [Peter] was come all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:36, 39). Like Phebe, Tabitha was a succourer—a helper, a protector, one who shields from suffering, and goes

⁴²Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 15-16.

⁴³Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity (A.D. 311-600)*, vol. 3 of *History of the Christian Church*, 260.

⁴⁴Riley, 33.

out to the aid of those in distress. She showed compassion for the underprivileged of Joppa, and made coats and garments to protect them from the weather.

The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses in the Early Seventh-day Adventist Church

Research of the *Ellen G. White Writings Complete Published Edition 2005*

revealed that of the fifteen times that the word deacon(s) was used; only four occurrences relate to their ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church. Of the eighteen times that the word deaconess (es) was used, only three relate to their ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church.

The first area concerning the deacons pertained to the kind of wine that they should use in the ordinance of Holy Communion. The following statement is a critique of the book *Prophetess of Health* that was published in the *Review and Herald* 29:222, April 16, 1867. The issue was what did Ellen White mean when she said that she approved of a “little domestic wine.” Here is the response,

Domestic wine occasionally referred to by Ellen White and in the *Review and Herald*, we would understand to be the juice of the grape pressed out and at first free from fermentation. It must be remembered that in 1867, 1868 and 1869 there was no sure and effective method of preserving grape juice unfermented. This meant that even utilizing the best means available for preserving grape juice, it would eventually gain an alcoholic content. Concerning the use of this kind of wine in the ordinances, James White counseled in 1867: “Know what you use. Let the deacons obtain the cultivated grape, see the wine made, and secure from the air to keep it from fermenting as much as possible.”⁴⁵

This statement indicates that the deacons in the early Seventh-day Adventist church were responsible for supplying the wine used in the ordinance of Holy

⁴⁵*Ellen G. White Writings, Complete Published Edition 2005, Ellen G. White Estate Research Documents Full Text Search, s.v. “deacons” [CD-ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2006).*

Communion. In that they were instructed to use unfermented grape juice for this ordinance, may also imply that they were required to abstain from fermented wine, as were the deacons of the first century Christian church, according to 1 Tim 3:8—“Be not addicted to much wine.” However, it is not clear from the above statement if the deacons in the early Seventh-day Adventist church also participated in serving the emblems—wine and bread—at the Holy Communion services.

The second area relating to the deacons’ ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church pertained to their responsibility in handling the tithe. In the following letter, the issue was that the Battle Creek church needed additional persons—a clerk and a treasurer—other than the deacons to look after the tithe. Ellen White agreed with the Battle Creek church’s decision to use a portion of their tithes to pay their clerk and treasurer for the service they rendered. That practice was also adopted by other large churches. The St. Helena Sanitarium church paid its treasurer. The treasurer was also referred to as a tithe collector. C. F. McVagh, president of the Southern Union Conference, wrote a letter to W. C. White on October 24, 1912 to get verification that Ellen White approved of this practice. W. C. White’s response was,

In the olden days, when the Battle Creek church was growing, it was found that unless the work of collecting the tithe was followed up regularly that the amount received was very much less than if the matter were followed up in a businesslike way by a collector who made the work his regular duty. We also found that this work demanded more time than it was right for us to ask any one, two, or three of the deacons to give to the matter, and it was thought by the church council that it would be good policy, and for the best interests of the tithe payers, and for the best interests of the conference, to have a good collector chosen and employed and paid a reasonable amount for his time. This plan, with the reasons therefore, was placed before Father and Mother, and received their hearty approval.⁴⁶

⁴⁶*Ellen G. White Writings*, s.v. “deacons.”

This next statement also dealt with the responsibility of the deacons in relationship to the tithe. The purpose of this statement was to clarify where the storehouse is.

A fair reading of Ellen White's statement leads unquestionably to the conclusion that, in her mind, the church treasury was the store house of Malachi 3. She used the words "treasury" and "storehouse" as synonyms when she wrote, "If all the tithes were brought into the storehouse, God's treasury would not be empty." Concerning the church treasury, she stated: "Many presidents of state conferences do not attend to that which is their work—to see that the elders and deacons of the churches do their work in the churches, by seeing that a faithful tithe is brought into the treasury."⁴⁷

It can be concluded from these two sources, that the deacons in the early Seventh-day Adventist church were responsible for collecting the tithe from the members. Sometime before the death of James White in 1881, after the deacons collected the tithe in the larger churches, specifically at Battle Creek, they turned the tithe over to the treasurer or tithe collector of the church. However, according to the letter W. C. White wrote to C. F. McVagh, the smaller churches did not follow the practice of hiring a treasurer. Therefore, the implication is that the deacons collected the tithe and served as treasurer in the smaller churches.

Finally, the third area relating to the deacons' ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church pertained to their ordination. The following statement by Arthur N. Patrick, who was the registrar at Avondale College in Australia, indicates that both deacons and deaconesses were ordained in the early Seventh-day Adventist church.

June 24, 1899, the Ashfield church in Sydney elected G. F. Goodman as elder. The church records tell us that he "was ordained as elder by the laying on of hands." Clearly, Adventists at the time understood the laying on of hands as effecting ordination.

Which officers were ordained to their tasks? Again the Ashfield church minutes, in two separate entries, give us the answer. At the meeting on August 10, 1895, the nominating committee rendered its report. The record notes: "immediately following

⁴⁷*Ellen G. White Writings*, s.v. "deacons."

the election, the officers were called to the front, where Pastors Corliss and McCullagh set apart the elder, deacons, [and] deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands.”

On Sabbath, January 6, 1900, Elder W. C. White presided over the regular Sabbath meeting at Ashfield. The clerk’s minutes note: “The previous Sabbath officers had been nominated and accepted for the current year, and today Elder White ordained and laid hands on the elders, deacon, and deaconesses.”

The page from W. C. White’s diary for this date confirms the Ashfield church’s records: “Spoke at Ashfield. Twenty-five present. Ordained J. Hindson Elder, Thos. Patchin Deacon, and Mrs. Brannyrane and Patchin Deaconesses.”⁴⁸

It is clear from this letter and the record of the church’s minutes that both deacons and deaconesses were ordained in the early Seventh-day Adventist church.

In addition to these two instances where deaconesses were ordained, Vyhmeister, documents two more occasions—one in February or March 1916, when E. E. Andross, then president of the Pacific Union Conference, officiated the service; and in 1921 at a church in Sarawak (Malaysia) where F. A. Detamore witnessed the ordination of a Sister Lee.⁴⁹

The second and final area relating to the deaconesses’ ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church described some of the duties that they performed. Ellen White gave this brief description of their work, as well as recommended that they be ordained, in an article she wrote in the *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895. She stated,

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the ministers; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church.⁵⁰

⁴⁸*Ellen G. White Writings*, s.v. “deacons.”

⁴⁹Nancy Vyhmeister, “Deaconesses in the Church,” *Ministry*, September 2008, 23.

⁵⁰*Ellen G. White Writings*, s.v. “deaconesses,” CD-ROM.

Regarding the matter of deaconesses being ordained in the early Seventh-day Adventist church, it is interesting to note how that practice ceased. In the *Church Officers' Gazette* of December 1914, it stated that deacons and elders were to be ordained in order to be properly qualified to fulfill their office, but nothing was said about deaconesses' ordination. In the first Adventist *Church Manual* of 1932, the New Testament origin of deaconess was noted, followed by this statement (which continued to appear in succeeding *Church Manuals* through 1986), "there is no record, however, that these women were ordained, hence the practice of ordaining deaconesses is not followed by our denomination."⁵¹ It was in the 1990 *Church Manual* that it was rendered that deaconesses were to participate in an induction service rather than an ordination service.⁵² The 2005 *Church Manual* reveals that this practice continued until the recently held 59th General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia on June 24-July 3, 2010. The 2005 manual states, "The church may arrange for a suitable service of induction for the deaconess by an ordained minister holding current credentials."⁵³ However, the delegates at the 59th General Conference Session voted that deaconesses should be ordained along with deacons.⁵⁴

Although Ellen White had very little to say about the duties of deaconesses, she forcefully expressed her view that they should be the ones to minister to the female congregants and not the elders. In a letter written to A. T. Jones in September 1902, she

⁵¹Vyhmeister, "Deaconesses in the Church," 23.

⁵²Ibid., 24.

⁵³General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 58.

⁵⁴Adventist Review, "Sixth Business Meeting: Proceedings (Church Manual Only)," www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=3510 (accessed July 5, 2010).

scolded him for “listening to the private woes of women—‘When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to go to her sisters, to tell her troubles to the deaconesses of the church.’”⁵⁵

Here is some additional information about the duties of deacons and deaconesses in the early Seventh-day Adventist church.

As early as 1856, Joseph Frisbie wrote about deaconesses as church workers. He referred to the choosing of the seven deacons of Acts 6 and Phoebe the deaconess (Rom. 16:1), noting that they “were considered servants, helpers or laborers with the apostles in the gospel, not that they preached the word, but ministered or served their temporal wants.” He approvingly quoted from Clarke’s commentary: “There were deaconesses in the primitive church, whose business it was to attend to the female converts at baptism; to instruct the catechumens, or persons who were candidates for baptism: to visit the sick, and those who were in prison; and, in short, perform those religious offices, for the female part of the church, which could not with propriety be performed by men.”

Frisbie then asked, “Would it not be well then brethren to appoint in all the churches deacons and deaconesses who may answer the qualifications that are laid down clearly in the Bible, with an understanding of what their duties are”? He then summarized these duties:

1. To see to the poor and destitute, the widows and orphans, the sick and afflicted
2. To raise funds and care for church finances
3. To make preparation for the ordinances, including keeping on hand good [unfermented] wine from grapes or raisins⁵⁶

Vyhmeister also indicates that J. H. Waggoner published his ideas about “The Office of Deacon” in 1870, emphasizing their spiritual characteristics, based on Acts 6:3 and 1 Tim 3:8-12.⁵⁷

These statements reveal that the duties and responsibilities performed by the deacons and deaconesses of the early Seventh-day Adventist church were in harmony with those carried out by their counterparts in the first century Christian church. They

⁵⁵Vyhmeister, “Deaconesses in the Church,” 22.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

were ordained to provide for the temporal needs of the poor and needy, care for the sick, assist in collecting and managing the funds of the church, teach the Word of God, and make preparations for the ordinances of the church.

Conclusion

The theology of ministry for deacons and deaconesses is derived from the servant model that was demonstrated in the life of Jesus. Jesus came into the world to minister (διακονῆσαι) and not to be ministered unto (διακονηθῆναι) (Matt 20:28). These two Greek words come from the root word διακονέω which is derived from the word for deacon (διάκονος)—masculine and feminine. Therefore, the act of ministering or serving is inherent in the name deacon and deaconess, and defines the nature of the office.

The deacons that served the first century Christian church solved problems that arose in the church, took care of the needs of the poor, and taught the Word of God. They were ordained to carry out their responsibilities.

The deaconesses that served the first century Christian church took care of the poor and sick among the females, taught the Word of God, assisted women at baptisms, greeted the women entering the church, and directed them to their seats. During the first five centuries, deaconesses were also ordained to carry out their responsibilities.

The deacons that served the early Seventh-day Adventist church provided unfermented grape juice for Holy Communion, and collected the tithe. In the large churches, the deacons would turn the tithe over to the church treasurer. In the small churches, however, a deacon served as treasurer. They were ordained just as their first century counterparts.

The deaconesses that served the early Seventh-day Adventist church visited the sick, looked after the young, ministered to the necessities of the poor, and listened to the women who had troubles that they wanted to share. They were ordained to carry out their responsibilities. However, beginning in 1914 they were no longer ordained. In 1990 the ordination service for deaconesses was replaced with an induction service. However, at the recently held 59th General Conference Session the delegates voted that deaconesses should be ordained along with deacons.

The call to serve as a deacon or deaconess is a spiritual calling. This can be readily seen by observing the spiritual qualifications required of those who were called to serve in this office. The call to wait on tables was, in fact, a call to solve relational problems that arose in the church. Therefore, deacons and deaconesses are called to serve as spiritual counselors, conflict managers, and social workers; as well as Bible workers and evangelists.

There are wider implications that can be drawn from the ministry of deacons and deaconesses for the church at large. Deacons and deaconesses symbolize the work of the church. Therefore, every church member is a deacon or deaconess although he or she may not bear the title. Jesus calls everyone who becomes a member of His church to a ministry of service.

Chapter 4 deals with the qualifications of deacons and deaconesses and presents them as spiritual leaders who solve problems, nurture the membership, proclaim the gospel, and win souls. However, the next chapter will review some of the literature concerning the role of these important church officers.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE CONTRIBUTING UNDERSTANDING TO THE MINISTRY OF DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Introduction

A review of the literature relating to the ministry of deacons and deaconesses will assist the reader of this project to have a better understanding of some of the roles that deacons and deaconesses have served in from the first century to the twenty-first century. It will provide information on the debate about whether or not women served as deacons or deaconesses in the first century Christian church. It will put contemporary scholars into conversation with each other in five specific areas: (1) Women Serving as Deacons or Deaconesses, (2) Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Teachers of God's Word, (3) Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Care Givers to the Sick and Needy, (4) Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Conflict Managers, and (5) Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Business Managers.

The works cited in this review are not intended to be exhaustive. However, they represent the most contemporary scholarship in this field.

Women Serving as Deacons or Deaconesses

Phoebe is the name most referred to by those who propose that female deacons or

deaconesses existed in the first century Christian church. Vyhmeister asserts that by the use of the word δῆκονος, in Rom 16:1-2, Paul recognized Phoebe as a minister of the church at Cenchrea. She indicates that the word can be translated in various ways, such as: servant, deacon, deaconess, and minister. She states that the way that one chooses to translate it in Rom 16:1-2 “has more to do with the translator than the meaning of the Greek word.”¹ Based upon her research, Vyhmeister concludes that Phoebe was a deaconess. She cites the views of some of the early church writers, such as: Origen, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret, to support her view.

Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee arrive at the same conclusion as Vyhmeister; that Phoebe was a deaconess. They suggest that to translate the word δῆκονος, as servant “would miss the official character of Paul’s commendation,”² and lessen Phoebe’s chances of being welcomed by the church at Rome. They state that “Phoebe was Paul’s designated letter carrier to the Roman church. A church’s welcome was based on the presentation of credentials. Since Phoebe was a virtual unknown, strong credentials would have been critical in her case. “Servant” would hardly have sufficed in the imperial capital. ‘A deacon of the church in Cenchrea’ is what was needed.”³

Like Vyhmeister, Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee, Clarence DeWitt Agan III also agrees that δῆκονος, can be translated in various ways. His observation is similar to the

¹Vyhmeister, “The Ministry of the Deaconess,” 17.

²Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, gen. eds. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed. Contr. ed. Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 121.

³Ibid.

one that Vyhmeister makes concerning the translation of the word having more to do with the translator than the meaning. Agan says, “It is not difficult to see that one’s views of gender, authority, and church office are likely to complicate discussions of this text [Rom 16:1].”⁴

Agan submits that in an attempt to interpret the word *διάκονος*, in Rom 16:1, many have developed their arguments around two poles: “‘Phoebe must be a deacon (or a minister), because she clearly isn’t a mere servant;’ or, ‘Phoebe must be a servant, because she clearly isn’t a deacon (or a minister).’”⁵ However, based upon lexical evidence, Agan argues that there are more possibilities to consider. The possibilities that he offers are waiter, servant, messenger, and agent. He summarizes his position by saying,

When Paul refers to Phoebe as a *διάκονος*, he could be employing the term in any of four senses:

1. *Table Attendance*: possibly in reference to a special role played by Phoebe in caring for those facing poverty, and therefore hungry; or if metaphorical, in reference to the humble status associated with “waiters.”
2. *Domestic Attendance*: possibly in reference to Phoebe’s work in attending to the needs of the church or its members; or, if metaphorical, in reference to the humble status associated with “servants.”
3. *Communication/Delivery*: possibly in reference to Phoebe’s functioning as a spokesperson, messenger, or representative on behalf of the church.
4. *Agency/Instrumentality*: possibly in reference to Phoebe as an “agent” who carried out the will of or acted in the name of the church (or its elder), in which case Paul would most likely intend that she held the office of deacon.⁶

Agan indicates that the use of *διάκονος*, in Rom 16:1 and its immediate context does not suggest that Paul was using the language of table or domestic attendance, nor of church office. His conclusion is that Phoebe was neither a servant nor a deacon of the

⁴Clarence DeWitt “Jimmy” Agan, III, “Deacons, Deaconesses, and Denominational Discussions: Romans 16:1 as a Test Case,” *Presbyterion* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 95.

⁵Ibid., 96.

⁶Ibid., 105.

church at Cenchrea. She was an emissary, envoy, spokesperson, or possibly, “a traveling representative of her home church when she journeys to Rome.”⁷

Therefore, on one hand Agan agrees with Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee, who state that Phoebe was Paul’s designated letter carrier. However, he disagrees with their position, as well as Vyhmeister’s, that Rom 16:1-2 proves that Phoebe was a female deacon or deaconess. He is careful to add, as he concludes his argument, that he does not disagree that women did (or could) serve as deacons, even if Paul’s reference to Phoebe as a *διάκονος* does not prove it.

Wijngaards proposes that women served as deacons or deaconesses in the first century Christian church. However, he also concludes that the word *διάκονος*, in Rom 16:1 does not provide this evidence. He states that “the word *diakonos* applied to Phoebe, does not really carry with it the sense of a precise ministerial function which it will have later where women are concerned. It has here the general sense of ‘servant,’ which is normal in the New Testament.”⁸ Wijngaards presents 1 Tim 3:8-12 as evidence that female deacons or deaconesses existed in the first century Christian church. Quoting Jean Daniélou, he states, “‘The word “deacon” is here used in its technical sense. It also seems clear that by “the women” in question, who are clearly distinguished from the wives of the deacons while the description of them is parallel to that of the deacons, we must understand *deaconesses*.’”⁹ Vyhmeister is in agreement with Wijngaards on this point. She explains that the Greek word for “women” or “wives” has been translated in various

⁷DeWitt, 106.

⁸John Wijngaards, “The History of Women Deacons,” page 1 of 4, http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/deac_his.asp (accessed October 13, 2008).

⁹Ibid., 3.

ways, such as: “women,” with “women deacons” or “their [deacon’s] wives” in the note (NRSV); “women,” with “either deacons’ wives or deaconesses” in the note (NASB); “their wives,” with “or deaconesses” in the note (NIV); or “*their* wives,” with *their* in italics, admitting its absence in the original text (KJV).¹⁰

Interpreting this text to refer to deacons’ wives conflicts with the fact that there is no possessive in the Greek. Therefore, Vyhmeister states, “it would not be possible to know whose wives the text was referring to. On the other hand, if one takes the context seriously, these are women who serve the church as do their male counterparts. Quite probably, these women were female deacons.”¹¹ Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek make this observation:

Two factors suggest that female deacons are referred to here. First is the mention of the female deacon Phoebe at an earlier stage of the development of ministerial structures in the Pauline churches (Rom 16:1-2). Second, the structures of verse 8 about men and verse 11 about women are parallel: the first three words of the Greek text are exactly the same except for gender changes. If female deacons were still referred to by the masculine designation as in Rom 16:1, there would be no other way to make a gender distinction in verse 11, the generic term *diakonoi* already having been used in verse 8.¹²

Deweese supports the previous writers. He quotes this statement that was printed in *The Baptist Magazine* in 1841. It was originally printed with the intent of renewing the emphasis on the work of deaconesses in the Baptist church when their work was on the decline.

Of the existence of this class of officers in the apostle’s time there can be little doubt.

¹⁰Nancy Vyhmeister, “Deaconesses in History and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2005): 136.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds. and trans., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 18.

We believe that Phoebe was a deaconess, and Euodia and Syntyche, with others; and there is reason to suppose that to such ones the apostle referred when, in 1 Timothy iii.11, he spake of women who were to 'be grave, not slanderers, sober, and faithful in all things.' That he is not there speaking of the wives of deacons, is maintained by very competent authorities, with whom we are inclined to agree.¹³

Gary Straub and James Trader, II concur with the idea that Phoebe carried out the role of a deacon and 1 Tim 3 includes women in the body of deacons.¹⁴ John Franklin Burnett also agrees. He states, "That women were chosen to this sacred office is too well established by the Scriptures [1 Tim 3:8-13] and Church history to be questioned. . . . Phoebe and Priscilla were deaconesses, and fellow-servants with Paul."¹⁵

Ute E. Eisen presents some interesting discoveries from the inscriptions written on the tombstones of female deacons or deaconesses during the fourth through the seventh centuries. In this statement, he predates proof of their existence in Asia Minor to the second century.

The number of surviving inscriptions concerning women deacons in Asia Minor is very extensive. Very early, 1 Tim 3:11 and Pliny, *Ep.* X, 96, 8 attest the presence of women deacons in Asia Minor in the second century. The abundant epigraphic evidence suggests the continuity of an office of women deacons in Asia Minor from the very beginning.¹⁶

Based upon inscriptions written on the tombstones of the husbands of female deacons or deaconesses, it can be concluded that them holding the office of deacon was not dependent upon their husbands being deacons. A woman deacon named Basilissa

¹³Charles W. Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 67.

¹⁴Gary Straub and James Trader, II, *Your Calling as a Deacon* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 17, 22.

¹⁵John Franklin Burnett, *The Church the Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (1917; repr., Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2009), 65.

¹⁶Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholder in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 173-174.

dedicated an inscription to her deceased husband and his family. The inscription reads: “The first man of the village, Quintus, son of Heraclius, with his wife Matrona and his children Anicetus and Catilla, all four lie in this grave. The wife of Anicetus, the deacon Basilissa, has erected this pleasant tomb together with her only son Numitorius, who is still an immature child.”¹⁷ Three things can be deducted from this inscription. The first thing is that “it is certain that Basilissa was an officeholder in the church, while her husband bears no official title.”¹⁸ Therefore, the church during the second century did not require women to be married to male deacons in order to serve as female deacons, as some interpret 1 Tim 3:11. A better interpretation is that these women are women deacons whether they were married to male deacons or not. Another example of this is the “deacon Strategis from Goslu, who together with her son Pankratos dedicated a gravestone to her husband Menneas, her sister-in-law Alexandria, and her son Domnos.”¹⁹

The second deduction is that women deacons were not in every case required to be virgins. It varied according to regions. Here are two examples of women deacons in Macedonia, the region of Edessa. One of them is a virgin, the other is not. The inscriptions read “Monument of Agathokleia, the virgin and deacon.” “Monument of the deacon Theodosia and the virgins Aspelia (Aspilia ?) and Agathokleia.”²⁰ Therefore, virgins and women deacons were two distinct groups. The family situation of these women in Asia Minor varied. Many of them were wives and mothers, and others were

¹⁷Eisen, 168.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 181.

members of monastic orders. However, the family situation of women deacons in the region of Moab was different.

None of the women named in the inscriptions is connected with a family of her own [same as] for the male deacons of this region. This points to the probability that the epigraphically attested women deacons of this time and region lived celibate lives, as demanded by Canon 15 of the Council of Chalcedon [451] for all officeholders with the exception of lectors and cantors.²¹

The third and final deduction is that the women deacons and widows were two distinct groups. Wijngaards agrees with this assessment. “During the first centuries, however, confusion in terminology and practice remained. In 517 AD the Synod of Epaon speaks of ‘widows whom they call deaconesses.’ Deaconesses are sometimes referred to as ‘widow and deaconess.’ It is likely, however, that the two roles have always been somewhat distinct.”²²

Four widows above sixty years of age were elected to serve the Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol, England in 1679 based upon them agreeing that they would not remarry, according to 1 Tim 5:11.²³ In light of this, Deweese explains that it is not the primary view of Baptists that the origin of women deacons resides with the widows of 1 Tim 5. However, he states that some Baptists do relate these two groups. E. Glenn Hinson states that it appears that the New Testament women deacons were selected from the widows.²⁴

Another discovery that Eisen makes is that all of these women officeholders held

²¹Eisen, 162.

²²Wijngaards, 3.

²³Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service*, 54.

²⁴Ibid., 39.

the official title of διάκονος or διακόνισσα (deacon or deaconess). On some of their tombstone inscriptions, the title was abbreviated as διακ or δκ.

The inscription on the tombstone of a deacon Maria states that she died at the age of thirty-eight. This indicates that young women were ordained to the diaconate during the seventh century.²⁵

Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Teachers of God's Word

There are few authors who have written recently about the role of deacons and deaconesses as teachers of God's Word. The reason for the lack of literature could be because little is recorded in the New Testament concerning it. Stephen and Philip are mentioned as examples of deacons serving in this role (Acts 6:8-60, 8:5-40). However, Owen Chadwick says, "Stephen and Philip were deacons who preached but they were exceptions."²⁶ Although he does not elaborate, Richard R. Gaillardetz acknowledges that the ministry of preaching and the ministry of catechesis were among the broad range of ministries performed by deacons throughout church history.²⁷ John M. Huels confirms, according to the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (early third century), one of the important roles of deaconesses was in the catechesis.²⁸ Vyhmeister elaborates more on this point by stating exactly what the *Didascalia* says about the teaching role of deaconesses. She quotes,

²⁵Eisen, 161.

²⁶Owen Chadwick, *The Early Reformation on the Continent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 104.

²⁷Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 184.

²⁸John M. Huels, "Special Questions on the Diaconate," *Liturgical Ministry* 13 (Winter 2004): 1.

“And when she who is being baptized has come up from the water, let the deaconess receive her, and teach and educate her in order that the unbreakable seal of baptism shall be (kept) in chastity and holiness. On this account, we say that the ministry of a woman deacon is especially required and urgent.”²⁹

One of the roles of the Baptist deaconesses in 1679 was to “speak a word to their souls [the sick], as occasion requires, for support or consolation, to build them up in a spiritual lively faith in Jesus Christ.”³⁰ This indicates that deaconesses were to teach God’s Word.

Alice Morse Earle says also during the 1600s that deacons “dispensed the word on Sabbaths to the congregation during the absence of the ordained minister.”³¹

Benjamin L. Merkle, however, disagrees with the idea that deacons and deaconesses are to serve as teachers of God’s Word. He says, “Deacons are called to ‘hold’ to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to ‘teach’ that faith (1 Tim. 3:9). This suggests that the deacons do not have an official teaching role in the church.”³² To further strengthen his position, Merkle quotes D.A. Carson who states, “Deacons were responsible to serve the church in a variety of subsidiary roles, but enjoyed no church-recognized teaching authority akin to that of elders.”³³ However, Merkle concludes that although deacons are not required to teach, does not mean they are

²⁹Vyhmeister, “Deaconesses in History and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” 141.

³⁰Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service*, 54.

³¹Alice Morse Earle, *Sabbath in Puritan New England*, 7th ed. (Teddington, Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007), 57.

³²Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 238.

³³Ibid.

not permitted to teach. They should teach God's Word when situations demand it.

Rosalind Brown, although an Anglican, writes from a wider Christian tradition. She states that proclaiming the gospel is one of three strands that makes up the diaconal ministry.³⁴ Even though preaching during the main worship service is not necessarily the role of deacons, Brown says that it is appropriate that they be trained to preach. This training prepares them to present God's Word within the varying context of their ministry. Brown gives the following examples to show the importance of deacons being trained to preach/proclaim the gospel: (1) a deacon may be requested to preach at a baptism, wedding, or funeral, especially when he or she has been the catalyst for the person coming to church; (2) if a deacon is also active in the local school during the week he or she can help connect people to the church; (3) conducting services during nursing home visits; (4) leading a small Bible study group or an inquirers' group; (5) sitting in someone's living room and looking together at a Bible passage; or (6) conducting a bedside communion during a hospital visit.³⁵

According to Brown, deacons are charged to reflect on Scripture with God's people so that the whole church is equipped to live out the gospel in the world. When a deacon fails to do this, Brown says,

The deacon's own ministry in the world will suffer because he or she will be doing it all on behalf of people who see no need to be engaged for themselves. However, if the deacon who is known to be actively engaged in ministry in the world is the same person who reflects with the people of God on God's word and their own vocation to serve God, who catechizes and leads them by example in living the gospel wherever they are, then there can be no excuse for anyone to drive a wedge between seeking nourishment in Scripture and getting deeply involved in the world: there is no option

³⁴Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2005), xi.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 80-82.

of it being ‘either/or’ since the deacon embodies the complementarity.³⁶

Sebastian S. Karambai, writing from a Roman Catholic’s perspective,³⁷ and the bishops of the Church of England, whose writing is based on their church’s perspective,³⁸ agree with the previous mentioned writers that one of the primary functions of deacons is to proclaim/preach the Word of God.

Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Care Givers to the Sick and Needy

Eurico Tadeu Xavier concludes that the work of deacons and deaconesses is indispensable to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Among all of the services that they render, caring for the sick and helping the poor and suffering are important responsibilities that they carry out. He also states that the deacons or deaconesses may accompany an ordained minister or elder of the church to give communion to a homebound member who happened to be sick, or for any other reason could not leave home to participate in the communion service.³⁹

The bishops of the Church of England are in agreement with Xavier’s view of the ministry of deacons to the poor and sick.. They state that “A deacon is called to serve the Church of God, and to work with its members in caring for the poor, the needy, the sick,

³⁶Rosalind Brown, 82.

³⁷Sebastian S. Karambai, *Ministers and Ministries in the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to Ecclesiastical Norms* (Bandra, Mumbai: The Bombay Saint Paul Society, 2005), 182.

³⁸Church of England, *For Such a Time as This: A Renewed Diaconate in the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001), 51.

³⁹Eurico Tadeu Xavier, “Deacons Take Care of Almost Everything,” trans. Antonio A. Rios, *Elder’s Digest* 10, January-March 2004, 6-7.

and all who are in trouble.”⁴⁰ They suggest that deacons may team up with ordained and lay ministers of the church to carry out this specialized area of pastoral ministry. This ministry would also include “the lonely and those who are ground down by adverse circumstances or by the pressures of life at home or work.”⁴¹ Straub and Trader indicate that one of the responsibilities of the deacons in the Presbyterian church is to see to members who are sick and in need.⁴² They also state that after the Protestant Reformation, Protestant churches reexamined the roles of the deacon. Some churches decided that in addition to other duties, deacons work with homebound members.⁴³ Earl S. Johnson also states that the duty of the Presbyterian deacon is “first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith.”⁴⁴ Johnson also adds that deacons assist senior citizens and visit shut-ins or members who cannot attend church services regularly. They organize transportation for those who cannot drive to their medical appointments. They provide meals and housing for the homeless, organize advocacy programs for those in legal trouble, and minister to those in jails and prisons.⁴⁵ Karambai says that deacons are to support the families under their care in their difficulties, alleviate the suffering of the sick,

⁴⁰Church of England, 51.

⁴¹Ibid., 54.

⁴²Straub and Trader, II, 20.

⁴³Ibid., 18.

⁴⁴Earl S. Johnson, Jr., *The Presbyterian Deacon: An Essential Guide* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2002), 28.

⁴⁵Ibid., 31.

and be involved in the administration of goods and in the church's charitable activities.⁴⁶

Gaillardetz says that according to early documentary testimony deacons ministered to the sick.⁴⁷ Burnett says that "deacons were God's first ministers to the poor."⁴⁸ Chadwick also agrees. He observes that the ministry of the deacons in the New Testament was to give out alms and look after the poor.⁴⁹ He states that "Calvin said that deacons were of two kind, those who looked after the poor and those who cared for the sick, and both kinds were to be called deacons."⁵⁰

Of all of the tombstone inscriptions that Eisen presents, only one makes reference to the kind of work that the women deacons did during the second to the seventh century. The inscription on the tombstone of a deacon Maria from Cappadocia in Asia Minor, sixth century, indicates that she took care of the needy. It reads, "Here lies the deacon Maria of pious and blessed memory, who according to the words of the apostle raised children, sheltered guests, washed the feet of the saints, and shared her bread with the needy. Remember her, Lord, when she comes into your kingdom."⁵¹

Vyhmeister cites from the *Apostolic Constitutions* that the deaconesses of the early church "ministered to the sick, the poor, and those in prison."⁵² She also relates the description of an ancient deaconess in Holland during the 1500s. She quotes the Puritan

⁴⁶Karambai, 183-184.

⁴⁷Gaillardetz, 184.

⁴⁸Burnett, 62.

⁴⁹Chadwick, 104.

⁵⁰Ibid., 105.

⁵¹Eisen, 164-167.

⁵²Vyhmeister, "Deaconesses in History and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 141.

governor William Bradford who described the ancient deaconess in his work entitled

Dialogue.

‘She did frequently visit the sick and weak, especially women, and, as there was need, called out maids and young women to watch and do them other help as their necessity did require; and if they were poor, she would gather relief for them of those that were able, or acquaint the deacons; and she was obeyed as a mother in Israel and an officer of Christ.’⁵³

Vyhmeister refers to a 1956 article in *Ministry* by Bess Ninaj, which states that

“deaconesses should care for the sick and the poor, which ‘may involve financial assistance, personal help with children in the home, assistance with household duties, or making arrangements for any or all of these.’”⁵⁴

The earliest detailed list of deaconess duties in Baptist literature was developed in 1679 and presented to four widows above sixty years of age. They were elected to serve as deaconesses of the Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol, England. These were their responsibilities:

1. To visit the sick, to have their eye and ear open to hearken and inquire who is sick, and to visit the sick sisters; in an especial manner to see what they need, because it may not be so proper for men in several cases.
2. To visit not only sick sisters, but sick brethren also; and therefore some conceive [this] may be the reason why they must be sixty years of age, that none occasion [of offence] may be given; as 1 Tim. v. 14.
3. Not only to take care of their sick bodies, of the brethren and sisters, but that their wants may be supplied; and therefore to make reports back of their condition, to the elders and deacons of the congregation.
4. It is their duty also to speak a word to their souls, as occasion requires, for support or consolation, to build them up in a spiritual lively faith in Jesus Christ. For as some observe, there is not an office of Christ in his church, but it is dipped in the blood of our Lord Jesus.

⁵³Vyhmeister, “Deaconesses in History and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” 145.

⁵⁴Ibid., 154-155.

5. Some think it is their duty to attend the sick; and if so, then they are to be maintained by the church.⁵⁵

These responsibilities show that those deaconesses served as care givers to the sick and needy.

Earle states that during the 1600s deaconesses also visited the sick and afflicted in the community, and the deacons provided for the poor of the church.⁵⁶

Chadwick also points out that during the 1500s, deacons and deaconesses were used as managers of hospitals in the Netherlands.⁵⁷ Huels mentions the importance of the deaconesses' role of nursing and pastoral care during the third century.⁵⁸

Janice Rider Ellis and Celia Love Hartley, recounting the history of the nursing profession, states, "The deaconesses of the Eastern Christian Church represent one group of particular significance to the history of nursing. These dedicated young women practiced 'works of mercy' that included feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, sheltering the homeless, caring for the sick, and burying the dead."⁵⁹ Ellis and Hartley state that these deaconesses are often cited as being the earliest counterparts to the community health nurses of today. They carried a basket that contained food and medicine that they distributed as they visited the homes of the sick. Their basket is the forerunner of the contemporary visiting nurse's bag. Phoebe is often referred to as the first

⁵⁵Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service*, 53-54.

⁵⁶Earle, 62, 57.

⁵⁷Chadwick, 105.

⁵⁸Huels, 1.

⁵⁹Janice Rider Ellis and Celia Love Hartley, *Nursing in Today's World: Trends, Issues and Management*, 8th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2004), 117.

deaconess and first visiting nurse in books about nursing history.

The Order of Widows and the Order of Virgins also visited the sick in their homes, and were

often mentioned along with the deaconesses as being the earliest organized group of public health nurses. The movement peaked in Constantinople in about 400 A.D., when a staff of 40 deaconesses lived and worked under the direction of Olympia, a powerful and deeply religious deaconess. The influence of the deaconess order diminished in the 5th and 6th centuries, when church decrees removed clerical duties and rank from the deaconess.⁶⁰

Ellis and Hartley continue relating the important role that deaconesses played as forerunners to today's nurses. They state that in Europe, Pastor Theodore Fliedner and his wife Friederike revived the deaconess movement by establishing a training institute for deaconesses at Kaisewerth, Germany in 1836.

Later they [the Fliedners] opened a small hospital for the sick, and Gertrude Reichardt, the daughter of a physician, was recruited as their first deaconess. The endeavors at Kaisewerth included care of the sick, visitations and parochial work, and teaching. A course in nursing was developed that included lectures by physicians. In 1849, Pastor Fliedner traveled to the United States, where he helped to establish the first motherhouse of Kaisewerth deaconesses in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With the help of four deaconesses, the Motherhouse of Kaisewerth Deaconesses assumed responsibility for the Pittsburgh Infirmary, which was the first Protestant hospital in the United States. The hospital is now called Passavant Hospital.⁶¹

A great legacy has been left by the deaconesses of past generations. If deaconesses of the twenty-first century would continue this legacy of working with the nurses in their churches and communities, they could alleviate a lot of suffering among the sick and needy.

⁶⁰Ellis and Hartley, 117.

⁶¹Ibid., 123.

Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Conflict Managers

Diana Davis takes her readers back to the election of the first deacons that served the first century Christian church. She says that Acts 6:1-7 is a biblical account of a conflict within the early church. Straub and Trader ask, “Did you notice that the office of deacon arose out of a conflict?”⁶² Davis says, “There was trouble in the church. There were rumblings that some of the widows weren’t receiving a fair portion in the daily distribution of food. Conflict.”⁶³ Davis describes the outcome of electing the seven deacons as a win-win situation. The church was pleased, the complainers were appeased, the widows were cared for, and the apostles’ ministry of prayer and preaching was not interrupted. She points out that these seven men were not called to serve the church as a board of directors or administrators. They were called to solve church problems. Davis applies the role that the deacons of the first century Christian church played in managing conflict to deacons of the twenty-first century. She says, “When conflict arises, deacons must act with dignity. As they lovingly ‘step up to the plate’ to calm adversity and help with the problem, their wives can also assist with peacemaking.”⁶⁴

Davis tells the story about her and her husband conducting a national conference for deacons and deacon wives. Her husband gave each deacon two buckets to carry around with them for the entire week. One bucket had a large W written on it, and the other one had a large G. “Steve told those deacons that every deacon carries two buckets:

⁶²Staub and Trader, II, 27.

⁶³Diana Davis, *Deacon Wives: Fresh Ideas to Encourage Your Husband and the Church* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 89-90.

⁶⁴Ibid., 90.

one filled with water and the other filled with gasoline. When a church fire, or problem, arises, it is a deacon's responsibility to pour water on that problem, not gas! When asked about the buckets, the deacons explained the problem-solving responsibility of deacons in the church."⁶⁵

Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall also appeal to the account in Acts to show the important role that deacons play in managing conflict in the church. Their analysis of the events of Acts 6 is that Luke, the writer of Acts,

states the failure of infrastructure as a breakdown in the daily *diakonia* ('distribution') of food (6:1) and his subsequent use of the verbal form *diakoneo* ('wait on tables') assesses this conflict: food is not being 'distributed' to the needy. Finally, the repetition of *diakonia* in verse 4 introduces the resolution of this conflict: the apostles are no longer diverted by administrative tasks and are fully engaged in their *diakonia* ('ministry') of the Word.⁶⁶

Although Robinson and Wall focus their readers' attention on the conflict managing skills of the apostles who identified the problem and initiated the process, it cannot be denied that those who were elected as deacons were the actual practitioners that brought about resolution.

Penny Edgell Becker interviewed twenty-three church congregations in Oak Park, Illinois to find out what kind of conflicts they were encountering and how they were dealing with them. One incident that she records is about a conflict that arose in the Bethlehem Congregational Church over the use of gender-exclusive language in the Sunday services. After a discussion in a Sunday School class, a group of well-educated professional

⁶⁵Ibid., 91.

⁶⁶Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 92.

women approached the deacons and asked, “What can we do about changing things?”⁶⁷

The deacons conducted a series of public meeting to ascertain how the other members felt about this issue. The pastor attended the meetings but did not chair them. Neither did he voice his position on the issue. Becker states that the pastor explained to her that his role was to ensure that the process of making the decision was caring and open. The process lasted over a year and a half with an agreed upon outcome for change.⁶⁸ This is an example of deacons serving in the role of conflict managers.

Adele Oltman writes about events that occurred in the African American community in Savannah, GA beginning sixty years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. One event that she relates involves the board of deacons resolving a conflict at the First African Church in 1928. The wife of a deacon left the church because she felt that her husband had been mistreated by the pastor. The deacons dealt with this conflict by setting with her “‘in prayer and meditation to God,’ endeavoring to convince their ‘sister to come back and be reconciled with us in our church.’”⁶⁹ She declined to stay. However, she returned one year later, after the deacons recommended to restore her husband to the deacon board. She appeared before the deacons to apologize and asked for forgiveness. They and the church forgave her.

Oltman shows that the deacons of the African American churches in Savannah were responsible for recommending that members who violated church laws be disciplined

⁶⁷Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101.

⁶⁸Ibid., 101-102.

⁶⁹Adele Oltman, *Sacred Mission, Worldly Ambition: Black Christian Nationalism in the Age of Jim Crow* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 159.

by the church. Depending upon the offence, the discipline could be the hand of Fellowship withdrawn from them and they be excluded from the church, or they be required to make a public acknowledgment and ask the church's forgiveness.⁷⁰

Thomas R. Burns sees the need for deacons to receive training in basic counseling so that they can become effective in this area of their ministry. He says that deacons "may be called upon to provide counseling for family problems arising from domestic violence, financial crises, marriage or family relationship problems, parent/child problems, pre-marital counseling, as well as the need for spiritual advice."⁷¹ Burns introduces a four step problem solving method that can be used by deacons as they address counsel with individuals and families in conflict. The four steps are: identification of the problem, assessment of alternatives, decision making among the alternatives, and implementation of an alternative.⁷² I also recognize that deacons and deaconesses are called to serve as conflict managers and need to develop counseling skills. Like Burns, I suggest steps for these officers to use when helping individuals to solve problems. I offer a nine step problem solving process, which includes: engagement, assessment, definition, set goals, alternatives, contract, action, evaluation, and continuation. I include a case study to show how this process can be implemented by deacons and deaconesses.⁷³ It is important that these officers have a professional counselor to whom they can refer people with problems too difficult for them to address. I suggest that they develop interdisciplinary teams

⁷⁰Oltman, 161.

⁷¹Thomas R. Burns, *Basic Counseling for Deacons: A Guide for Interviewing* (Rio Rancho, NM: Thomas Burns, 2008), 58.

⁷²Ibid., 57.

⁷³Vincent White, 48-58.

consisting of church members that work in the helping professions. These individuals can be of great assistance to them.⁷⁴

Deacons and Deaconesses Serving in the Role of Business Managers

Deweese makes reference to the work of R. B. C. Howell, a Baptist pastor whose writings were very influential to the Baptist church during the 1800s. Deweese says although Howell favored deaconesses, he influenced the Baptist in the 1800s to assign administrative, business, and financial matters to male deacon bodies, thereby excluding women.

He claimed that deacons ‘of right have the full control’ over the church’s temporalities. They must exercise ‘management’ over the church’s ‘property and funds,’ although he did make clear that such management ‘is not absolute, but limited to such uses as the church may order.’ Deacons were both ‘the financial officers of the church, and ‘a BOARD OF OFFICERS, or the *executive board* of the church, for her temporal department.’(This designation of a deacon body as a ‘board (of managers)’ continues to have implications for many Baptist churches in the early 2000s.)⁷⁵

Some historical facts that may have led Howell to this way of thinking can be gathered from Dwight A. Moody’s sermon, preached on June 15, 1997. Moody asks two important questions. The first one is why was there a decline in deaconesses during the nineteenth century? The second is, what influence do cultural trends have to do with it? Moody submits that the emergence of the all male corporate board of directors in American society during the second half of the nineteenth century influenced the way in which the church was managed. He says, “Deacons drifted away from ministry and toward management. While churches were once open to women sharing ministry

⁷⁴Vincent White, 58.

⁷⁵Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service*, 71-72.

responsibilities, they were closed to the idea of women sharing in the management decisions.”⁷⁶ Moody’s observation seems to suggest that Howell’s views were influenced by the secular management culture of the nineteenth century. He, in turn, influenced the Baptist church to assign the role of business managers to the male deacon board.

Annie Barksdale, in her description of the role of deacons, says that they should also be trained in church management.⁷⁷ William Speer also includes in his list of deacons’ responsibilities, “the management of the temporal affairs of the Church.”⁷⁸ James Hastings agrees with this concept. Speaking of deacons and bishops in the early church, he says, “The charities of the church and the maintenance of its ministry (1 Co 9⁷⁻¹⁴, Gal 6⁵) required business management.”⁷⁹ He therefore, implies that both of these officers are to be involved in the business management of the church.

Bill Pitts interviews the key participants in the election of the first women deacons in the First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas in 1996. He cites Alton Pearson, chairman of the deacons at the time of that event, who stated, “Deacons, are for service, not to run the church.”⁸⁰ According to Pitts, Pearson “resisted the image of a board of deacons that existed merely to make financial decisions.”⁸¹ This statement by Pearson shows that he is

⁷⁶Dwight A. Moody, *Heaven for a Dime: Memoir of a Small Town Preacher* (Lincoln, NE: Winter’s Showcase, 2002), 58.

⁷⁷Annie Barksdale, *The Holy Spirit* (Stamford, CT: Annie Barksdale, 2002), 112.

⁷⁸William Speer, *God’s Rule for Christian Giving: A Practical Essay on the Source of Christian Economy* (1923; repr., Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2009), 158.

⁷⁹James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), 727.

⁸⁰Bill Pitts, “Women, Ministry, and Identity: Establishing Female Deacons at First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 76.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

opposed to the idea that deacons should serve as business managers of the church. He, therefore, disagrees with Howell's ideology that deacons should serve as the financial officers and executive board of the church.

Conclusion

It may be concluded from the review of the works in this chapter that the New Testament reveals little information about the existence of female deacons or deaconesses and the role that they played in the first century Christian church. In that the Greek word *διάκονος*, can be translated in various ways, the way in which it is translated to describe Phoebe's position (the woman most referred to as proof that female deacons/deaconesses existed, Rom 16:1-2) depends upon the presupposition of the translator. Similar ambivalence surrounds the interpretation of the Greek word for "wives" in 1 Tim 3:11 KJV, whether it should be translated so that the text means deacons' wives or women deacons/deaconesses. However, in the absence of the possessive form of *διάκονος*, the context is most favorable to the translation of "women," meaning women deacons/deaconesses.

Clear evidence beginning as early as the third century substantiates that female deacons/deaconesses exist. Some of the evidences are documented in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (third century), the *Apostolic Constitutions* (late fourth century), inscriptions written on the tombstones of female deacons/deaconesses during the fourth through the seventh centuries, and current literature from both Protestant and Catholic writers. These women deacons were a distinct group from the virgins or the widows of 1 Tim 5. In some cases a woman deacon was a virgin or a widow. But that was not the criteria.

There are four important roles in which deacons and deaconesses function. The first is the role of teachers of God's Word. Although their ministry does not consist of preaching God's Word during the main worship service, they should be able to teach when the occasion requires them to. One of their primary functions is to proclaim the Word of God. Therefore, they should be able to teach a Bible study group, explain a Bible passage during a nursing home, hospital, or home visit, and teach the members how to study the Bible and explain it to others. Deacons and deaconesses that are exceptionally gifted in teaching and/or preaching the Word of God, as were Stephen and Philip, could also conduct evangelistic meetings.

The second role in which deacons and deaconesses function is that of serving as care givers to the sick and needy. These officers are to render help to the sick, poor and suffering, troubled, lonely, homebound, friendless, and senior citizens. They are to provide meals and housing for the homeless, organize transportation for those who cannot drive to their medical appointments, organize advocacy programs for those needing legal assistance, provide financial assistance to the poor, help with children in the homes, and assist with household duties. Deacons and deaconesses may team up with ordained and lay ministers of the church to carry out this ministry.

The third role of these officers is the role of conflict managers. The office of deacon in the first century Christian church arose out of a conflict over the daily distribution of food for the widows. These officers were called to solve problems that arose in the church. This is still their role in the twenty-first century. They are to calm adversities and help with the problems in the church so that the pastor and elders are not distracted from preaching, prayer, and meditation. Deacons and deaconesses are to assess

disciplinary issues that exist among members and recommend what action the church should take. They may also be called upon to provide counseling for family problems arising from domestic violence, financial crises, marriage or family relationship problems, parent/child problems, pre-marital counseling, or the need for spiritual advice. Therefore, it is important that these officers receive training in basic counseling so that they can become effective in this area of ministry.

The fourth and final role is primarily carried out by a board of all male deacons. It is the role of business managers. Baptist churches began assigning this role to their deacons during the 1800s. They were influenced by the cultural trends of American society to adopt this style of management. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the all male corporate board of directors emerged. As the churches embraced this style of management, deacons drifted away from ministry and focused their attention on management. The exclusion of women deacons or deaconesses in management decisions was a factor in the decline of the deaconesses during the nineteenth century. Some churches still assign the role of business managers to their deacons. Others believe that “Deacons are for service, not to run the church.”⁸²

There are two questions that I propose as being worthy of future research. The first question is, how did the use or misuse of power obtained by deacons to run the church as business managers during the nineteenth century influence the way in which the Seventh-day Adventist church defines the role of its deacons and deaconesses? The second question is, is the under utilization of the deacons and deaconesses of the Seventh-day Adventist church a reaction to the use or misuse of power obtained by the

⁸²Pitts, 76.

aforementioned deacons? The results of such research could serve as a catalysis for the Seventh-day Adventist church to readdress the role of deacons and deaconesses, and provide more training for them.

The relationship between the literature review and the central topic of this research is to aid in the development of a balanced ministry for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that will empower them to serve in the role of teachers of God's Word, care givers to the sick and needy, conflict managers, and "physical plant managers" that maintain the upkeep of the church's property. The emphasis is on creating a balance between empowering these officers to utilize all of their God-given gifts in service to the church, and not misuse their power to "run" the church as business managers.

CHAPTER 4

THE ANALYSES OF THE MINISTRY OF DEACONS IN THE FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES OF THE MT. CALVARY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Introduction

There are several implications for the ministry of deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that can be drawn from the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church. For example, the first century Christian church used the representative form of government in the election of the original seven deacons. This was established by God for His church since the time of Moses. The “multitude of the disciples” that was involved in that election process was spiritually connected with God and led by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they understood the spiritual qualifications that the candidates needed to possess, and were committed to selecting only those who possessed such qualifications. The implications of this for the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church are to continue to follow the representative form of government in electing deacons and deaconesses, give serious thought and prayer before putting a person in this office, make sure that those being elected meet the biblical qualifications, and those who feel that they are not ready to assume such awesome responsibilities should decline and request to be placed in a training capacity until they

are confident that God is directing them to serve.

A primary task of the deacons of the first century Christian church was conflict resolution. The conflict that faced the church required that these men serve tables and take care of the daily distribution of assistance to the Grecian and Hebrew widows. The deacons also taught and preached the Word of God, and nurtured the church members. The implication of this for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they assess the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the church members. Then they should seek ways to meet those needs. This would include but not be limited to: (1) visiting the members; (2) seeing that the church has an equitable system in place for meeting the needs of its needy members; (3) giving Bible studies; (4) leading out in prayer groups; (5) assisting in and conducting evangelistic meetings; (6) seeking ways to minister to the community in which the church is located; and (7) discipling new members.

Election Process

When the seven deacons were elected to serve the first century Christian church, according to Acts 6:1-6, the twelve apostles called the “multitude of the disciples” together to explain to them the problem concerning the complaints of the widows about the daily distribution of food. The *SDA Bible Commentary* says,

By “the multitude of the disciples” it is not to be supposed that every individual Christian in Jerusalem and its environs had to be gathered to a meeting, but that a special meeting was called, to which all came who could, and at which the apostles presented the problem and their plan. From this procedure in a single central place there naturally arose the representative form of church government.¹

¹“Called the multitude,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:189.

If the commentary is correct, “all came who could,” then this meeting fell short of a representative form of church government in that those who were present did not necessarily represent an equitable ratio to membership formula as required by such governance. The representative form of church government was previously established by God during the time of Moses, according to the counsel of his father-in-law, Jethro, and was followed by the apostles at this meeting. Addressing the election of the seven deacons, Ellen G. White stated, “The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God’s people in the time of Moses and David, were to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation.”² She further added, “Summoning a meeting of the believers, the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church.”³ She continued to explain:

When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.⁴

From these statements, I conclude that the meeting held to elect the seven deacons was attended by the entire body of believers and not just those who could come as the commentary suggests.

This representative form of government is still being used by the Seventh-day

²Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 95.

³Ibid., 89.

⁴Ibid., 96.

Adventist church today in its process of electing church officers, including deacons and deaconesses. The process is briefly described as follows: the church membership elects a large committee which is responsible for electing a nominating committee, which in turn recommends to the church membership individuals to serve as church officers. If the majority of the church members vote to accept the nominating committee's recommendations, those individuals will serve as officers of the church for one term, consisting of one or two years. These individuals may be re-elected to serve additional terms for as long as the church sees fit.

It is important to note, however, that the caliber of individuals elected to serve as officers of the church, to a large degree, depends upon the caliber of people that serve on the large committee and nominating committee. Perhaps a more accurate statement would be: it depends upon the spiritual condition of the church membership, since the process begins and ends with them. Nonetheless, the process is God inspired, although the outcome is sometimes flawed.

One of the flaws that must be avoided when electing individuals to serve as deacons and deaconesses is knowingly electing people to serve in these offices that do not meet the qualifications. Sometimes unqualified individuals are given a chance to see how they will work out in hopes of encouraging them to attend church regularly or to feel needed. Hiebert addresses this practice by saying,

In 1 Timothy 3:10 Paul mentioned the testing of persons for appointment to the office of deacon. The meaning is not that they should be given a trial appointment as deacon, but rather that the church should constantly be examining and testing the members of the congregation, so that whenever the need for selecting deacons arises, they will know what members are qualified for appointment.⁵

⁵Hiebert, 154.

Howard B. Foshee says, “Churches are often tempted to lower the spiritual qualifications at deacon election time. A church should never fall to this temptation. God in his divine wisdom set the qualifications high because the work of the deacon is spiritual in its nature and requires men who are mature Christians.”⁶

The implication for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that church members who sense that God is calling them to the ministry of deacon and deaconess should inform the head deacon, head deaconess, or pastor of their conviction and their desire to serve. The head deacon and head deaconess should take these individuals through a training program that should be conducted at least once a year, and allow them to work alongside the deacons and deaconesses as deacons/deaconesses in-training so that they can also receive some hands-on experience. The head deacon and head deaconess should also be observant of church members that show potential of serving as deacons and deaconesses; and through much prayer and guidance from God, recruit them to be trained along with the above mentioned group. By doing this, the church would have a pool of qualified individuals to elect to serve as needed—either at the beginning of a new term, or to add to those currently serving.

Qualifications

In 1 Tim 3:8-13, the Apostle Paul presented the qualifications of deacons. He wrote,

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to

⁶Howard B. Foshee, *Now That You're a Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1975), 43.

themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The word “grave” comes from the Greek word σεμνός, which means to be “worthy of honor,” or “dignified.”⁷ The implication of this for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they are to carry themselves in such a way that they earn the respect of others, including church members, residents of their community, people with whom they work, their colleagues in ministry, and members of their own family. By gaining the respect of others, these officers will be in a better position to minister to them and influence them to accept the Christian faith.

To be doubletongued means “saying a thing to one person and giving a different view of it to another.”⁸ Being doubletongued is the result of being unstable and double minded. According to Jas 1:8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” In her Beatitudes for deacons, Riley says, “*Blessed is the deacon* who is not ‘doubled-tongued’ and will not engage in gossip. Cheap talk will defile you. Shun unsavory conversations. Talk your Church and Pastor Up, and not Down, and always protect their image, for righteous sake.”⁹ Foshee, quotes Walter A. Bennett, Jr., a pastor and denominational leader who said, “Church activities are much more successful when deacons give them verbal endorsement and active participation. One deacon with an indifferent attitude toward a revival or visitation campaign can weaken the effectiveness of his entire group.”¹⁰

⁷“Grave,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:299.

⁸W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (1952), s.v. “Doubletongued.”

⁹Riley, 145.

¹⁰Foshee, 51.

The injunction to be “not given to much wine” can be rather difficult to understand whether we believe Paul was referring to unfermented wine (grape juice) or fermented wine (intoxicating beverage). The *SDA Bible Commentary* presents the dilemma as following,

Some hold that Paul here speaks of unfermented wine—grape juice—because for him to speak otherwise would place him in conflict with his declaration against defiling the body (see on I Cor. 6:19; 10:31), and contrary to the general teaching of the Bible regarding intoxicating drink (see on Prov. 20:1; 23:29-32). Others hold that Paul here permits a temperate use of ordinary wine. They declare that if he were speaking of grape juice he would not need to warn the deacons against drinking “much” of it, and would have no valid basis for forbidding the elders to drink it at all. The passage is admittedly difficult.¹¹

The difficulty in understanding this injunction is lessened, however, by translating the Greek phrase μή οἴνω πολλῷ προσέχοντας to mean, “be not addicted to much wine”¹² instead of “be not given to much wine.” This translation places the emphasis or warning against being addicted to wine (alcoholism) rather than a warning about the amount of wine that one can consume. If Paul was instructing deacons not to be addicted to wine, then the only sure way to prevent addiction is abstinence, which is in harmony with his declaration against defiling the body, and with the general teaching of the Bible regarding intoxicating drink. Anne M. Fletcher quotes a woman she refers to as Karen M. who said, “It’s not so much the frequency of drinking but how it affects your life when you do.”¹³ Therefore, I favor the interpretation “be not addicted to much wine,” and believe that the apostle Paul was advocating abstinence from fermented wine.

¹¹“Wine,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:299.

¹²Jay P. Green, Sr., gen. ed. and trans., *The Interlinear Bible*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986).

¹³Anne M. Fletcher, *Sober for Good: New Solutions for Drinking Problems—Advice from Those Who Have Succeeded* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 26.

Robert E. Naylor comments on Paul’s counsel to both the bishop and the deacon concerning this issue of wine. In verse three of this same chapter, Paul says that a bishop must be “not given to wine.” Whereas in verse eight, he says that a deacon must be “not given to much wine.” Naylor says,

Many brethren have taken a great deal of comfort from the fact that while the preacher is not to use wine, the deacon is simply not to use *much* wine. They would interpret that to provide the deacon with a certain liberty in the matter of alcoholic drink, as long as it is not done, as some say, to excess. There is no real ground for believing that a double standard is created by the Scriptures. A deacon has a responsibility towards God in the matter of alcoholic drink. A fair examination of the Bible indicates that a man who is to be useful in accepting a vow that makes him a servant of the church for the rest of his life must leave intoxicating drink and even the appearance of it out of his life.¹⁴

Naylor even takes it a step further and rightly so, by stating, “Abstaining from alcoholic drink is not quite enough for the deacon. He is to have nothing to do with the liquor traffic. A man that in some fashion profits from the debaucheries of men is not only a poor deacon but a poor church member. A man should not be selected as a deacon in any church that in any wise is engaged in the sale of liquors.”¹⁵

Naylor’s statements succinctly express the implication of this qualification for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church—abstain from alcoholic drink and the trafficking of such. This admonition is in harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist baptismal vows, which all members are to adhere to. Number ten of the thirteen vows states,

Do you believe that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and will you honor God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, abstaining from all

¹⁴Robert E. Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1955), 23.

¹⁵Ibid.

unclean foods; from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking in narcotics or other drugs?¹⁶

The next qualification listed for deacons is that they be “not greedy of filthy lucre.” They were not to accept ill gotten gain, bribes, or show favor to individuals or to a certain group(s) in the church for personal gain. They were to remain fair and objective in carrying out their responsibilities, otherwise they would forfeit the trust of those whom they were called to serve. This command also warned against taking advantage of people.

The implication of this for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they see the importance of gaining and maintaining the respect and trust of church members in a post-modern era when everyone and everything is suspect.

“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” is the next qualification. According to Vine, the Greek word for mystery, μυστήριον, means “that which is known to the initiated. In the NT it denotes not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit.”¹⁷

This implies that deacons and deaconesses are to have such a connection with God that He will give them divine revelations about His Word, as they spend quality time in prayer and the study of God’s Word.

¹⁶General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 33.

¹⁷Vine, s.v. “Mystery.”

Another one of Riley's Beatitudes speaks to the implication of this qualification for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. It says,

BLESSED IS THE DEACON who considers it not robbery to sacrifice time to study God's Word. He too needs to be able to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." Attending Sunday Church School [Sabbath Church School] or teaching a Sunday School Class [Sabbath School Class], will not only sharpen his own spiritual knowledge, but will enhance his role as a Bible believing church leader. He should also better prepare himself for this ever challenging role, by keeping abreast with other good spiritual informative literature.¹⁸

The apostle Paul continued his list by stating, "Let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (1 Tim 3:10). Evidently, the prospective deacons were scrutinized by the church to see if they possessed a godly character, sound judgment, and had the potential to develop all of the qualifications Paul listed. All areas of their lives were investigated to see if they were fit to hold this sacred office. This insured that the right caliber of persons was being chosen to serve the church.

Webb presents some implications of this admonition for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. He states,

Many churches also require prospective deacons to be church members for a specific period of time. This gives church members a more adequate opportunity to become familiar with their qualifications for deacon service. This time also gives prospective deacons an opportunity to become familiar with the nature and style of the church and how deacons minister in it. A one-year requirement is most common, but some churches require as little as six months and others as much as two years.¹⁹

Webb continues to say,

Churches often require some external signs of commitment to the church. Most frequently cited is regular participation in church programs such as Sunday School [Sabbath School], Church Training, Sunday worship services [Sabbath worship services], and midweek prayer service. Deacons are often expected to be tithers,

¹⁸Riley, 144-145.

¹⁹Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church*, 13.

giving 10 percent or more of their income through the church budget. A church may also require regular deacons' meeting attendance and participation in specific training for deacon ministry.²⁰

The implication for the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is to not take the election of deacons and deaconesses lightly. Serious thought and prayer must take place before putting a person in this office. Also, those who feel that they are being rushed into office before they are ready to assume such awesome responsibilities should decline. They may even request to be placed in a training capacity until they are confident that God is directing them to serve in this office.

Ellen G. White said, "It would be well for all our ministers to give heed to these words and not to hurry men into office without due consideration and much prayer that God would designate by His Holy Spirit whom He will accept."²¹ Although White directed her comment to the election of elders, the same principle is applicable when electing deacons and deaconesses.

The final items on Paul's list of qualifications of deacons are: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim 3:11-12).

It was concluded in chapter 2 of this paper that the best translation for the word "wives" is "women," meaning "women deacons." Therefore, Paul held the women deacons accountable to the same qualifications as the male deacons. These women were to conduct themselves with dignity, not find fault to criticize others, abstain from intoxicating drinks, and be faithful in all things. Both male and female deacons were to

²⁰Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church*, 13-14.

²¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 617.

train their children to be obedient, respectful, and how to behave at home, in public, and at church.

The admonition that deacons were to be the husband of one wife is the same admonition given to bishops in 1 Tim 3:2. The *SDA Bible Commentary* only comments on this phrase as it applies to the bishop. It offers four explanations and the arguments in favor of and against each of them. After considering them, I conclude that the admonition given to the deacons did not mean that men had to be married in order to hold this office. It simply meant that if they were married, they could only have one wife at a time. This was a safe guard against polygamy. This also applied to men who divorced their wives on non-biblical grounds and remarried. However, there is still a question about the eligibility of those who divorced their wives on biblical grounds and remarried since, according to the *SDA Bible Commentary*, “even as the Jews recognized the most trivial grounds for divorce (see Matt 5:32), some of the early Christians were excusing divorce for causes other than adultery (see Matt 19:8, 9). A bishop divorced for any reason would be handicapped as a spiritual leader.”²² If this argument was true concerning the election of bishops, it is possible that it applied to deacons as well. However, the commentary confirms that “nowhere in Scripture is remarriage after the death of a first spouse condemned, nor is it considered detrimental to spiritual leadership.”²³

Ed Glasscock’s position addresses the statements in 1 Tim 2:3, 12 that bishops and deacons are to be the husbands of one wife. He suggests that “it is more probable that Paul was concerned not so much with a man’s marital status as he was with his

²²“One Wife,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:298.

²³Ibid.

character.”²⁴ After a number of arguments, Glasscock bases his position on an alternate interpretation of “husband of one wife.” He states,

The translation “husband of one wife” is not the best understanding of the Greek phrase *μᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα*, but that it should be translated “a man of one woman” or ‘a one-woman man.’ This understanding emphasizes the character of the man rather than his marital status. Thus even a single man or a man who has been married only once must demonstrate that he is not a “playboy” or flirtatious, but that he is stable and mature in character toward his wife or other females. A man who demonstrates a character of loyalty and trustworthiness in such personal relationships is qualified in this area. He, being a one-woman type man, can be placed in this high position and trusted to deal in maturity and with discretion in a situation involving female members. This view shifts the emphasis away from an event that took place in a man’s life before his conversion and properly concentrates on the character and quality of his life at the time of his consideration for this high office.²⁵

Glasscock’s position challenges the traditional interpretation of this passage.

However, I believe that there is sufficient evidence that his position may be correct. At least it is worth our consideration. Echlin is also in agreement with Glasscock. He says, “Recently it has been suggested that the famous Pauline strictures against remarriage may mean that ministers should be totally loyal to their wives.”²⁶

The implication of this qualification for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they are to set a godly example in their home, be faithful to their spouse if they are married, do not be flirtatious with the opposite sex, and train their children to be obedient.

Ellen G. White also stressed the importance of the family of church officers. She counseled,

²⁴Ed Glasscock, “‘The Husband of One Wife’ Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (July-September 1983): 246.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 249.

²⁶Echlin, 11.

The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the man rule his own house with honor? What character have his children? Will they do honor to the father's influence? If he has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home in managing his own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there.²⁷

White was again addressing the hasty election of elders. However, this is also true in the case of deacons and deaconesses.

An example of how important it is for the family members of deacons and deaconesses to be converted and have a godly influence in the church can be seen from this situation that White wrote about in 1862. She addressed an issue concerning the “power of example” when the children of a deacon wore immodest clothing. The example of the deacon's children caused the other children in the church to question their parents on why they could not wear what the deacon's children were wearing. The article of clothing was called hoops. White described hoops as a shame and indecent. She said, “Children urge the example of other children, whose parents are Sabbathkeepers. Brother A is a deacon of the church. His children wear hoops, and why is it any worse for me to wear them than it is for them?”²⁸ She continued to stress the importance of influence by saying, “Those who by their example furnish unconsecrated professors with arguments against those who would be peculiar, are laying a cause of stumbling in the way of the weak; they must render an account to God for their example.”²⁹

It is difficult for deacons and deaconesses to teach others to obey God's Word and the standards of the church when their children and/or spouse disregard them. Other

²⁷Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:618.

²⁸Ibid., 1:276.

²⁹Ibid.

members who want to disregard these standards will use the example of the deacon's family as an excuse.

Job Description and Empowerment

The job description of the deacons in the first century Christian church began with them resolving conflict by serving tables and taking care of the daily distribution of assistance to the Grecian and Hebrew widows of the church (Acts 6:1-6). By doing this, they restored unity and peace in the church when the members began to murmur. The implication of this for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they are to see to it that the church has an equitable system in place for meeting the needs of the members that are poor and sick. They are to assess the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the church members and seek ways to meet them. This will require them to be aware of the available resources in the church and in the community, and know the proper steps to take to obtain these resources. They are to educate the members in need on what community agencies they can go to for help and how to apply for help.

In order for deacons and deaconesses to properly assess the needs of the members, they must be actively engaged in home visitation. Some of the reasons for visitation are: to become better acquainted with the membership; strengthen new members and absentee members; reclaim backsliders; call on the sick and shut-ins; identify and follow-up on the needs of the elderly, disabled, widows, and single parents (such as house cleaning, yard work, meals, transportation, child care, home weatherization, and other improvements); address family crisis (such as spiritual problems, disaster, illness, violence, bereavement,

marital problems, financial problems, and children’s behavioral problems); and encourage faithfulness in matters of stewardship.³⁰

In addition to the above job function, there are accounts that show that the deacons of the first century, at least two of them—Stephen and Philip—taught and preached the Word of God to large audiences, explained the Scriptures to single individuals, baptized believers into the church, healed the sick, and cast out unclean spirits (Acts 7; 8:5-13, 26-40). I will not seek to show in this section of the chapter whether or not the rest of the deacons carried out these additional functions. However, the point that I want to make here is that the job description of the deacons was of such a nature that it allowed them the freedom to exercise all of the spiritual gifts that God chose to bestow upon them individually. The church recognized that these officers were a great asset to the gospel work and were willing to empower them to function in a variety of ways.

Ellen G. White made this observation regarding the empowerment of the deacons elected by the first century Christian church, which has important implications for the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church: “It is proper for all matters of a temporal nature to come before the proper officers [deacons] and be by them adjusted. But if they are of so difficult a character as to baffle their wisdom, they should be carried into the council of those who have the oversight of the entire church.”³¹

The implication of this for the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the pastor, elders, and church members

³⁰Vincent White, 41-42.

³¹Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (1947; repr., Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1980), 261.

must give deacons and deaconesses a sense of empowerment if they are to fulfill their God-given role. Only when these officers cannot resolve an issue are they to bring it to the pastor or the church board. This kind of empowerment allows deacons and deaconesses the freedom to carry out their responsibilities with courage and dignity without having to say, “The Pastor said,” in order to get the cooperation of members. When the pastor uses his/her influence from the pulpit and in other ways to solicit the members’ cooperation for the deacons and deaconesses, it informs the congregation that the pastor and officers work as a team. This also helps to establish a sense of empowerment among the deacons and deaconesses.

Solving Problems and Nurturing the Membership

It has been established that the deacons of the first century Christian church ministered to the members that joined the church by solving problems and nurturing them. Therefore, the implication is that the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church must be involved in preparing the church to welcome new members into its ranks, and nurture them.

Ellen G. White stated that “God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience.”³² This statement indicates that baptizing people into the church is not the end of the process of soul winning. Church members have a responsibility to nurture, train, and assimilate the new members into the church. It must

³²Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (1946; repr., Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1970), 352.

be carefully noted that this responsibility rests upon the entire church membership and not solely on the pastor. In following the biblical model as outlined in the book of Acts, the deacons and deaconesses have an important role to play in accomplishing this task.

For further implications of the ministry of deacons in the first century Christian church for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church, I direct your attention to Ellen G. White's inspired account of the election of the seven deacons in the first century Christian church:

The church accordingly selected seven men full of faith and the wisdom of the Spirit of God, to attend to the business pertaining to the cause. Stephen was chosen first: he was a Jew by birth and religion, but spoke the Greek language, and was conversant with the customs and manners of the Greeks. He was therefore considered the most proper person to stand at the head and have supervision of the disbursement of the funds appropriated to the widows, orphans, and the worthy poor. This selection met the minds of all, and the dissatisfaction and murmuring were quieted.

The seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties by prayer and the laying on of hands. Those who were thus ordained were not thereby excluded from teaching the faith. On the contrary, it is recorded that "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." They were fully qualified to instruct in the truth. They were also men of calm judgment and discretion, well calculated to deal with difficult cases of trial, of murmuring or jealousy.

This choosing of men to transact the business of the church, so that the apostles could be left free for their special work of teaching the truth, was greatly blessed of God. The church advanced in numbers and strength. "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

It is necessary that the same order and system should be maintained in the church now as in the days of the apostles. The prosperity of the cause depends very largely upon its various departments being conducted by men of ability, who are qualified for their positions. Those who are chosen of God to be leaders in the cause of God, having the general oversight of the spiritual interest of the church, should be relieved, as far as possible, from cares and perplexities of a temporal nature. Those whom God has called to minister in word and doctrine should have time for meditation, prayer, and study of the Scriptures. Their clear spiritual discernment is dimmed by entering into the lesser details of business and dealing with the various temperaments of those who meet together in church capacity.³³

³³Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption*, 260-261.

From this account, I propose four implications of the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church that can be applied to the ministry of deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church as it relates to solving problems and nurturing the membership. First of all, it is important to note the qualities of Stephen, who was elected to serve as the head deacon. Although he was a Jew, he spoke the Greek language and was familiar with Greek culture. Therefore, Stephen was capable of identifying with and relating to both of the groups that were in contention—the Grecians or Hellenistic Christians and the Hebrews or Palestinian Jewish converts. The implication is that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church must elect men and women to serve as deacons and deaconesses who show evidence of being capable of identifying with and relating to the various groups that make up the church membership. The membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the twenty-first century is divided by culture, ethnicity, complexion, race, socioeconomic status, age, education, gender, liturgy, music, theology, dress, diet, etc. Deacons and deaconesses must be skilled in building relationships across these divides if they are to have a positive influence among the membership.

After Stephen and the other deacons were elected to serve the church, the dissatisfaction and murmuring ceased between the Grecians and Hebrews. Therefore, the second implication is that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church must elect men and women to serve as deacons and deaconesses who have skills in resolving conflicts. These officers are to recognize that they have been called as conflict managers, social workers, and spiritual counselors. Their primary responsibility is to restore unity and

peace in the church when the members begin to murmur. In other words; they are “problem solvers.”³⁴

The deacons of the first century Christian church were able to teach the Word of God. They were also calm, and had discernment. Therefore, the third implication is that the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church must be qualified to instruct others in the Word of God, have self control, and be able to reason from cause to effect.

We are further told that God greatly blessed the first century Christian church by increasing its membership. This was due to the deacons being willing to take care of the social needs and relational problems of the membership and allowing the apostles to focus on their primary calling of teaching the Word of God. Therefore, the fourth and final implication is that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church will grow spiritually and numerically when the men and women that are elected to serve as deacons and deaconesses follow the same model of taking care of the social needs and relational problems of the membership and allowing the pastor and elders to focus on their primary calling of teaching God’s Word, meditating, praying, and studying the Scriptures.

Barnett presents a list of functions for deacons to carry out among the church membership. My conviction is that it is also the deaconesses’ responsibility to carry out these functions. These functions are in harmony with the principles set forth in the first century Christian church for the work of deacons, and should be carried out by the deacons and deaconesses of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the twenty-first century.

Barnett says,

³⁴Vincent White, xviii, xvii.

The following are functions which ordinarily are primarily focused upon ministry to the Church's own people and illustrate the kinds of things they might encompass:

1. To visit the sick and the shut-ins.
2. To care for and about the parish's poor.
3. To coordinate a program for visiting and integrating newcomers.
4. To visit prospects for entering the Church.
5. To instruct adults in the precatechumenate, catechumenate, and postbaptismal catechesis. [Adapted for Seventh-day Adventists—To instruct adults in Bible studies in preparation for baptism, fundamental beliefs of the church, and postbaptismal Bible studies/new believers class].
6. To teach the children of the church.
7. To lead small study/prayer/sharing groups.
8. To organize and head groups and activities to serve special needs within the Christian community.
9. To train acolytes or altar servers. [Adapted for Seventh-day Adventists—To establish and train a group of youth to serve as junior deacons and deaconesses].
10. To work with student groups.
11. To instruct parents and godparents for baptisms. [Adapted for Seventh-day Adventists—To instruct parents and guardians for baby/child dedications].
12. To lead parish discussion groups.
13. To organize and coordinate retreats, workshops, and similar activities.
14. To coordinate ushers or “parish hosts.”
15. To develop youth programs and activities. [Adapted for Seventh-day Adventists—To serve as sponsors and advisors to the youth department].
16. To counsel those with problems.
17. To coordinate and train lectors. [Adapted for Seventh-day Adventists—To coordinate and train deacons and deaconesses to lead out in mid-week prayer meetings and participate on platform during worship services].
18. To assume responsibility for some aspect of parish or diocesan administration.³⁵

As the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church returns to the biblical model of the first century Christian church and allows its deacons to solve problems and nurture the membership, it will experience greater results.

Proclaiming the Gospel and Winning Souls

The impact that the deacons made in the early church was astounding—“The word

³⁵Barnett, 184.

of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7). Dockery states that “the selection of the seven started the church on its world evangelism mission.”³⁶

With great insight, Ellen G. White attributed this growth experience to the work of the deacons. She stated,

This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success.³⁷

These statements indicate that in addition to addressing the physical needs of the poor, the deacons of the early church proclaimed the gospel and won converts to the church, as did the apostles.

The Book of Acts gives us undisputable evidence of this fact as it portrays the ministry of Philip and Stephen in particular. Although there is no biblical record that proves that the other deacons proclaimed the gospel and won converts, neither is there any record that proves that they did not. According to 1 Tim 3:9, one of the qualifications necessary to serve as a deacon is to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. This includes being “a well-informed Bible student.”³⁸ This would suggest that all of the deacons were expected to share their faith verbally.

The deacon Philip is portrayed as being effective as both an evangelist and as a Bible worker. He is even referred to as an evangelist in Acts 21:8. “And the next day we

³⁶Dockery, 424.

³⁷Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 90.

³⁸“Faith,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:299-300.

that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

As an evangelist, Philip conducted a public evangelistic meeting in the city of Samaria with tremendous success. The story is recorded as following:

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city (Acts 8:5-8).

According to Ellen G. White, God used Philip's evangelistic work in Samaria to help the apostles to understand Jesus' prediction concerning their witnessing. She said, "Philip's work in Samaria was marked with great success, and, thus encouraged, he sent to Jerusalem for help. The apostles now perceived more fully the meaning of the words of Christ, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' Acts 1:8."³⁹

Not only was Philip an evangelist with the skills to conduct a public meeting, he also had the skills to teach the Scriptures to a one-person audience. After completing the meeting in Samaria, Philip was instructed by the angel of the Lord to go into the desert of Gaza. When he arrived there, he met an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the Scriptures. Philip explained the Scriptures to him, and baptized him (Acts 8:34-38).

Another example of a deacon that won converts to the church is Stephen. According to Ellen G. White's description of him, we could consider Stephen the head deacon of the early church. White said, "Stephen was chosen first; he was a Jew by birth and religion, but spoke the Greek language, and was conversant with the customs and

³⁹Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 107.

manners of the Greeks. He was therefore considered the most proper person to stand at the head and have supervision of the disbursement of the funds appropriated to the widows, orphans, and the worthy poor.”⁴⁰

Acts 6:8 gives this account of Stephen, “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Unfortunately Stephen received great opposition because of his work and was stoned to death (Acts 7:58-60). However, Saul witnessed the courage of Stephen and was convicted. Ellen G. White shared this account,

His [Stephen’s] death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance. For a time he [Saul] was a mighty instrument in the hands of Satan. But soon this relentless persecutor was to be employed in building up the church that he was now tearing down. A Mightier than Satan had chosen Saul to take the place of the martyred Stephen, to preach and suffer for His name, and to spread far and wide the tidings of salvation through His blood.⁴¹

Dockery makes a similar observation concerning Stephen’s death and Saul’s conviction. He says, “Saul became a prime mover in the new persecution of the church because he was zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:13). He began to devastate the churches. Luke, however, wants us to see that out of a seeming tragedy there was advance in the Christian mission. Out of Stephen came Saul (hereafter referred to as Paul).”⁴² Therefore, not only did Stephen witness by his life and his words, but he also witnessed by his death.

In addition to these two stalwart male deacons—Philip and Stephen—there were also female deacons or deaconesses that were instrumental in instructing others and

⁴⁰Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption*, 260.

⁴¹Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 101-102.

⁴²Dockery, 426.

winning converts to the church. As previously stated, Schaff proposed that Priscilla, whom Paul mentioned along with Phebe, was also a deaconess.⁴³ Christopher Wordworth agrees with Schaff and says, “From the position of her name immediately after Phobe the Deaconess, and before her husband and all the other Roman Christians [Rom 16], it may be inferred, that Priscilla also was appointed by St. Paul to do some special work, like that of a Deaconess, in the Church.⁴⁴ However, due to the lack of definitive evidence, Jane Marie Bancroft states that we have “no means of knowing” if Priscilla and the other women mentioned by Paul in Rom 16 were deaconesses.⁴⁵ I am inclined to agree with Cecilia Robinson—to let Priscilla’s work speak for her. Robinson says, “It was women such as Phoebe and Priscilla who created the ideal of the female diaconate. Whether or no they received the name as an official title matters but little; they certainly ‘executed the office’ of a Deaconess, and bore splendid testimony to the value of a ministry of women.”⁴⁶ Therefore, based upon the Scriptures, Priscilla was a powerful example of one who instructed others in the truth.

Priscilla and her husband Aquila instructed Apollos, a prominent leader of the early church, in the Word of God. Sensing that Apollos’ understanding was limited to the teaching of John the Baptist, Priscilla and Aquila “took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). According to the *SDA Bible*

⁴³Schaff, 1:500-501.

⁴⁴Christopher Wordworth, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1923; repr., Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, LLC, 2009), 130.

⁴⁵Jane Marie Bancroft, *Deaconesses in Europe and Their Lessons for America* (1890; repr., Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2008), 18.

⁴⁶Cecilia Robinson, *The Ministry of Deaconesses* (1898; repr., Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2008), 12.

Commentary, the teaching that Apollos received from Priscilla and Aquila “would include the doctrine of salvation by grace, justification by faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit after conversion and baptism, and the meaning and necessity of the Lord’s Supper.”⁴⁷ This is evident that Priscilla was knowledgeable of the Scriptures and apt to teach.

To further describe how involved she was in instructing others in the truth, the commentary states: “It would doubtless follow, as in the case of the twelve men discussed in [Acts] ch. 19:1-7, that Apollos, who formerly knew only John’s baptism, would be rebaptized into ‘the name of the Lord Jesus.’ She evidently took an active part in instructing Apollos, indicating that she was a woman of great power and zeal among the Christians.”⁴⁸ Although it may not be conclusive that Priscilla was a deaconess, it is certain that she proclaimed the gospel and won souls to the Lord.

Edmond Cullinan indicates that Phoebe may have also engaged in proclaiming the gospel and winning souls. He states that “her ministry may not have corresponded exactly to that of later deaconesses; indeed it may have been more extensive, particularly in terms of preaching and teaching which were particular concerns of St. Paul.”⁴⁹

Regarding those deaconesses who were not in the forefront as was Priscilla and Phoebe, but worked in a more subtle way; Schaff noted the tactful manner in which they used their humanitarian role as an opportunity to teach others the truth and win converts to the church. Concerning the office of deaconess, he said,

It opened to pious women and virgins, and chiefly to widows, a suitable field for the regular official exercise of their peculiar gifts of self-denying charity and devotion to

⁴⁷“Way of God,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:369.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Edmond Cullinan, “Women and the Diaconate,” *Worship* 70, no. 3 (May 1996): 261.

the welfare of the church. Through it they could carry the light and comfort of the gospel into the most private and delicate relations of domestic life, without at all overstepping their natural sphere.”⁵⁰

Citing Clement of Alexandria, Vyhmeister writes of another subtle way in which these women ministered: ““But the apostles in conformity with their ministry concentrated on undistracted preaching, and took their wives around as Christian sisters rather than spouses, to be their fellow-ministers [“fellow deacons”] in relation to housewives, through whom the Lord’s teaching penetrated into the women’s quarters without scandal.””⁵¹

The female deacons or deaconesses ministered by using the gifts that God gave them within the context of their own unique personalities and circumstances, as did the male deacons. Some were in the forefront in instructing others in the truth while others worked subtly behind the scenes. Both were effective in their ministry.

The implication of the deacons and deaconesses in the first century Christian church proclaiming the gospel and winning souls for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is that there is a potential for an explosion of new members added to the church. They can win souls by conducting public meetings—tent meetings, hall meetings, church meetings, and prophecy seminars. They can serve as Bible workers in meetings conducted by their pastor, which would reduce the expense of hiring outside Bible workers. And since the deacons and deaconesses would remain at the church, they could continue to visit and study with the people who did not decide to join the church when the meeting ended. They would be more effective in

⁵⁰Schaff, 1:500.

⁵¹Vyhmeister, “The Ministry of the Deaconess,” 18.

nurturing and assimilating the new members into church-life because of the relationship they would have built with them throughout the course of the meetings. They could train those newly baptized members how to share their faith with their family and friends, thus, they would become soul-winners also.

Barnett presents a list of practical ministries to be conducted by deacons and deaconesses that would address many of the social needs found in all communities. These ministries could serve as an entering wedge for presenting the gospel, once the people's confidence has been won.

1. To help and befriend the powerless who are in need: prisoners, the poor, the rejected.
2. To counsel the troubled.
3. To work in referral programs to help those in crisis situations.
4. To lead or work in community action groups to effect social change.
5. To organize and promote community activities or programs to meet special needs: drug and alcohol dependencies, unwed parents, etc.
6. To work with juveniles and adults in hospitals, prisons, orphanages, half-way houses, and other institutions.
7. To serve youth in various educational and recreational programs.
8. To care for the needs of the elderly and disabled.
9. To visit the lonely and neglected, especially those in institutions.
10. To work with the handicapped.
11. To provide employment help to those leaving institutions, such as prisons, half-way houses, drug and alcohol treatment centers.⁵²

Barnett also gives suggestions for ministries that could grow out of a deacon's and deaconess' work situation. In fact, the deacons and deaconesses could identify other church members that work in these areas and organize ministry teams. Barnett states,

The modern diaconate should serve to enable and encourage those in varied occupations and life situations to develop special ministries of service, though these do not lend themselves to precise categories. Some of these ministries would be natural outgrowths of occupational vocations. A nurse or a lawyer might give part of his or her time to service in a free clinic on a regular and continuing basis. Such

⁵²Barnett, 185.

service, enlightened and informed by the Spirit, is a *diakonia* of love and rises above the level of mere social service.

A teacher might offer special classes or personal instruction to children with learning problems. A salesperson could offer time and expertise to teach volunteers how to “sell” charitable organizations to prospective supporters to raise needed financial support.⁵³

As the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church adopt the mind-set of being soul-winners, they will earnestly pray for opportunities to witness for Jesus and implement some of Barnett’s suggestions. As they focus on their mission to spread the gospel, I believe that “the Lord [will add] to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

Conclusion

As the members of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church are spiritually guided in using the representative form of government, they will elect persons that possess the biblical qualifications needed to serve as deacons and deaconesses. And as these officers follow the prescribed job description, and are empowered by the church to solve problems, nurture the members, and proclaim the gospel, the church will grow spiritually and numerically like the first century Christian church grew.

The following chapter gives the strategies for developing and implementing a twenty-first century ministry for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that reflects the first century model.

⁵³Barnett, 185.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MINISTRY FOR DEACONS AND DEACONESSES THAT REFLECTS THE FIRST CENTURY MODEL

Introduction

The intervention presented in this chapter addresses the problem of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. The problem of these officers is they have lost their identity as spiritual leaders. They have neglected their responsibility of looking after the social needs of the widows, orphans, sick, and poor members of the congregation. They do not manage conflicts and solve relational problems that arise among the members. Nor do they teach and preach the Word of God, or nurture the members of the church. The intervention is built upon the theological foundation that is described in chapter 2, and framed by the literature review presented in chapter 3. The theological foundation for the ministry of deacons and deaconesses is derived from the servant model that was demonstrated by Jesus, and from the deacons that served the first century Christian church. Jesus came to minister (διακονῆσαι) and not to be ministered unto (διακονηθῆναι) (Matt 20:28). These two Greek words are derivatives of the word διάκονος, which is interpreted as deacon, minister, or servant—masculine and feminine. Therefore, the act of ministering or serving is inherent in the name deacon and deaconess. The deacons that served the first century Christian church looked after the widows,

orphans, sick, and poor, managed conflicts, and taught the Word of God. The literature review indicates that there are four roles in which deacons and deaconesses are to serve. These roles are: (1) teachers of God's Word, (2) care givers to the sick and needy, (3) conflict managers, and (4) physical plant managers.

As supplemental research, I mailed surveys to 103 of the 179 non-Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city of Huntsville. The purpose of the surveys was to identify "best practices" among other churches in both the training and the ministry of both deacons and deaconesses that were built upon a similar theological foundation as I propose. I did not include Seventh-day Adventist churches in the survey because I am familiar with their general practices. My knowledge of their practices comes not only from the churches that I have pastored, but from insights that I have gained from conducting deacon and deaconess seminars in churches throughout my conference—the South Central Conference—and churches in other conferences for the past ten years.

The breakdown of church denominations that were mailed surveys is as follows: Baptist—28, Methodist—18, Presbyterian—13, Church of Christ—10, Non-denomination—9, Church of God in Christ—7, Church of God—3, Lutheran—3, Assembly of God—3, Episcopal—2, Church of the Nazarene—2, Anglican—1, Holiness—1, Greek Orthodox—1, Catholic—1, and Sabbath Assembly—1. Eleven of the one hundred three churches responded—8 Baptists, 1 Assembly of God, 1 Presbyterian, and 1 unidentified.

Of the eleven respondents, three had both deacons and deaconesses, six had only deacons, and two had neither deacons nor deaconesses. The three churches with both deacons and deaconesses had memberships above three hundred. Two identified their

worship styles as formal, and formal-evangelical. The third did not identify its style.

The kinds of training that the deacons and deaconesses received, according to the surveys, that could be implemented at the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church are: training in denominational history, issues relating to faith and leadership, training manuals, quarterly training sessions, studies on the biblical basis for deacons/deaconesses, study of the Scriptures and memorization, and retreats.

The inreach ministries that could be implemented are: a family ministry plan that assists in meeting the physical, financial, and spiritual needs of the families in the church; lead out in prayer groups; conduct Bible studies; and encourage church members. The outreach ministries are: visitation of the lost and unchurched; minister to prisoners, hospital patients, the homeless, and people with emergencies.

The selection process most beneficial to the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church would require its members to identify and select men and women that have the Holy Ghost, godly characters, maturity, discernment, a dedication to the faith and the congregation (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:8-13), willingness to be trained, and preferably have a spouse and children. Members who observe men and women of this caliber would be encouraged to submit their names to the nominating committee for their consideration. The nominating committee would then recommend these persons to the church body to be voted as deacons and deaconesses.

The list of responsibilities for the deacons and deaconesses was similar to those previously listed as inreach and outreach ministries, with the exception of “being troubleshooters and not trouble makers,” and proclaiming the Word of God.

**Teaching the Congregation the Principles That Caused
the First Century Christian Church to Grow
Spiritually and Numerically**

I initiated the project by presenting a series of Sabbath sermons to the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church congregation, entitled *The Life of the Early Church*. These seven sermons were developed from the Book of Acts and presented during the months of August and September 2005. The goal was to highlight the principles that the members of the first century Christian church used that caused it to grow spiritually and numerically, and to challenge our church members to implement those principles. Those principles are found in Acts 2:42, 46, 47—“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

I challenged the membership to apply these principles by reading and studying the Bible daily and following the doctrines taught by the Seventh-day Adventist church; visiting, calling, and inviting each other home for supper during the week; attending all of the services of the church, opening the church during the week for prayer, praise, and worship; having family worship in the mornings and evenings in their homes; developing an effective prayer life, calling each other for prayer, praying with co-workers and neighbors, and praying for people they want to be saved.

At the conclusion of the first sermon, which dealt with the need for prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to become effective witnesses for Jesus, I made an appeal to those interested in becoming prayer warriors for the church. Several signed up and were

eventually paired off and scheduled to come to the church at certain times during the week to pray (see appendix A for schedule and prayer focus areas).

The sixth sermon that I presented was from Acts 6, dealing with the call and ministry of the first deacons. I used this sermon to educate the membership concerning the multi-faceted responsibilities of the deacons and deaconesses, and to challenge them to become more sensitive and supportive of these officers. At the conclusion of the sermon, I invited everyone that was currently serving as a deacon or deaconess, and those that were interested in serving to meet with me and sign up to participate in a training workshop.

The workshop consisted of four two-hour sessions, September 25, 26, 27, October 3, 2005, and covered the following topics: The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Problem Solvers; The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Soul Winners; The Biblical Qualifications of Deacon and Deaconess; The Work of the Deacon and Deaconess; Serving During the Services of the Church; Visitation Techniques; Providing Quality Care for Families in Crisis; Telephone Ministry; and Welcoming and Nurturing New Members.¹ The book that the training material was presented from was made available to each of the participants so that they would have it for future reference. This training, especially the information presented on the biblical roots of deacons and deaconesses correlated with the training that was indicated by the respondents of the mail-out surveys.

The training workshop occurred just prior to the election of church officers for the year 2006-2008, which began October 2005. Most of those that participated in the

¹Vincent White, 1-77.

training were elected by the church to serve as deacons and deaconesses. The year of 2006 was filled with challenges and distractions, so I was not able to focus on the project.

Conducting First Weekend Training Retreat for Deacons and Deaconesses

At the beginning in 2007 I conducted several joint meetings with the deacons and deaconesses in order to create an atmosphere of unity and equality among them. The first meeting dealt with identifying the most vulnerable and needy “people groups” in the church and community and to develop ministries to help meet their emergency physical, social, and spiritual needs. Thirteen groups were identified: single parents, senior citizens, new mothers, missing members, new members, members recovering from surgery, persons in abusive relationships, homosexuals, persons with substance abuse, handicaps, persons in bereavement, Spanish speaking individuals, and persons with mental health issues (see appendix A).

After identifying these groups, the deacons and deaconesses selected the group(s) that they were interested in working with. To assist in developing ministries for these groups, I provided each deacon and deaconess with a Madison County Resources for Families list. This is a list of social service agencies that provide assistance to various groups of people in need that live in the Huntsville/Madison County area (see appendix A).

At the conclusion of that meeting, I requested that the deacons and deaconesses would meet in their selected needs group and identify the agency(s) that provided services for that group. They were to contact those agencies and get information about their services, and if possible, arrange for a representative to come and speak to the board of deacons and deaconesses about how they could network with them in helping to meet the

needs of members of our church and community. I requested that they report their findings at the next monthly meeting.

I conducted two more meetings of this nature in an attempt to get participation from the deacons and deaconesses who did not initially sign up to work with a needs group. I also discussed with them the idea of going on a spiritual retreat to seek God's vision for them as deacons and deaconesses, and to do some effective planning. The majority of them were excited about the idea, so we began to make plans. A retreat was also a training method used by a respondent of the survey.

I encouraged them to meet the following month to share their findings concerning the agencies and to continue to plan the retreat. At the next meeting, no one had a report on the agencies, so I encouraged them to continue to work on it. I presented them with information about the Cliff House Christian Retreat, located about sixty miles outside of Huntsville, in Woodville, Alabama. They liked the location, so we set the date for the retreat, May 18-20, 2007, Friday through Sunday.

Seventeen people attended the retreat—eight deaconesses, one former deaconess, one youth that participated, five deacons, one child, and myself. We arrived at 4:00 p.m., got set up, and finished supper by 7:15. To begin our work for the evening, one of the deacons gave us a vesper thought. After that, I shared with them what I hoped we would accomplish that weekend together—to seek God's vision for the deacon and deaconess board, develop a mission statement, and establish goals and objectives.

I divided them into three groups—five in each group. Each group selected a secretary and a facilitator. Everyone was given a “Pleased and Troubled Worksheet” on which to list the things they were pleased about and troubled about as deacons and

deaconesses. As each person shared his/her list in their group, the secretary recorded it on a large master sheet and put stars by those areas that were repeated. Then each person in the group ranked the pleased and troubled areas by putting a red dot by the areas most important to him/her, and a blue dot by the area least important. Each group turned in their big sheets to me to be synthesized.

The areas in which they were most pleased were their dedication to duties, and their willingness to serve. The areas in which they were most troubled were the Wednesday night prayer meetings not being used as a training opportunity for deacons to speak, lack of communication among them, and their lack of visiting the sick. Eventually, strategies were implemented that addressed some of these troubled areas, and the troubled areas cited at a second retreat. I will present this information in the section entitled “Outcomes.”

The next item scheduled for that evening was to have a twenty-five minute prayer session. The focus of the prayers was to thank God for what they were pleased about, seek direction in how to address their troubled areas, and to seek God’s vision for them as deacons and deaconesses. That session was very moving. After I gave a few remarks, we settled in for the night.

Developing a Vision and a Mission Statement

After breakfast that Sabbath morning, we had Sabbath school, which was facilitated by a deacon and a deaconess. Afterward we had another prayer session to seek God’s vision for us. The worship service followed. This consisted of a PowerPoint presentation by me that identified the current problem of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day

Adventist Church and other Seventh-day Adventist churches. The problem is that the deacons and deaconesses of our churches are under-utilized. They have been relegated to caring for the church facilities while the spiritual leadership responsibilities that were carried out by the deacons of the first century Christian church have been assigned to other departments established by the church.

I gave examples from the Scriptures to show the biblical model that deacons and deaconesses of the twenty-first century should adopt. As they listened to the presentation, I asked them to write on their “Vision Worksheet” the vision that God was revealing to them about their ministry as deacons and deaconesses.

After the presentation, they separated into their groups and shared what they had written, while the secretaries wrote it on a large master sheet. The same process was followed for this exercise as was followed with the “Pleased and Troubled” exercise. The synthesis of their work resulted in this vision for the Mt. Calvary deacons and deaconesses: to be filled with the Holy Spirit; to be teachers and preachers; to be students of the Word; to be soul winners; to be prayer warriors; to keep order in the church; to come together on one accord; to meet once a month as a whole group; to come together to study and be taught how to be effective; and to have seasons of prayer before Holy Communion.

Following the group session, we had dinner, went on a hike, and relaxed for a couple of hours. After relaxing, we came back together for another group exercise—this time to develop a mission statement and set some goals and objectives. The same process was used as in the previous group sessions with the following mission statement emerging: The mission of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day

Adventist Church is to serve its members and community—especially those that are most vulnerable—by providing for their emergency physical, social, and spiritual needs, addressing relational problems in the church, and teaching and preaching God’s Word through public and personal evangelism. We will lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and disciple newly baptized church members. We will visit, assess needs, and network with departments within the church and agencies in the community in order to accomplish our mission. We will be responsible for maintaining the upkeep of the church and its properties. We will engage in on going personal development through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and other relevant materials so that we might become better persons that are better equipped to glorify God and serve humanity.

Setting Goals and Objectives

The final task of this group exercise was to set goals and objectives to be carried out upon returning home. The one goal that was agreed upon was to follow-through with the previous assignment that I gave them before going on the retreat—to begin developing ministries for the thirteen needs groups. The objective was to contact the social service agencies on the Madison County Resources for Families list and find out about their services, and if possible, arrange for a representative to come and speak to the board of deacons and deaconesses. Each of the deacons and deaconesses identified the agency(s) relevant to the needs group that he/she had previously chosen to work with, and agreed to contact them. The secretary of each group wrote the deacon and deaconess’ name and agency(s) that he/she was to contact on an Action Steps Assignment Sheet. A deadline

was set for contacting the agencies, and a date for the next meeting was established.

During my presentation earlier that day, I shared with them that I was documenting the work that I was doing with them for my doctoral studies. I stated that I did not want them to hear it from someone else and begin to think that I was using them. I informed them that I had a burden for the work of deacons and deaconesses for several years before I decided to do a doctorate in this area; so my interest in them is genuine. I told them that I wanted them to carry out their ministry because of their love and commitment to God and not because they want to help me with my studies. Therefore, I emphasized that they take the initiative in scheduling future monthly meetings and following through with assignments. I assured them that I would continue to assist and support them, and be present at their meetings; but I was not going to call them to remind them of meetings and assignments. I wanted to empower them and not do the work for them.

We ended the group exercise with another prayer session, seeking God's power to fulfill His vision through us. We then had supper, vesper, recreation, and retired for the night. Following breakfast Sunday morning, we shared our testimonies, sang songs, prayed, and prepared to depart. It was a spirit-filled experience that everyone enjoyed, and a lot was accomplished. A vision was defined, a mission statement was developed, and goals and objectives were established (see appendix A for materials used at retreats).

Conducting Second Weekend Training Retreat for Deacons and Deaconesses

The second retreat took place the following year, after new church officers were elected. Therefore, a new board of deacons and deaconesses were selected (see election

process in section entitled “Confronting the Status Quo”). The head deacon suggested to me that we have another retreat. He attended the first retreat and saw the benefits of the training. This was his first year serving as head deacon, and he really embraced the concept that I was presenting. He felt that if the new group attended a retreat that they would embrace the concept also. I agreed to the idea and asked him to communicate it to the head deaconesses. If she agreed, then both of them were to share it with the other deacons and deaconesses for their approval.

The deacons and deaconesses agreed to have the retreat. The date was set for February 29-March 1, 2008 at Oakwood University, in the Carter Hall Dormitory chapel. Since this retreat was held locally, there were no expenses involved. Therefore, I thought that more would attend this one than the first one. However, it was just the opposite. Out of a total of twenty-six officers, seven attended the Friday evening session (six deacons and one deaconess), and eleven attended the Sabbath afternoon session (seven deacons and four deaconesses).

Those who attended the Friday evening session of the retreat shared similar responses in the pleased and troubled areas as those at the first retreat with a few exceptions. They were pleased about visiting the nursing home, unity, and learning from experienced individuals who share and encourage. They were troubled that the church is not always open; there are not enough programs, seminars, training workshops, revivals, home visitation, or commitment; there is a lack of discernment, community in nurturing each other’s children, unified effort, managing meeting times, organization, and prayer meeting attendance. We ended the evening with a prayer session thanking God for what they were pleased about, seeking direction in how to address their troubled areas, and

seeking God's vision for them as deacons and deaconesses.

At the Sabbath afternoon session, I gave a PowerPoint presentation that challenged them to establish a ministry that is reflective of the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses in the first century Christian church. They were to write down their vision for ministry on their Vision Worksheet as they listened to the presentation. However, due to the time restraints on the use of the facility, they were not able to share their vision for ministry. Therefore, this was to be shared at their next meeting, along with suggestions about the mission statement, and goals and objectives.

Identifying Inreach and Outreach Ministries to be Developed

About two weeks after the first retreat, one Sabbath during the Personal Ministries period, the head deacon and one of the deaconesses gave a brief report of our experience at the retreat to the church members. He solicited support from the church on behalf of the deacons and deaconesses. A few Sabbaths later, during Divine Worship, everyone was given a list of the thirteen ministries that the deacons and deaconesses were developing. They were asked to write their names under the ministry(s) that they needed assistance in. Those who had knowledge about any of the ministries were asked to write down some of the issues that needed to be addressed. Everyone was also given the opportunity to give their input anonymously. They were asked to return their list the following Sabbath, after having time to prayerful consider their responses (see appendix A).

Unfortunately, the deacons and deaconesses did not follow through with their assignment to contact the social service agencies, neither did they meet as agreed upon at the retreat. The church members did not respond to the above request concerning the list

of ministries, and the deacons and deaconesses did not keep the request before them by reminding them. When I inquired of the head deacon why there was no follow through, he indicated that he was not able to get the deacons and deaconesses to meet. By this time the head deaconess had resigned because of ill health, and none of the other deaconesses wanted the position, in spite of my attempts to encourage several of them to take it.

I had decided that I would not carry out the responsibilities that they had agreed to. Besides, a big part of this project for me was to discover that if I presented them with the biblical model for their ministry, provided the training, the tools, the support, and the empowerment; would they have a desire to change the status quo (I will address this in the Conclusions section of chapter 6).

Confronting the Status Quo

When the election of church officers for 2008 began in October 2007, I recommended that the nominating committee take a critical look at the persons to be selected to serve as deacons and deaconesses. I asked that those who were inactive all year not be re-elected. I counseled the committee to consider people who had never served in this office or had not served in this office for an extended period of time. I was trying to get a group of people who were teachable and open to new ideas. I also requested that they consider people who had been active in areas that deacons and deaconesses should be involved in, such as: community services, medical missionaries, Bible studies, Sabbath school teachers, youth ministry, personal ministries, nursing home visitation, prison ministry, lay evangelism, and ushers. The activities in which this group were involved were closely aligned with the work done by the deacons and deaconesses

of the first century Christian church. Therefore, they only needed some additional training to continue their work, but as deacons and deaconesses.

I was pleased that the nominating committee accepted my recommendations, and the church voted a board of deacons and deaconesses consisting of persons as described above. There were fourteen deacons, two junior deacons, six deaconesses, and four junior deaconesses. However, within a few weeks into the new year, some of the former deacons that were not re-elected were asked to serve because the head deacon felt that he needed additional deacons to assist at Holy Communion. Nonetheless, I was optimistic about this new group and looked forward to working with them.

I met with all of the department leaders, including the head deacon and head deaconess, and instructed them to meet with their departments and develop a calendar of events for the year. They were to include inreach and outreach activities that would nurture and meet the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of church members and non-members of our community.

The deacons and deaconesses were having a difficult time meeting. I soon discovered that the problem was that this new group of active people was so active with other departments that they did not have time to meet as deacons and deaconesses. Although they were active in ministries that deacons and deaconesses should be leading out in, according to the early church model, they could not see the connection. They were functioning from a status quo mentality of this office—that deacons and deaconesses are only active when serving during Holy Communion, baptisms, collection of tithes and offerings, and cleaning and maintaining the church facilities. I also discovered that the reason that the attendance was so low at the second retreat was because the majority of

them were involved in activities of other departments in which they also served. They made it clear that the other departments in which they served came first, and they did not have time to attend deacon and deaconess meetings.

I was not successful in getting them to see that the offices of deacon and deaconess are not in competition with the other departments; they are to work with them. I was simply asking them to be deacons and deaconesses first but to continue to work with the other departments that are involved in ministries that deacons and deaconesses are biblically called to do. And if the church needs additional ministries that are not being provided by those departments, that the deacons and deaconesses be willing to spearhead those ministries, if they are in line with the biblical model of what deacons and deaconesses should be doing.

What I was asking requires a paradigm shift; and to make this shift, deacons and deaconesses must be committed enough to attend meetings and training sessions. I was challenging the status quo. Margaret Wheatley emphasizes the importance of challenging the status quo in her quantum theory. To illustrate the importance of change, she points to the adaptability of a stream of water to reconfigure, shift, and create new structures in order to meet the needs of the water's flow. This, she reminds us, is in contrast to the rigid systems of organizations that work against themselves and obstruct their mission for the sake of maintaining the status quo.² This is an adequate description of these officers, which is systemic of the tradition and culture held by the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the office of deacon and deaconess.

²Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), 17-18.

This project sought to create a “new structure” that would better meet the needs of the church. I refer to it as a “new structure,” but it is not new because it is the structure that was established by the first century Christian church. My use of the term “new structure” is in the same context as Jesus’ use of the term a “new commandment” in John 13:34. Jesus told His disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” The *SDA Bible Commentary* gives this explanation: “The command to love was not in itself new. It belonged to the instructions given by the Lord through Moses (Lev. 19:18). The command was new in that a new demonstration had been given of love, which the disciples were now bidden to emulate.”³ Therefore, in light of this explanation, to develop and implement a strategy for ministry for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that reflects the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses in the first century Christian church is “new.”

Outcomes

Although the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church did not embrace the intervention for developing a twenty-first century ministry that would reflect the first century model, I was able to address some of the “troubled areas” that they listed during the retreats. They stated that they were troubled because there was a lack of home visitation, communication, and soul winning done by them.

In that the elders are the officers that traditionally assist the pastor in visitation; I felt that it was necessary to include them in addressing this concern. With their assistance,

³“New Commandment,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:1031-1032.

I divided the church membership geographically into nine districts. The leadership of each district consisted of an elder, two deacons, and a deaconess. Some districts had junior deacons and junior deaconesses assigned to them. The districts ranged from eleven to twenty-two families (see appendix B).

I met with the head deacon and elders and presented them with their district assignments. Since we did not have a head deaconess at this time (she resigned shortly after the second retreat because of her job responsibilities, and she and her husband were expecting their first baby), the head deacon was responsible for having a joint meeting with the deacons and deaconesses and sharing this information with them. I went over the material dealing with visitation techniques with the elders and head deacon, which was some of the information that I had previously shared with the deacons and deaconesses at the retreats. I gave each of them a thirteen page document outlining the needs for visitation, how to conduct the visit, a copy of a membership visitation form, a visitation and outreach referral form, and a personal information sheet (see appendix B).

This district visitation plan was similar to the Family Ministry Plan used by one of the respondents to the survey that I conducted. The respondent used this plan solely as an inreach ministry—to assist in meeting the physical, financial, and spiritual needs of the families in the church. However, we decided to use it for both inreach and outreach ministries. For inreach ministry, the goals were to become better acquainted with the members; strengthen new members and absentee members; reclaim backsliders; pray for and encourage the sick and shut-ins; identify and follow-up on the needs of those who fit into the thirteen needs groups; address family crisis; and encourage faithfulness in matters of stewardship, prayer, and daily Bible study. These activities would also address the

need for better communication among deacons, deaconesses, and church members. For outreach ministry, the elders recommended that the elders, deacons, and deaconesses of each district conduct studies with the families in their district using the book *You Are My Witness* by Don and Marjorie Gray. These studies would prepare the families to witness door-to-door throughout their districts, invite their neighbors to home-held cottage meetings, and enroll people in the Jesus is the Answer Bible Study Course—a course of twenty-four lessons that I produced and used in this project. This was to be done year round to prepare each district to conduct lay-led Share Him evangelistic meetings. However, the immediate goal was to prepare for a tent meeting that we were planning to conduct that summer. This plan addressed the deacons and deaconesses' interest in home visitation, communication, and winning souls.

To further address their interest in soul-winning, I requested them to work as Bible workers in preparation for the tent meeting. A few of them, along with a few elders and members, went into the community that we were going to conduct the meeting on Sabbath afternoons to take prayer requests and enroll people in Bible studies. Some of them went out on other days during the week, depending upon their schedules. They invited the people to attend the meeting. During the meeting, some of the deacons assisted with parking and security. Others served as Bible workers and prayer warriors. Seven people were baptized in that meeting.

After the tent meeting, I assigned the head deacon to teach a New Members Class. Since he had worked very closely during the meeting with those who were baptized, he was the best person to continue to nurture and teach them. They met on Sabbaths during the Sabbath school time. He assisted me in home visitations after the meeting; and he also

volunteered to teach a Friday night Bible study class, which was open for anyone to attend. He requested other deacons to assist him in teaching the class.

The final “troubled area” that I addressed concerned the deacons and deaconesses involvement in mid-week prayer meetings. They indicated at one of the retreats that the mid-week prayer meeting should be used as an opportunity for them to be trained in speaking. This was another area wherein the elders are primarily the ones that assist the pastor. Therefore, to avoid conflict, I began by continuing to schedule the elders as the primary speakers; but I assigned the deacons that worked with the elders in visitation to be the facilitators of the meetings. The deacons conducted the preliminaries. I did this for one quarter. The next quarter, I scheduled the elders as the speakers and had them to select a deacon and/or deaconess to assist them. This proved to be more beneficial, because on several occasions, the elders had a deacon or deaconess to speak while they served as the facilitator. There were also times when an elder was not able to meet his speaking assignment; he would ask a deacon or deaconess to speak in his place (see prayer meeting schedule in appendix B).

Conclusion

At the beginning of the project, the perception that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church deacons and deaconesses had of themselves was that they were only to care for the church facilities, collect the offerings, and assist at baptisms and Holy Communion services. This perception was also held by the membership. The intervention presented in this chapter challenged this perception by presenting a theological foundation for deacon and deaconess ministry as demonstrated by Jesus’ ministry as a

servant, and by the ministry of the first century Christian church deacons. Based upon the literature review, training materials were given and weekend training retreats were conducted to demonstrate practical ways of developing and implementing a twenty-first century ministry for deacons and deaconesses that reflects the first century model. The vision and the mission statement that was produced by the deacons and deaconesses are in harmony with the literature review, and clearly defines what their ministry should be. They should serve in the role of teachers of God's Word, care givers to the sick and needy, conflict managers, and physical plant managers.

Although the intervention challenged the narrow perceptions held by these officers and church members, it was not able to change them. Those deacons and deaconesses that participated in addressing the "troubled areas" in the "Outcomes" section of this chapter were few, and their involvement in home visitation, soul-winning, and mid-week prayer meetings was minimum. They did not embrace the concept of serving in the role of care givers to the sick and needy. A few of them visiting the nursing home once a month was the extent of their involvement. Neither did they embrace the role of conflict managers or physical plant managers. They chose to maintain the status quo.

The final chapter will give a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The goal of the project was to develop and implement a strategy for ministry for the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that would reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church. The strategy was developed upon a theological foundation that was reflective of Jesus' ministry as a servant, the ministry of the deacons of the first century Christian church, and the findings from the literature review.

At the beginning of the project, I presented to the Mt. Calvary members a series of seven sermons from the book of Acts, entitled *The Life of the Early Church*. Principles that were used by the members of the first century Christian church that caused it to grow spiritually and numerically were highlighted; and our members were challenged and empowered to adopt and implement those principles. Since prayer was the most important principle used by the early church, after the first sermon, I appealed to the members to organize a group of prayer warriors that would come to the church at different times of the day throughout the week to pray. Of the twenty-six members that volunteered, nine of them were deacons and deaconesses. They chose partners, met, and prayed consistently for three months. Unfortunately, they discontinued these meetings.

The sixth sermon that I presented was from Acts 6. It dealt with the call and ministry of the first deacons. The information in this sermon heightened the congregation's awareness of the spiritual calling of deacons and deaconesses. They were informed that the deacons played a significant role in the growth of the early church.

My expectation for this project was that the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church would also grow spiritually and numerically by developing and implementing a strategy for ministry for deacons and deaconesses that would reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church. Therefore, I began the process of training the deacons and deaconesses, and casting the vision. At the conclusion of the sermon, I invited those currently serving as deacons and deaconesses, and those that were interested in serving, to meet with me and sign up to participate in a training workshop.

The workshop consisted of four two-hour sessions, September 25, 26, 27, October 3, 2005, and covered the following topics: The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Problem Solvers; The Biblical Roots of the Deacon and Deaconess as Soul Winners; The Biblical Qualifications of Deacon and Deaconess; The Work of the Deacon and Deaconess; Serving During the Services of the Church; Visitation Techniques; Providing Quality Care for Families in Crisis; Telephone Ministry; and Welcoming and Nurturing New Members. Eleven people attended this training.

Two weekend training retreats were also conducted for the deacons and deaconesses. The same topics were presented. The first retreat was on May 18-20, 2007 at the Cliff House Christian Retreat in Woodville, Alabama. This is located approximately sixty miles from Huntsville. Seventeen people attended. The second retreat was on February 29-March 1, 2008 at the Carter Hall Dormitory on the campus of Oakwood

University, Huntsville, Alabama. Eleven people attended. At both retreats, the officers identified the “pleased” and “troubled” areas of their ministry, their vision, and mission.

A number of areas that troubled the deacons and deaconesses were addressed. Opportunities were created and these officers were empowered to change their “troubled areas.” The opportunities that were created were: (1) assignments to work with the elders on visitation teams, (2) opportunities to speak at mid-week prayer meetings, (3) opportunities to conduct Bible studies, (4) opportunities to serve as Bible workers, and (5) opportunities to disciple new members.

The mission statement that the deacons and deaconesses developed reflects that, as a result of the training workshops and retreats, they gained a theoretical understanding of what their roles consist of. The mission statement is as follows:

The mission of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is to serve its members and community—especially those that are most vulnerable—by providing for their emergency physical, social, and spiritual needs, addressing relational problems in the church, and teaching and preaching God’s Word through public and personal evangelism. We will lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and disciple newly baptized church members. We will visit, assess needs, and network with departments within the church and agencies in the community in order to accomplish our mission. We will be responsible for maintaining the upkeep of the church and its properties. We will engage in on-going personal development through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and other relevant materials so that we might become better persons that are better equipped to glorify God and serve humanity.

The deacons and deaconesses identified thirteen groups of people that they categorized as being “most vulnerable.” They were single parents, senior citizens, new mothers, missing members, new members, members recovering from surgery, persons in abusive relationships, homosexuals, persons with substance abuse, handicaps, persons in bereavement, Spanish speaking individuals, and persons with mental health issues. The

deacons and deaconesses were to select agencies in the community that provide assistance to these groups. They were to invite representatives of these agencies to come and explain to the deacons and deaconess boards and/or church membership the services that they offer, and tell us how we could network with them in developing ministries to help meet the needs of the people that we targeted to work with. Unfortunately, the deacons and deaconesses did not follow through on this activity.

The deacons and deaconesses did not follow through on a number of activities. They did not embrace the intervention for developing a twenty-first century ministry that would reflect the first century model. They chose to maintain the status quo. However, a few isolated incidents occurred that indicate some of these officers were grasping the concept that I was attempting to teach them.

One of the deacons reported to me that he was giving Bible studies to a group of Spanish speaking people that he worked with. Another deacon referred a single mother to the Community Action Agency for assistance to pay her utility bill. When that did not work out, he paid the bill himself. This same deacon met a woman in a health food store one day and started to talk to her about health issues. That encounter led to him and his wife giving her Bible studies. A few months later, he and I baptized her into the church. He gave Bible studies to a family, and two of the children were baptized. He was trying to call a church member and misdialed the number. He witnessed to the young lady that answered the telephone and invited her to church. She came regularly and began taking Bible studies from him and his wife until she had to relocate to another state. My wife kept in contact with her and connected her with the Seventh-day Adventist pastor where she went and he visited with her. Another deacon and his wife, a former deaconess, gave

Bible studies to their three grandchildren who were baptized. Another deacon began a conversation with a young man in his apartment building, who was a student at one of the universities in the city. That conversation led to him giving the man Bible studies and the man being baptized. Five deacons, four deaconesses, and three former deaconesses visited people in the community, took their prayer requests and enrolled them in Bible studies, in preparation for the tent meeting that we conducted in July and August 2008. On several occasions a deacon or deaconess presented a message for mid-week prayer meeting. The head deacon began conducting a Friday night Bible study class for the church, and held classes with the newly baptized members on Sabbath mornings. A few deacons and deaconesses visited the nursing home every third Sabbath of the month. With the concerted effort of these officers, the baptisms for the church increased from four in 2005 when the project began, to twenty in 2008 when it concluded.

Conclusions

The theology of ministry for deacons and deaconesses is built upon Jesus' earthly ministry as a servant, and the ministry of the deacons of the first century Christian church. Jesus came into the world to minister (διδάσκω) and not to be ministered unto (διδασκόμενος) (Matt 20:28). The Greek word for deacon (διάκονος) can be translated as servant or minister. Therefore, the ministry of deacons is a ministry of service. The wider theological implications of the ministry of deacons is that it symbolizes the ministry that each member of the church is called to. Jesus has called everyone who unites with His church to a ministry of service similar to that of deacons. The deacons that served the first century Christian church were ordained to take care of

the needs of the poor, to solve problems that arose in the church, and to teach the Word of God. The New Testament reveals little information about the existence of female deacons or deaconesses and the role that they played in the first century Christian church.

However, based upon the context of 1 Tim 3:11 KJV, the Greek word translated as “wives” should be translated as “women,” meaning women deacons.

Beginning as early as the third century, clear evidence substantiates that female deacons/deaconesses exist. Some of the evidences are documented in the *Didascalía Apostolorum* (third century), the *Apostolic Constitutions* (late fourth century), inscriptions written on the tombstones of female deacons/deaconesses during the fourth through the seventh centuries, and current literature from both Protestant and Catholic writers.

According to these sources, female deacons/deaconesses ministered to the needs of the female members of the church, cared for the poor and sick women, assisted women at baptisms, greeted the women entering the church and directed them to their seats, and taught them the Word of God. These women deacons were a distinct group from the virgins or the widows of 1 Tim 5. In some cases a woman deacon was a virgin or a widow. But that was not the criteria for holding office. During the first five centuries, deaconesses were ordained to carry out their responsibilities as were their male counterparts.

Very little is recorded about deacons and deaconesses that served the early Seventh-day Adventist church. However, it is recorded that deacons were responsible for obtaining unfermented grape juice for Holy Communion, and for collecting the tithe. In the small churches one of the deacons served as treasurer. However, in the large churches, someone else was elected to serve as treasurer. The deaconesses visited the sick, looked

after the young, ministered to the necessities of the poor, and listened to the women who had troubles that they wanted to share. Both, the deacons and deaconesses were ordained to carry out their responsibilities. However, beginning in 1914 the church ceased to ordain deaconesses. In 1990, the church introduced an induction service for deaconesses that replaced the ordination service. At the 59th General Conference Session in 2010, the delegates voted to ordain deaconesses.

According to the literature review, there are four important roles in which deacons and deaconesses function. They are to function as (1) teachers of God's Word, (2) care givers to the sick and needy, (3) conflict managers, and (4) physical plant managers. Due to the cultural trends of American society, Baptist churches began assigning the role of business managers to their deacons during the 1800s. As the churches embraced this style of management, deacons drifted away from ministry and focused their attention on management. Some churches still assign the role of business managers to their deacons. Others believe that ““deacons are for service, not to run the church.””¹ I advocate physical plant managers rather than business managers.

In order for a person to serve as a deacon or deaconess, he or she must meet certain qualifications. These qualifications are recorded in 1 Tim 3:8-13. When the members of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church are willing to be spiritually guided in using the representative form of government, they will elect persons that possess the biblical qualifications needed to serve as deacons and deaconesses. And when these officers follow the prescribed job description, and are empowered by the church to serve in their various roles, the church will grow spiritually and numerically like the first

¹Pitts, 76.

century Christian church grew. Unfortunately, the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church did not demonstrate a willingness to be guided in this direction.

At the beginning of the project, the perception that the deacons and deaconesses had of themselves was that they were only to care for the church facilities, collect the offerings, and assist at baptisms and Holy Communion services. This perception was also held by the members. The intervention used in this project challenged this perception but was not able to change it. I stated in chapter 5 that a big part of this project for me was to discover that if I presented the deacons and deaconesses with the biblical model for their ministry, provided the training, the tools, the support, and the empowerment; would they have a desire to change the status quo. My conclusion is that it was difficult for the majority of them to see the need for change. These officers, along with other deacons and deaconesses of the Seventh-day Adventist church, have been adversely affected by several factors.

According to the findings presented in chapter 2, of all of the volumes of books and letters written by Ellen G. White on various topics, the word deacon(s) appears fifteen times. Of those fifteen times, only four relate to their ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church. One occurrence deals with a brief discussion on the kind of wine that they were to use in the ordinance of Holy Communion; two occurrences deal with their responsibility in handling the tithe; and one occurrence deals with their ordination.² The word deaconess(s) appears eighteen times; and only three relate to their ministry in the early Seventh-day Adventist church. Two occurrences reveal that they were ordained along with the deacons and elders; and one occurrence deals with some of their

²*Ellen G. White Writings Complete Published Edition 2005*, s.v. “deacons” [CD-ROM].

duties—visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor.³

It is clear that Ellen G. White had very little to say about the duties of the deacons and deaconesses in the early Seventh-day Adventist church. Yet, based upon what she did say and what other early pioneers like Joseph Frisbie and J. H. Waggoner wrote (see chapter 2), it appears that the church started out in the 1860s following the model established during the first century Christian church. However, eventually the deacons and deaconesses became less and less responsible for carrying out many of the spiritual duties associated with their office.

In an honest attempt to engage the entire membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church in active ministry, the church created departments such as Personal Ministries and Dorcas/Adventist Community Services. By doing this, some of the most active members—deacons and deaconesses—were rendered almost inactive. The broader ministries that these officers once did were relegated to these departments very early in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The following quotations taken from the church's official website indicate when these departments were introduced.

Personal Ministries is a facet of the church whose origin can be traced to the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist history in the 1860s. It endeavors to inspire, motivate, equip, train, and mobilize all members for dynamic Christian service with the conviction that “The church of Christ is organized for service” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 148) and “Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 395).⁴

In regards to Dorcas/Adventist Community Services, it states:

Historically, at the General Conference level, Dorcas (later ACS) has been under the

³Ibid., s.v. “deaconesses.”

⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Personal Ministries,” <http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/article.php?id=3> (accessed May 17, 2009).

Home Missionary, Lay Activities, and Personal Ministries Departments. This ministry of unselfish service started in 1879. Traditionally, Dorcas societies have focused on providing food and clothes to needy people, and remains a part of Adventist Community Services. . . . ACS has expanded its sphere to include many other different types of services and ministries, such as tutoring, job finding and training, community health, elder care, family life and counseling, AIDS programs, etc.⁵

The Personal Ministries Department, Dorcas/Adventist Community Services Department, and all of the other departments of the church are to be commended for the outstanding work that they have done since being established. I am not advocating that they should be abolished. I am simply pointing out that the creation of these departments has caused the church to under-utilize the office of deacon and deaconess, and has caused these officers to lose their identity as spiritual leaders that were originally called to carry out most of the responsibilities that these departments are doing.

To further undermine the spiritual calling of the deaconesses, the church discontinued their ordination for almost a century. And to add insult to injury, proponents for the ordination of female elders and female pastors are misusing Ellen G. White's statement, made in 1895 in favor of the ordination of deaconesses, to support their position. Although the statement was presented in chapter 2, I will repeat it here for the sake of clarity.

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the ministers; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church.⁶

⁵General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "History of ACSI," <http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/article.php?id=49> (accessed May 17, 2009).

⁶*Ellen G. White Writings Complete Published Edition 2005*, s.v. "deaconesses" [CD-ROM].

The following statement is an example of the misuse of Ellen G. White's counsel to ordain women. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim refutes this misuse. He says,

On the basis of this statement, one writer in *Women in Ministry* laments: "If only Ellen White's 1895 landmark statement had come fourteen years sooner [in 1881]!" He apparently believes that this "landmark statement" would have encouraged the General Conference committee brethren who were wondering about the question of "perfect propriety" in implementing the alleged 1881 vote to ordain women "who were serving in the gospel ministry." But evidence that Ellen G. White's 1895 statement is not applicable to the ordination of women as *pastors or elders* may be found within the passage itself.⁷

Pipim is correct in his observation that Ellen G. White was not talking about the ordination of women as pastors or elders. However, I will refer to the Ellen G. White Estate to explain who these women were that Ellen G. White was talking about.

There is no documentary evidence that EGW was calling for the ordination of women to gospel ministry in this RH article. The article seems to deal primarily with the question of the church utilizing its resources (including women) to the ultimate. The immediate internal context ("visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor") may suggest she had in mind the work of a deaconess. The opinion of EGW's personal secretary, Clarence C. Crisler, writing within one year of Mrs. White's death, was to the effect that EGW was referring to ordination of deaconesses rather than gospel ministers.⁸

The discussion of the ordination of female elders and female pastors is beyond the scope of this project. My only intent for mentioning it is to show how this issue has impacted the deaconesses. There is clear evidence from Ellen G. White in favor of the ordination of deaconesses, yet their ordination was discontinued. However, the evidence from Ellen G. White in favor of the ordination of female elders and female pastors does not appear to be clear, and the evidence that supports the deaconesses is being misused in an attempt to support female elders and female pastors.

⁷Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Must We Be Silent?* (Ann Arbor, MI: Berean Books, 2001), 261.

⁸*Ellen G. White Writings Complete Published Edition 2005*, s.v. "deaconesses" [CD-ROM].

I conclude that because of these underlying factors (1) very little was recorded about the work of deacons and deaconesses during the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, (2) other departments were established that eventually supplanted the role and function of deacons and deaconesses, (3) deacons and deaconesses have been marginalized and relegated to caring for the church facilities, collecting tithes and offerings, and serving during Holy Communion and baptism, and (4) the church discontinued the ordination of deaconesses for almost a century but is in continual discussion about the ordination of female elders and female pastors—the church has been sending a negative message over the years to these officers concerning their value and identity as spiritual leaders. Though unintentionally, they have been devalued and displaced. Therefore, the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church have been affected subconsciously, and find it very difficult to become motivated to embrace changing the status quo. Their lack of motivation is systemic of the tradition and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist church toward the role of these officers from its early history.

Recommendations

In light of the facts presented in this project, my recommendations for the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church are that it becomes intentional in its efforts to restore the deacons and deaconesses to their biblical position as spiritual leaders of the church. This means that both church officers and members must change their perception of them. When they elect people to serve as deacons and deaconesses, they must elect those who meet the biblical qualifications so that they will have the spiritual gifts and

commitment to fulfill the responsibilities required of that office. Rather than limiting them to collecting tithes and offerings, serving during Holy Communion and baptisms, and cleaning the church, utilize their leadership skills by electing each deacon and deaconess, as is possible, to serve as the leader of at least one other department in the church, such as: Personal Ministries leader, Community Services director, Dorcas Society leader, Women's Ministries leader, Sabbath School superintendent/teacher, Stewardship leader, Bible School coordinator, Ministry to People With Disabilities coordinator, Interest coordinator, etc. Those deacons and deaconesses that may not be elected to lead other departments should be encouraged to assist. Just as the elders are customarily assigned to departments as liaisons for the pastor, deacons and deaconesses should also be utilized the same way. They should be utilized along with the elders to visit the members, facilitate mid-week prayer meetings, resolve conflicts in the church, and give Bible studies. They should be provided with sufficient resources to care for the sick and needy. They should be empowered to serve as the physical plant managers.

My recommendations to the Seventh-day Adventist Church are to support this project to restore these officers to their biblically defined roles as spiritual leaders. Now that the church has taken action to ordain deaconesses again, it is imperative that it provides training for them beyond what has been traditionally given. Invite pastors and elders to attend deacon and deaconess training sessions so that they can better understand the role of these officers and the value that they have to contribute to the work. Place as much emphasis on the development of these officers as is placed on the development of local elders, women, singles, children, and youth. Sponsor retreats and summits for them. Produce a quarterly magazine for them such as the *Elder's Digest* that is produced for the

elders. Produce a handbook for them such as the *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook* that is produced for the elders. Support the concepts presented in this project. Train the deacons and deaconesses of newly organized churches so that the current trends will not continue to be perpetuated. When dignity is restored to the office of deaconess, the tension over the ordination of female elders and pastors will be reduced. Women that are called of God to minister will count it a privilege to serve in the office of deaconess.

I also recommend that further study be done on the broader implications of this systemic problem that is the result of the church's hierarchal structure. My deep conviction is that if the Seventh-day Adventist church at large would be willing to dialogue concerning the role and function of deacon and deaconess, beginning at the point of acknowledging that in its zeal to engage the entire church body into active ministry, it crippled one of its members—deacons/deaconesses—and consider implementing the recommendations and principles set forth in this project, the deacons and deaconesses would be restored to their rightful place as teachers of God's Word, care givers to the sick and needy, conflict managers, and physical plant managers. They would become problem solvers and soul-winners. They would do ministry in the twenty-first century reflective of the ministry that was done by the deacons and deaconesses of the first century Christian church. The outcome of making such a shift would be as it was of old—"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). I repeat Ellen G. White's statements again, "This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons."⁹ And

⁹Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 90.

finally, she said, “It is necessary that the same order and system should be maintained in the church now as in the days of the apostles.”¹⁰

It is my prayer that this project will make a valuable contribution to the church that I love, and to the deacons and deaconesses that I long to see reach their fullest potential.

¹⁰Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption*, 260.

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APPENDIX A
TRAINING MATERIALS

2005 SERMON SERIES OUTLINES

Can I Get a Witness? (Acts 1:1-11)

Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, addressed his writing to Theophilus. It is believed that Theophilus was one of Luke's converts that he had won to Christ. Luke was a witness.

- I. During the forty days that Jesus was with His apostles following His resurrection, He discussed with them their need to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. This was not an option if they were to accomplish their mission to evangelize the world by their witness (Acts 1:4-5).
 - A. The church's mission today is still to evangelize the world through its witness.
 - B. The success of our mission also depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
- II. The apostles were more concerned about their situation—Rome had authority over them—than they were about witnessing (Acts 1:6).
 - A. Jesus wanted them to receive Holy Ghost Power to change the world, but they wanted power to change their situation so that they would have authority over Rome.
 - B. Church members today also seem to be more concerned with authority and control issues than about receiving the power of the Holy Ghost to witness.
- III. It was not for the apostles to know when God would deal with Rome (Acts 1:7).
 - A. God did not promise the apostles or us power to change our situations. We must leave our situations in His hands.
 - B. God promised to give His apostles and us Power to witness! Not power to change our situations, but power to change the world (Acts 1:8)
- IV. After the apostles received Holy Ghost Power, the first item on their agenda was to get another witness. "One must be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts 1:22).
 - A. When we as a church receive Holy Ghost Power, the first item on our agenda will be to get another witness.
 - B. God is always trying to get another witness! Will we be His witnesses today? God is asking, "Can I Get a Witness?"

- V. Acts 1:14 tells us what it takes for us to become witnesses.
 - A. Get on one accord
 - B. Be consistent in prayer
 - C. Be consistent in supplication.
- VI. Appeals—Be a witness; join Prayer Warriors’ Ministry; accept Christ; join the church.

Look on Us (Acts 3:1-11)

Several months after Pentecost, the members of the early church were still excited about their faith. They continued daily to follow the apostles’ doctrine; to fellowship in breaking of bread from house to house; to worship in the temple; and to offer up prayers. This is the NT Model for individual spiritual growth and for church growth.

- I. Peter and John and the other disciples put prayer and worship first. They didn’t have to make time for prayer and worship. Prayer and worship were the main activities of their day.
 - A. They went to the temple every day at 9:00 in the morning and 3:00 in the afternoon—the third and ninth hours (Acts 3:1).
 - B. Like Peter and John, every time we come to church, we pass people who have been crippled by life’s circumstances. God places some of them in our path, and Satan places some of them in our path. But either way, they are placed there to test us.
 - C. They look on us expecting something (Acts 3:2-5). Dr. Maurice Riley says,
 - 1. Today in the confused and cruel world in which we live, many people are hurting and need to be comforted. Hurting, due to loneliness, hurting because of disappointments, heartbreaks over broken homes, hurting because of the sickness of a love-one, perhaps an incurable alcohol or substance abusing relative in the home, disobedient children, and just plain ‘hard to make ends meet’ syndromes. Sometimes these hurting souls are right in church with us. Many times they are our next door neighbors. They see us rushing out to church, apparently happy, content, and carefree, all dressed in our white attire, and never even tarry long enough to say: ‘Come go with me.’ Deaconesses must reach out for those ‘hurting ones’ and serve as God’s ‘angels of mercy’ in an era of ruthlessness and selfishness. Someone is waiting for our outreached

hand of compassion, love and mercy.¹

- II. Peter and John introduced this crippled man to the ministry of healing.
 - A. God has given the Health Message to this church so we can tell the sick to “Look on us!”
 - B. As we follow the NT model, God will fill us with Holy Ghost Power, and we will be able to minister to people outside the church in such a powerful way that they will come inside the church to praise God with us (Acts 3:8).
- III. Appeal–Power to tell others to “Look on you” so you can minister to their physical need and then lead them to Jesus.

Principles of Witnessing Used by the Early Church: Part 1 (Acts 3:11-21)

The impact that was made by Peter and John’s ministry to the lame man was phenomenal. God used that one single event to reach a larger audience. This teaches us to never underestimate the value of ministering to one soul. There are ten principles that Peter and John used as they continued to witness about Jesus. Here are five of those principles.

- I. When God sees fit to use us, give Him the glory (Acts 3:12-13).
 - A. God allowed Peter and John to see some immediate results from their witnessing because He could trust them to give Him the glory.
 - B. The early church grew because they gave glory to God.
- II. Confront sin (Acts 3:13-15)
 - A. There comes a time when we witness for Jesus that we must confront people about their sins. We are to do it in a loving way. But we must not allow them to feel comfortable living in sin.
 - B. Our message is a call to Fear God and give glory to Him; to worship Him; get ready for judgment; and come out of Babylon, and give up Babylonian ways (Rev 14:6-12).
- III. Exalt Jesus (Acts 3:16)
 - A. Make Jesus the center of our witness. Exalt Jesus above church doctrine.
 - B. The Sabbath without Jesus is a boring day of prohibitions. The State of the Dead means nothing without the Resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus.
- IV. Show empathy (Acts 3:17)

¹Riley, 34.

- A. Peter told the Jews that they killed Jesus out of ignorance. Some of the people that we witness to are committing sins out of ignorance, just like we use to. Therefore, let them know that we can identify with them.
 - B. God gives all a chance to know better so we can do better (Acts 17:30).
- V. Make an appeal and give hope (Acts 3:19-21)
- A. We must not be afraid to extend an appeal to those we witness to.
 - B. Get a decision by asking them: “Do you believe what God’s Word is saying about your lifestyle? Do you believe that Jesus died to offer you a better way of living? Are you willing to accept His offer today by repenting of your sins and allowing Him to change you?”

Appeal—Be committed to apply these principles in your witnessing for Jesus

**Principles of Witnessing Used by the Early Church:
Part 2 (Acts 4:1-13)**

When we follow these principles in witnessing for Jesus, two things are guaranteed to happen:(1) we will be persecuted (Acts 4:3; 2 Tim 3:12), and (2) somebody will believe in Jesus (Acts 4:4; Isa 55:11). The next five principles are as follows:

- VI. Be bold for Jesus (Acts 4:13)
 - A. The persecutors didn’t have a case, so they tried to bluff Peter and John (Acts 4:14-18).
 - B. Those who challenge our faith are usually bluffing also. They are hoping that we will back down. They don’t have a case against us. They are afraid of our godly influence.
- VII. Be true to God and conscience (Acts 4:19-20)
 - A. We are to do what’s right in God’s sight and not be intimidated by man’s threats and bluffs.
 - B. Whatever happens when we witness is intended for God’s glory, and when it is over, we have a testimony to share.
- VIII. Give your testimony (Acts 4:23)
 - A. When we give our testimony, we encourage others to trust God more.
 - B. We gain strength to overcome the devil (Rev 12:11).
- IX.. Praise God in the face of persecution (Acts 4:24)
 - A. Praise God for the privilege of suffering for Jesus (1 Pet 2:20-21).
 - B. There is a blessing in store for those who suffer for Jesus (Matt 5:10; 2 Tim 2:12).
- X. Pray for more boldness and power (Acts 4:29-31)

- A. Peter and John were not satisfied with just one lame man being healed and joining the church, or 3,000 baptisms on Pentecost, or 5,000 baptisms a few months later. They wanted more.
- B. The early church was about prayer-power and soul-winning. After they prayed and received more power, they won more souls (Acts 5:14).
- C. God wants us to have this kind of prayer-power and soul-winning experience. We can have it if we follow the model and principles outlined in the book of Acts.

Appeal—Pray that God will help you to follow these principles to witness and win souls for Jesus

Why Lie? (Acts 5:1-11)

Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be highly favored and recognized by the church like Barnabas and others who gave, but they didn't want to make the sacrifice. They sold some land, kept back part of the money, and gave the rest to the apostles. The Greek word for "kept back" is also used in Joshua 7 (LXX) to describe the sin of Achan. Whenever we keep back our possessions from God under pretense, we are also guilty of the sin of Achan. Keeping part of the money wasn't a sin in itself. In fact, they could have kept all of the money. It was their property and their money. They didn't have to give it; and Peter told them so (Acts 5:4). The sin was that they pretended that they had given the total amount that they had received for the land. They lied.

- I. Peter confronted Ananias while he was giving him the money (Acts 5:3).
 - A. When we joined this church, we agreed to support the church with our tithes and offerings. Tithe is 10% of our income. Our offerings should be in proportion to how God is blessing us.
 - B. When we write an amount on our envelope for tithes, we are saying that this reflects the total amount of our income. We are saying the same thing that Ananias and Sapphira said, "This is all that I received."
 - C. When we do not write or give anything for tithes, we are saying, "We did not receive anything."
- II. Liars did not make it in the early Christian church.
 - A. God punished them by death (Acts 5:5-11).

- B. Liars will not make it into the Kingdom of God (Rev. 22:15).
- III. God has many ways of meeting our needs (Phil 4:19).
 - A. Withholding our tithes and offerings is not one of those ways (Mal 3:10).
 - B. God always has a “ram in the thicket” for us when we trust His (Gen 22:1-13).
- IV. Appeal—Do not lie to God; be a faithful steward

**Deacons and Deaconesses: A Return to the Biblical Model
(Psalm 84:1-12)**

Psalm 84 was written by David for the Sons of Korah. These men were the descendants of Korah who escaped God’s punishment on their father for rebelling against Moses. They became leaders in the worship services at the Temple of God. The word *gittith* in the superscription is derived from the Hebrew word *gath*, which means wine press. This indicates that this Psalm has a vintage melody. It was sung with a joyful spirit. This may also suggest the manner in which the Sons of Korah carried out their responsibilities in the Temple. They did it with joy. In fact, their commitment to service is reflected in vs. 10. Being servants in the House of God was the ultimate reason for their existence.

- I. The Sons of Korah were the OT counterparts of the NT deacons (1 Chr 9:19-29).
 - A. They were the “keepers of the gate of the tabernacle.”
 - B. They lived close by the tabernacle and were responsible for opening the doors every morning for worship.
 - C. They took rotated their duties from Sabbath to Sabbath.
 - D. They worked in the treasury.
 - E. They oversaw the sacred vessels and instruments of the tabernacle.
 - F. They were in charge of the fine flour, wine, and oil.
- II. The Calling of the NT deacons (Acts 6:1-7)
 - A. They were called to serve and to share the responsibility of the work of the church.
 - B. They came into existence because of a problem in the church. Therefore, they called to be problem solvers, conflict managers, social workers, and spiritual counselors.
 - C. They preached the gospel and won converts to the church (Acts

6:8-7:60; 8:5-6, 26-40).

- III. Female deacons/deaconesses served in the NT Church (Rom 16:1-2).
 - A. It is believed that Phebe was a deaconess at the church in Cenchrea.
 - B. The women spoken of in 1 Tim3:11 were female deacons.
 - C. Their responsibilities during the first five centuries were to: assist the women at baptisms, greet the women parishioners, direct them to their seats, maintain order among them, and care for the sick and needy.²
- IV. Qualifications of deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13)
 - A. They are to be grave, which means to be worthy of honor or to be dignified.
 - B. They are not to be doubletongued,, which means saying one thing to one person and giving a different view of it to someone else.
 - C. They are not to be addicted to wine, which means abstinence.
 - D. They are not to take bribes.
 - E. They are to have a connection with God so that He can give them divine revelations of His Word to teach to others.
 - F. They are to be faithful husbands, not polygamous, or flirtatious. They are to train their children to obey and encourage their spouse to live a godly life.
- V. Today's deacons and deaconesses are the Sons and Daughters of Korah and keepers of the gates.
 - A. They open the church doors and secure the building after services.
 - B. They rotate their responsibilities and divide their duties.
 - C. They assist with the tithes and offerings.
 - D. They oversee the Holy Communion vessels
 - E. They use flour, oil, and wine in preparation for the Lord's Supper.
 - F. They are to solve problems and win souls for Jesus.
- VI. Appeal—Deacons and deaconesses, be willing to change and follow the biblical model for service.

How to Turn an Enemy into a Friend? (Acts 9:10-20)

Saul of Tarsus was the most notorious enemy of the early Christian church. He was zealous about his religion but misled. He consented to the stoning death of Stephen, one of the original deacons. Saul reaped havoc on the church. He entered the homes of the Christians and took them to prison. If we were a members of the early Christian

²Ibid., 1.

church, Saul would have been our enemy. How do we turn an enemy like Saul into a friend? The following six principles will help us to accomplish this challenge.

- I. Recognize that when we are being persecuted for living right, our enemy is Jesus' enemy. Therefore, the battle is not ours, it's the Lord's (Acts 9:3-50).
 - A. Jesus knows the best way to deal with His enemies.
 - B. Jesus wants to turn His enemies into friends instead of destroying them. But He needs our cooperation in order to accomplish this. Ananias cooperated with Jesus.
- II. Go and inquire about your enemy (Acts 9:10-11).
 - A. Show our enemy that we have a genuine concern for his/her well-being.
 - B. Do not distance ourselves and be indifferent. This will perpetuate a cycle of disharmony.
- III. Believe that Jesus is already preparing our enemy to receive us as a friend (Acts 9:11-12).
 - A. Eventually our enemy will get tired of persecuting us. He/she will have a change of heart.
 - B. Sometimes God will take our enemy through hardships so that he/she can become sensitive to the suffering that he/she is causing us. Do not rejoice in his/her suffering; but believe that Jesus is using it to turn him/her into a friend.
- IV. Do not listen to or rehearse the negative comments of others concerning our enemy once Jesus has convicted us to pray for him/her (Acts 9:13-14).
 - A. Negative thoughts and talk will cause us to doubt Jesus' ability to change our enemy's heart.
 - B. It is not about us being persecuted. It is about Jesus saving our persecutor.
- V. Our perception of our enemy will change once we realize that Jesus loves him/her and has chosen him/her for a special work (Acts 9:15-16).
 - A. Jesus is no respecter of persons. He wants to save our enemy just like He wants to save us.
 - B. Our enemy is Jesus' enemy. Jesus wants us to help Him save this enemy.
- VI. If we treat our enemy like a brother, he/she will see the Light (Acts 9:17-18).
 - A. Our enemy will see Jesus, the Light of the world, in us. He/she will also see his/her need to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.
 - B. Like Ananias, we may be privileged to witness our enemy being baptized into the church.

Appeal—Cooperate with Jesus so He can turn our enemies into friends and members of His church and Kingdom

MT. CALVARY PRAYER WARRIORS SCHEDULE

Day and Time	Warriors Name	Location
Sunday 4:00-5:00 a.m.	Deaconess _____	Home
Monday 8:15-9:15 a.m.	Deacon _____	Church
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Elder and Sister _____, Sister _____	Church
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Deacon _____, Deacon _____	Church
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Sister _____	Church
Tuesday 8:15-9:15 a.m.	Deacon _____	Church
10:00-12:00 p.m.	Sister _____	Church
12:00-2:00 p.m.	Deaconess _____, Elder and Sister _____	Church
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Deacon _____	Church
Wednesday 8:15-9:15 a.m.	Deacon _____	Church
10:00-12:00 p.m.	Elder _____, Sister _____, Sister _____	Church
12:00-1:00 p.m.	NOON DAY PRAYER MEETING	Church
6:00-7:00 p.m.	Deaconess _____, Sister _____	Church
7:00-8:00 p.m.	EVENING PRAYER MEETING	Church
Thursday 8:15-9:15 a.m.	Deacon _____	Church
12:1:00 p.m.	Sister _____	Church
5:30-6:30 p.m.	Deaconess _____, Deaconess _____	Church
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Brother and Sister _____	Church
Friday 8:15-9:15 a.m.	Deacon _____	Church
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Elder _____	Church
Sabbath (Divine Worship)		
1 st Sabbaths	Sister _____, Sister _____	Church
2 nd Sabbaths	Sister _____, Sister _____	Church
3 rd Sabbaths	Deacon _____, Sister _____	Church
4 th Sabbaths	Sister _____, Sister _____	Church

Prayer Focus

1. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit
2. Revival and reformation in the church
3. Unity in the church
4. Nurturing the members
5. Youth and young adults
6. Senior citizens
7. Home bound members
8. Faithfulness in stewardship
9. Health reform among members
10. Unsaved family members
11. Relatives of other faiths
12. Wisdom and common sense
13. Wisdom to use Christ's method alone
14. Community's receptivity to the gospel
15. Discernment to work for the community
16. Identify and use of spiritual gifts

2007 PLEASED AND TROUBLED AREAS
WORKSHEET SYNTHESIS

As a Deacon/Deaconess of Mt. Calvary, I am:

PLEASED ABOUT

1. Our dedication to duties
2. Our willingness to serve

TROUBLED ABOUT

1. Our lack of communication
2. Our lack of visiting the sick
3. Church doesn't use prayer meetings
as training opportunities for deacons
to speak

Prayer Focus

1. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit
2. Revival and reformation in the church
3. Unity in the church
4. Nurturing the members
5. Youth and young adults
6. Senior citizens
7. Home bound members
8. Faithfulness in stewardship
9. Health reform among members
10. Unsaved family members
11. Relatives of other faiths
12. Wisdom and common sense
13. Wisdom to use Christ's method alone
14. Community's receptivity to the gospel
15. Discernment to work for the community
16. Identify and use of spiritual gifts

Friday, May 18, 2007

- 4:00-6:00 p.m. Arrival and Personal Preparation
- 6:00-7:15 p.m. Supper
- 7:30-8:00 p.m. Vesper
Song Service
Prayer
Special Music
Speaker- Deacon _____
- 8:00-8:05 p.m. Break
- 8:05-8:30 p.m. Group Exercise



- 8:30-8:55 p.m. Prayer Session (Seek God's vision for Deacons and Deaconesses)
- 8:55-9:00 p.m. Closing Remarks and Benediction

Sabbath, May 19, 2007

- 7:30-8:45 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:15-10:30 a.m. Sabbath School
Song Service
Prayer
Special Music
Lesson- Deaconess _____
Deacon _____
- 10:30-10:50 a.m. Prayer Session (Seek God's vision for Deacons and Deaconesses)
- 10:50-11:00 a.m. Break
- 11:00-12:00 p.m. Presentation- Pastor White
- 12:00-12:05 p.m. Break
- 12:05-1:05 p.m. Group Exercise
- 1:30-2:45 p.m. Dinner
- 3:00-5:00 p.m. Hiking/Relaxation

(Continued on back)

- 5:00-5:30 p.m. Group Exercise
- 5:30-5:45 p.m. Prayer Session (Seek God's Power
to fulfill His vision through us)
- 6:00-7:15 p.m. Supper
- 7:30-8:00 p.m. Vesper
Song Service
Prayer
Special Music
Speaker- Deacon _____
- 8:00-8:05 p.m. Closing Remarks and Benediction
- 8:15-9:45 p.m. Recreation

Sunday, May 20, 2007

- 8:30-9:45 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:45-10:45 a.m. Testimonies and Sharing
- 10:45-11:00 a.m. Season of Prayer
- 11:00-12:00 p.m. Cleaning and Packing
- 12:00 p.m. Departure

**MT. CALVARY S.D.A. CHURCH
DEACON & DEACONESS
RETREAT**



**The Cliff House Christian Retreat
Woodville, AL
May 18-20, 2007**

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself [herself] unspotted from the world."
James 1:27

MADISON COUNTY RESOURCES

FOR FAMILIES

Child Care:

Childcare Management Agency of N. Central AL	534-5110
Child Development Center-AL A&M Univ.	852-0740
Huntsville Child Care Assn.	536-8131
YMCA Preschool Child Care Center NW	852-6700
SE	880-8400

Child Enrichment/Recreation:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters	880-2123
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Huntsville	534-6060
Boy Scouts	883-7071
Girls, Inc.	859-0011
Headstart	851-9804
YMCA Blue Springs	852-6700
Weatherly	881-8710
OR	883-9622

Child Support:

ACES- Association For Children Enforcement of Support	1-800-537-7072
Child Support Enforcement	535-4500

Clothing/Household Items:

Breaking Free Thrift Store	851-1688
Catholic Center for Concern	536-0041
Christmas Charities Year Around	837-2375
Downtown Rescue Mission	536-2441

Goodwill Thrift Store	536-0737
Neighborhood Store (Second Mile)	536-1953
Salvation Army Thrift Store	536-5576
St. Vincent De Paul Thrift Store	851-8881
Tennessee Valley Toys for Tots	213-9683

Counseling/Mental Health:

Family Services Center	551-1610
HELPLine, Telephone Counseling 24 hrs.	716-1000
Huntsville-Madison Co. Mental Health Ctr.	533-1970
Mental Health Association	536-9441
Referrals to Area Counselors	

Drug & Alcohol, Addiction Treatment

Bradford	461-7272
OR	1-800-879-7272
Crestwood Hospital Behavioral Health	880-4280
New Horizons	532-4141

Drug& Alcohol Recovery Support Groups:

AA/Alano	885-0323
Families Anonymous (through HELPLine)	716-1000
Narcotics Anonymous	1-800-239-5509

Emotional Support for Parents/Parents-To-Be:

AGAPE of North AL	859-4481
Catholic Family Services	536-0073
Choose Life-Save a Life	534-1996

Pregnancy tests	533-3526
Department of Human Resources	
Adoption Services	535-4500
Healthy Families North AL	533-5437
Healthy Beginnings	1-800-654-1385

Employment/Training

Calhoun Community College	890-4747
Center for Technology-Adult Programs	428-7810
Christian Women's Job Corp.	428-9435
City of Huntsville Job Line	427-6751
Drake State Technical College	539-8161
Madison County Job Line	532-6906
Madison County Career Academy	852-2170
High School Students Only	
Madison County Adult Education Center	852-2170
North AL Center for Educational Excellence	858-4600
North AL Skills Center	859-9360
Seldon Center-Adult Education-Huntsville	428-7830
State Employment Office	851-0537
Vocational Rehabilitation Center	536-6621/ 518-8640
Virginia College at Huntsville	533-7387

Family Planning:

UAB Medical Center	551-4579
Central North AL Health Services	533-6311
Planned Parenthood	539-2746
Madison County Health Department	539-3711

Food:

Community Action Agency	851-9800
Government Surplus Commodities	
Food Line	534-2424
Emergency Food Assistance, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.	
Food Stamps	536-0766
HELPLine Information/Referral	716-1000
Cooperative food program locations	
Mobile Soup Van	534-1402
5:30 p.m. Salvation Army, 305 Seminole	
5:30 p.m. Abingdon & Meridian	
6:00 p.m. First Baptist Church, St. Clair Street	
WIC (Women, Infant & Children Nutrition)	533-0826
Government Agencies:	
AL Disability Advocacy Program	1-800-826-1675
Madison Department of Human Resources	535-4500
Public Assistance Information & Application	
Madison County Health Department	539-3711
Birth Certificates	
Medicaid Hotline	1-800-362-1504
Questions or Complaints	
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213
Local Office	837-7010
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1-800-669-3362

Division of Health Care Facilities 1-800-356-9596
 Questions or Complaints

Homeless:

Community Action Agency 851-9800
 Limited Homeless Assistance

Housing/Shelter:

AGAPE of North AL 859-4481
 Maternity Home for Unwed Mothers
 Breaking Free Rescue Mission 533-2588
 Downtown Rescue Mission 536-2441
 Temporary Shelter for Transients/Homeless
 Habitat for Humanity 533-2282
 HOPE Place (HELPLine)-716-1000
 Huntsville Housing Authority (HUD) 534-3842
 Hope Community Church 534-8750
 LIFT-Living In Family Transition 534-7009
 Temporary Housing, waiting list
 New Futures 837-2856
 Section 8 Housing 534-3842
 Salvation Army 534-1402
 Overnight Shelter for Transients after 4:30

Legal:

Law Library 532-1585
 Lawyer Referral Service 539-2275
 Small Claims Court 532-3622
 Victim Assistance 532-3460

Medical/Dental:

All Kids Health Insurance for Children 1-888-373-KIDS
 Central North AL Health Services 533-6311
 Community Free Clinic 533-2910
 HEALS Family Life Center 428-7560
 Huntsville Hospital Women's Center 265-7440
 Best Start Program, Pregnancy Care
 Department of Human Resources 535-4500
 Medicaid, Glasses
 Medicaid Dentists
 Weefolks 536-2778
 Madison County Health Department 539-3711
 Planned Parenthood 539-2746
 Reproductive Health Care
 Sickle Cell Foundation of North AL 536-2723
 UAB Medical Clinic/Pediatrics Clinic 551-4579
 Huntsville Hospital Help Line 265-RN4U (7648)

Money Management/Budget Services:

AL Cooperative Extension Office 532-1578
 Consumer Credit Counseling Service 881-1000
 Huntsville Utilities Budget Billing 535-1200

Prescription Assistance:

Catholic Center of Concern 536-0041
 Two requests daily, Monday-Friday
 HELPLine Information & Referral 716-1000
 Limited emergency assistance

Rent

Catholic Center for Concern	536-0041
CUP-Churches United for People	539-8720
First United Methodist Church	539-5738

Self Help and Parenting Support:

Active Parenting Today (Grace Presbyterian Church)	722-0508
Central North AL Health Services	533-6311 ext. 230
HELPLine Information & Referral	716-1000
LaLeche League-Breastfeeding Support	830-0283
	OR 859-1352
Breastfeeding Support Network	265-7285
Family Services Center	551-1610
National Alliance for Mentally Ill (NAMIH)	534-2628
Nurturing Fathers Program	551-1610
Parents Resource Center	539-7386
Preparation for Parenting and Childbirth Huntsville Hospital Women's Center	265-7440
Resolve Through Sharing Grief Support Loss of a pregnancy or loss of an infant	265-7287
Teens Loving Children-Girls, Inc.	859-0011
Domestic Violence Women's Support Group	716-4052
Skills for Success	881-5959

Special Services for Children:

AL Institute for Deaf and Blind	539-7881
Alabama A & M University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic	372-5534
Child Find	1-800-543-3098

Early Development Disabilities

Intervention

Children's Rehabilitation Services-Disabilities	518-8640/ 536-6621
Sickle Cell Foundation of North AL	536-2723
United Cerebral Palsy	852-5600

Transportation:

Handi-Ride	532-7433
Shuttle Service	532-7433
TRAM (Transportation for Rural Areas of Madison Co.)	532-3792

Utilities:

Catholic Center for Concern	536-0041
Community Action Agency-Crisis Heating/ Cooling	851-9800
CUP-Churches United for People	539-8720
First Baptist Church	535-9400
Huntsville Assistance (Mondays 9:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m. only)	539-2320
Huntsville Utilities-Payment Arrangement	533-0646
Project Share-Utility Assistance Age 62 plus and/or disabled, winter, summer	536-5576
Salvation Army	534-1402
St. Vincent De Paul	539-7476

Important Numbers:

Child Protective Services-to report abuse	535-4500
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National Child Abuse Hotline
Poison Control Center

1-800-422-4453
1-800-462-0800

**MT. CALVARY S.D.A. CHURCH
DEACON & DEACONESS
RETREAT**



**Oakwood University, Carter Hall
Huntsville, AL
February 29- March 1, 2008**

*“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself [herself] unspotted from the world.”
James 1:27*

Friday, February 29, 2008
7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

7:00-7:20 p.m. . Song Service
Prayer
Scripture (James 1:26-27)
Scripture Remarks
Season of Prayer

7:20-7:40 p.m. Group Exercise
(Pleased & Troubled Areas)



7:40-8:00 p.m. Discussion

8:00-8:15 p.m. Today's Challenge

8:15-8:30 p.m. Prayer Session (Seek God's
vision for Deacons and
Deaconesses)

Sabbath, March 1, 2008
4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

4:00-4:10 p.m. Song Service
Prayer

4:10-5:10 p.m. Presentation-
Pastor White

5:10-5:20 p.m. Break

5:20-5:40 p.m. Group Exercise
Visioning

5:40-6:00 p.m. Discussion
Mission
Statement
Action Steps

Closing Prayer

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

In as much as I have taken a critical look at the Biblical Roots of the office of Deacon and Deaconess, I am now willing to reshape my ministry so that it will fit the Biblical Model of being a Problem Solver and a Soul Winner. Therefore, I am making the following commitment:

Please check the appropriate line(s)

- To spend at least one hour each day reading my Bible and praying for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- Become actively involved in visiting and nurturing the members of my church.
- Use my influence to solve the problems that arise in the church that create dissatisfaction and murmuring among the membership.
- To make sure that the church properties are maintained in such a way that they will always present a positive witness for God.
- To be a team player, attend all of the scheduled meetings of my office, and faithfully carry out my assigned duties.
- Become actively engaged in soul-winning by giving Bible studies, conducting cottage meetings in my home/community, passing out Bible tracts, or do some other form of evangelism in consultation with my Pastor.
- Other: *Witness To Family (if 1st day worshipper)*
Visit nursing homes or patients in hospitals.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date 9-27-05

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

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Other:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ Date Sept 27-08

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

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- Use my influence to solve the problems that arise in the church that create dissatisfaction and murmuring among the membership.
- To make sure that the church properties are maintained in such a way that they will always present a positive witness for God.
- To be a team player, attend ^{most} all of the scheduled meetings of my office, and faithfully carry out my assigned duties.
- Become actively engaged in soul-winning by giving Bible studies, conducting cottage meetings in my home/community, passing out Bible tracts, or do some other form of evangelism in consultation with my Pastor.

Other:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date 09-26-05

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

In as much as I have taken a critical look at the Biblical Roots of the office of Deacon and Deaconess, I am now willing to reshape my ministry so that it will fit the Biblical Model of being a Problem Solver and a Soul Winner. Therefore, I am making the following commitment:

Please check the appropriate line(s)

- To spend at least one hour each day reading my Bible and praying for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- Become actively involved in visiting and nurturing the members of my church.
- Use my influence to solve the problems that arise in the church that create dissatisfaction and murmuring among the membership.
- To make sure that the church properties are maintained in such a way that they will always present a positive witness for God.
- To be a team player, attend all of the scheduled meetings of my office, and faithfully carry out my assigned duties.
- Become actively engaged in soul-winning by giving Bible studies, conducting cottage meetings in my home/community, passing out Bible tracts, or do some other form of evangelism in consultation with my Pastor.
- Other:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date 5/20/07

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

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- Become actively engaged in soul-winning by giving Bible studies, conducting cottage meetings in my home/community, passing out Bible tracts, or do some other form of evangelism in consultation with my Pastor.
- Other *to USE the Right An (HEALTH MESSAGE) of BREAK down ANY barrier for introduction of the (3 ANGLES MESSAGES)*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date 5/20/07

DEACON AND DEACONESS COMMITMENT FORM

In as much as I have taken a critical look at the Biblical Roots of the office of Deacon and Deaconess, I am now willing to reshape my ministry so that it will fit the Biblical Model of being a Problem Solver and a Soul Winner. Therefore, I am making the following commitment:

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- Become actively engaged in soul-winning by giving Bible studies, conducting cottage meetings in my home/community, passing out Bible tracts, or do some other form of evangelism in consultation with my Pastor.

Other: _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date Mar. 1, 2008

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The important questions I had were answered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The information was presented in an interesting way.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The presenter was familiar with the subject.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The objectives of the seminar were accomplished.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Now I have a better understanding of my office.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Now I am inspired to serve my church with dignity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The information on the screen was clear and easy to read.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Now I have greater confidence to serve as a deacon/deaconess.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I was challenged to faithful fulfill my responsibilities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I was blessed by the seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments I wish that he could do another seminar

Name of church Alt Calvary SDA Church

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
2. The important questions I had were answered.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The information was presented in an interesting way.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
4. The presenter was familiar with the subject.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The objectives of the seminar were accomplished.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
6. Now I have a better understanding of my office.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Now I am inspired to serve my church with dignity.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
8. The information on the screen was clear and easy to read.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
9. Now I have greater confidence to serve as a deacon/deaconess.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I was challenged to faithful fulfill my responsibilities.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I was blessed by the seminar.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	_____✓_____	_____	_____	_____

Other comments _____

Name of church Mt Calvary

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The important questions I had were answered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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11. I was blessed by the seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments I really enjoyed the seminar and all churches
should have a seminar like this annually.

Name of church Mt. Calvary SDA Church

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The important questions I had were answered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments _____

Name of church Mt Calvary SDA Church

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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4. The presenter was familiar with the subject.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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6. Now I have a better understanding of my office.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Now I am inspired to serve my church with dignity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The information on the screen was clear and easy to read.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Now I have greater confidence to serve as a deacon/deaconess.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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11. I was blessed by the seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments It Was an Inspired Retreat. Very Strong +
Compelling, informative Moment.

Name of church Mt. Calvary

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The important questions I had were answered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The information was presented in an interesting way.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments _____

Name of church MT Calvary

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The important questions I had were answered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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7. Now I am inspired to serve my church with dignity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The information on the screen was clear and easy to read.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Now I have greater confidence to serve as a deacon/deaconess.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I was challenged to faithful fulfill my responsibilities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I was blessed by the seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments I Learned so much. It was well presented and attended.
Every thing was positive and should be on-going quarterly or twice a
year.

Name of church M.P. Calvary

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
2. The important questions I had were answered.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
3. The information was presented in an interesting way.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
4. The presenter was familiar with the subject.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
5. The objectives of the seminar were accomplished.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
6. Now I have a better understanding of my office.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
7. Now I am inspired to serve my church with dignity.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
8. The information on the screen was clear and easy to read.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
9. Now I have greater confidence to serve as a deacon/deaconess.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
10. I was challenged to faithful fulfill my responsibilities.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
11. I was blessed by the seminar.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	_____	_____✓_____	_____	_____

Other comments God Bless and Keep up the Good Work

Name of church Mt sawney S.D.A

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SEMINAR EVALUATION

Please put a check on the line under the words that best describe the way you feel about this seminar.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information was relevant.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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10. I was challenged to faithfully fulfill my responsibilities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I was blessed by the seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend that others attend this seminar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other comments _____

Name of church MT Calvary

May 19, 2008



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

**Mount Calvary
Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Senior Pastor
Head Deacon and Head Deaconess

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14

Dear Church Leaders:

1201 Meadow Drive
Huntsville, Alabama 35816
Phone (256) 533-9000
Fax (256) 533-9021

My name is Vincent E. White, Sr., pastor of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am also a doctoral student requesting input from you that will assist me in developing and implementing a ministry for today's deacons and deaconesses that will reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church.

www.tagnet.org/mt-calvary

P.O. Box 11157
Huntsville, Alabama 35814

In my twenty-five years of pastoring, I have had the privilege of serving several different congregations. All of them have faced the same challenges relating to the work of deacons and deaconesses. The major challenge today is that other departments of the church have supplanted the role and function of deacons and deaconesses. Instead of deacons providing for the physical and social needs of the church community, as did the deacons of the first century Christian church, they are now relegated to simply collecting offerings and performing janitorial duties. Deaconesses are now relegated to sitting on the front pews of the church until there is a baptismal or Holy Communion service. My burden is to develop a ministry that will empower these church leaders to return to the biblical model of solving problems that arise in the church and winning new converts to the church.

I am asking that you would please assist me in this endeavor by taking a few minutes to fill out the enclosed Questionnaire and Informed Consent Form. After completing these forms, please seal and mail them in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Please keep your copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records. These documents will be processed so that your responses will be anonymous. There are no physical or emotional risks involved in this study. The results of this study will be published, and the ministry that will be developed will be relevant to all churches that utilize deacons and deaconesses. I thank you, and I am very grateful for your assistance.

Yours in Christ,

Vincent E. White, Sr., Pastor

2007 PLEASED AND TROUBLED AREAS
WORKSHEET SYNTHESIS

As a Deacon/Deaconess of Mt. Calvary, I am:

PLEASED ABOUT

1. Our dedication to duties
2. Our willingness to serve

TROUBLED ABOUT

1. Our lack of communication
2. Our lack of visiting the sick
3. Church doesn't use prayer meetings
as training opportunities for deacons
to speak

VISION STATEMENT

The deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Seventh-day Adventist Church identified the following vision of themselves and their work: (1) being filled with the Holy Spirit, (2) being teachers and preachers, (3) being students of God's Word, (4) winning souls, (5) being prayer warriors, (6) keeping order in the church, (7) coming together on one accord, (8) meeting once a month as a whole group—deacons and deaconesses together, (9) coming together to study and to be taught how to be effective, and (10) having seasons of prayer before Holy Communion.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church is to serve its members and community—especially those that are most vulnerable—by providing for their emergency physical, social, and spiritual needs, addressing relational problems in the church, and teaching and preaching God’s Word through public and personal evangelism. We will lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and disciple newly baptized church members. We will visit, assess needs, and network with departments within the church and agencies in the community in order to accomplish our mission. We will be responsible for maintaining the upkeep of the church and its properties. We will engage in on-going personal development through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and other relevant materials so that we might become better persons that are better equipped to glorify God and serve humanity.

ACTION STEPS ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Contact Community Agencies that Service Targeted Groups

Group 1

Single parents

New mothers

Senior citizens

People recovering from surgery

Group 2

Substance abusers

Handicap

Victims of domestic violence

Homosexuals

Group 3

Mentally ill

Bereaved

Spanish speaking residents

MINISTRIES SURVEY FORM

Mt. Calvary's deacons and deaconesses are developing the ministries that are listed below. The purpose is to nurture the members and meet the needs of the community. We need your input so that we can make these ministries relevant to your needs. If you fit into any of these categories, or have knowledge about them, please write down some of the issues that we need to address. You may respond anonymously if you like. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

1. Single Parents
2. Senior Citizens
3. New Mothers
4. Missing Members
5. Recovering from Surgery
6. Abuse Issues
7. Homosexuality
8. Substance Abuse
9. Handicap
10. Bereavement
11. Spanish Ministry
12. New Members
13. Mental Health

2008 PLEASSED AND TROUBLED AREAS
WORKSHEET SYNTHESIS

As a Deacon/Deaconess of Mt. Calvary, I am:

PLEASSED ABOUT

1. Work at nursing home
2. More willing to serve now than in the past
3. Unity, ambition, goals, plans, right number, experience

TROUBLED ABOUT

1. Church isn't always open
2. A lack of programs, commitment, discernment, and community nurturing of each others children
3. Lack of communication and organization
4. Lack of prayer meeting attendance

APPENDIX B

INREACH AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

DISTRICT VISITATION TEAMS

District 1 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Deaconess _____	Harvest, Madison	11 families

District 2 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Deaconess _____	Harvest, Toney, Hazel Green	13 families

District 3 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Jr. Deaconess _____ Jr. Deaconess _____	Zip code 35806	22 families

District 4 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____	Zip code 35810	16 families

Deacon _____
Deacon _____
Deaconess _____

District 5 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Deaconess _____	Zip code 35810	14 families

District 6 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Jr. Deacon _____ Deaconess _____	Zip code 35810	21 families

District 7 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Deacon _____ Jr. Deacon _____ Deaconess _____	Zip codes 35811, 35761, 35748	18 families

District 8 Visitation Team

District Leaders	Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____ Deacon _____ Elder _____ Jr. Deaconess _____	Zip codes 35816, 35810	20 families

Jr. Deaconess _____

District Leaders	District 9 Visitation Team Territory	Number of Families
Elder _____	Zip codes 35801, 35802, 35805	20 families
Deacon _____		
Deacon _____		
Jr. Deacon _____		
Deaconess _____		

VISITATION TECHNIQUES

- I. Visit in twos—one will pray silently while the other is conversing.
- II. Dress appropriately
 - A. Elders and deacons—coat and tie
 - B. Deaconesses—dress, skirt and blouse, or suit.
- III. Visiting the home
 - A. No excuse needed for a visit
 - B. This is your duty and privilege.
 - C. State purpose for the visit.
 - D. Do not be afraid to “drop by.”
- IV. The spirit of the visit
 - A. Pray before arriving at the home.
 - B. Maintain the attitude of prayer throughout visit.
 - C. Not a social call
- V. The nature of the conversation
 - A. Assess needs of the family
 - B. Engage in conversation about their home, church, community, employment, family, and themselves.
 - D. Document your assessment of the family.
 - E. “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jam 1:19).
 - F. Avoid gossip
 - G. Don’t take sides when family members disagree.
 - H. Stay objective and assure them that you will join them in prayer about the situation.
- VI. The length of the visit
 - A. Most visits can be about 15 minutes.
 - B. In extenuating circumstances, it may take longer.
- VII. Completing the visit
 - A. Closing should be deeply spiritual and end with prayer
 - B. Respectfully ask that the radio or television be turned off or down.
 - C. Prayer should be brief but comprehensive enough to include the discussion.
 - D. Call the family members by name in prayer.
 - E. Leave promptly

MEMBERSHIP VISITATION FORM

Visited by _____ Date _____

1. Member's name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____

2. Best time to visit? _____

3. Do I need to call before coming? _____ Yes _____ No _____

4. How long have you been a member of this church? _____

5. What do you like best about this church? _____

6. Does everyone in your family have a Bible? _____ Yes _____ No _____

7. Are Sabbath school quarterlies in the home? _____ Yes _____ No _____

8. Do you own any Spirit of Prophecy books? _____ Yes _____ No _____

9. Are all members of the family baptized SDAs? _____ Yes _____ No _____

10. Is there family worship in the home daily? _____ Yes _____ No _____

11. Are the children in church school? _____ Yes _____ No _____

Circle grade level: Elementary High school College

12. Is a spouse missing from the home? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Which? _____

13. Do you understand tithes and offerings? _____ Yes _____ No _____

14. Have you taught your children to tithe? _____ Yea _____ No _____

15. Do any members of the family need work? _____ Yes _____ No _____

Who? _____ Type of work? _____

16. Are you employed? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Where? _____

How long? _____

17. Are you having Sabbath employment problems? _____ Yes _____ No _____

18. List the names and ages of your family. Circle SDA if they are members.

		SDA
		SDA
		SDA
		SDA
		SDA

19. Family's Needs Assessment: _____

VISITATION AND OUTREACH REFERRAL FORM

Member's name _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Telephone () _____

Event and date of event: _____

Ministry(s) needed: _____

Referred to _____ Outreach Ministry

Date of referral _____

Referral made by: _____ Telephone () _____

.....

Ministry(s) provided: _____

Date provided _____ Comments: _____

Person(s) who provided the ministry(s):

_____ Telephone () _____

_____ Telephone () _____

(After both sections are completed, give a copy to the pastor and the personal ministries leader)

PERSONAL INFORMATION SHEET

Name _____ Telephone () _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Date of birth _____

Children Names	Birthday
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Public Service Record

Military _____ Business _____

Other organizations _____

Previous Church Experience (check)

___ Church officer or committee member

___ Church school worker

___ Teacher

___ Secretarial

___ Music ___ vocalist instrumentalist ___ what instrument? _____

___ Outreach ministries (describe) _____

Please check inreach and outreach ministries in which you are interested in

working:

Inreach Ministry

Sabbath School

Teaching

Music

Greeter

Usher

Other _____

Class Levels

Cradle Roll

Kindergarten

Primary

Junior

Earliteen

Youth

Adult

Extension Division (shut-ins)

Outreach Ministry

Vacation Bible School

Counselor or craft

Teach or help

Transportation

Personal Ministries

Children Story Hour

Communications

Community Services

Health Education

Lay Bible Ministry

Nutrition Classes

Tracts and Literature

Visitation and Prayer

Witnessing and Bible Studies

PRAYER MEETING SCHEDULE

APRIL-JUNE 2008

Date	Speakers	Facilitators
April 2	Elder _____	Deacon _____
April 9	Elder _____	Deacon _____
April 16	Deaconess _____	Deacon _____
April 23	Elder _____	Deacon _____
April 30	Prayer and Praise Service	Deacon _____
May 7	Elder _____	Deacon _____
May 14	Elder _____	Deacon _____
May 21	Elder _____	Deacon _____
May 28	Prayer and Praise Service	Deacon _____
June 4	Deacon _____	Elder _____
June 11	No Meeting (Campmeeting)	
June 18	Elder _____	Deacon _____
June 25	Prayer and Praise Service	Deacon _____

COMMUNITY PRAYER REQUEST FORM

My name is _____ from the Mt. Calvary Community Prayer Ministry.

We are praying for you and the residents of our community. Is there anything in particular that you would like for us to pray about concerning you or your family?

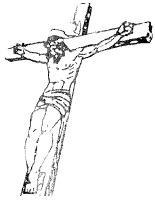
Prayer Request

Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____

We have special prayer meetings on Wednesdays at 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m. We will be praying for your situation. May I pray with you now? I will check back with you to see how God is answering your prayer request if that is alright with you.

Prayer _____

Have a blessed day.



Jesus Is The Answer
Bible Study Course
(Regular)

Lesson 1

HOW DID WE GET GOD'S SPOKEN WORD THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a collection of 66 books which was written over a period of 1,500 years. Nearly 40 men were involved in writing the Bible. It is divided into two testaments—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 books, and the New Testament contains 27. The Bible is God's love letter to us. The more we read it, the more we will see how much God loves us.

Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. The men who wrote the Bible (prophecy) wrote and spoke from their own will and imagination (2 Peter 1:21). **TRUE-FALSE**
2. The New Testament is the only part of the Bible that God inspired to be written (2 Timothy 3:16-17). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. The Bible was written to give us hope (Romans 15:4). **TRUE-FALSE**
4. We have to study the Bible if we are to understand it correctly (2 Timothy 2:15). **TRUE-FALSE**
5. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** The Scriptures testify that He is the one that we must go to to receive eternal life (John 5:39-40). **TRUE-FALSE**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

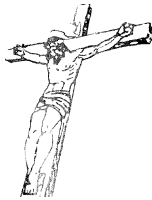
Date _____

Jesus Is The Answer

Bible Study Course

(Regular)

Lesson 2



WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU?

God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. Man is continually trying to experience a more abundant life. We cannot experience this kind of life unless we accept Jesus and follow God's plan. Jesus is our bridge over the gulf. Won't you accept Him and His plan today?

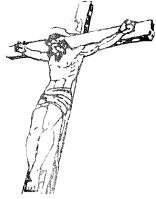
Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life (John 3:16). **TRUE-FALSE**
2. God's plan is for you to have a more abundant life (John 10:10). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. Our sins separate us from God, and keep us from having an abundant life (Isaiah 59:2).
TRUE-FALSE
4. You must receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior if you want to become a child of God (John 1:12).
TRUE-FALSE
5. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER** to your sin problem. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life (Matthew 1:21; John 17:3).
TRUE-FALSE

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____



Jesus Is The Answer
Bible Study Course
(Regular)

Lesson 3

THE SECRET TO ANSWERED PRAYER

Prayer is the science of applying our knowledge of God's principles in a way that will guarantee us a response from God. It involves the combination of *faith and works* operating together in a way that will bring glory to God and good to others.

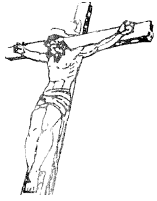
Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. Through prayer, we learn to trust God more than we trust man (Psalm 118:8).
TRUE-FALSE
2. When we pray, we must recognize our need for God's help (Psalm 86:1).
TRUE-FALSE
3. God will give us anything we pray for even when our hearts are full of sin and iniquity (Psalm 66:18).
TRUE-FALSE
4. We must have faith when we come to God in prayer (Hebrews 11:6).
TRUE-FALSE
5. We must pray to God in Jesus' name and obey the Ten Commandments if we want God to answer our prayers (John 16:23; 1 John 3:22).
TRUE-FALSE
6. We all know what to pray for; so we don't need any help (Romans 8:26-27).
TRUE-FALSE
7. God will hear and answer a sinner's prayer if he admits his sins and ask God for mercy and forgiveness (Luke 18:10-14; 1 John 1:9).
TRUE-FALSE
8. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** Before He died on the cross for our sins, He prayed to God for our salvation (John 17:9-21).
TRUE-FALSE

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____



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(Regular)

Lesson 4

WHAT IS SIN?

Did God create a devil? No He didn't! God created a perfect angel named Lucifer, who turned traitor to God. There was perfect harmony throughout the universe. There was no sin until Lucifer ("Son of the Morning") became Satan ("Adversary/Enemy").

Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. The definition of sin is to transgress (break) God's Ten Commandment Law (1 John 3:4) **TRUE-FALSE**
2. Lucifer sinned when he broke God's Ten Commandments by coveting God's position and power (Exodus 20:17; Isaiah 14:12-14). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. When Satan was put out of heaven, he came to planet earth and deceived Adam and Eve into breaking God's Ten Commandments. They coveted and stole fruit from God's Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-5; Exodus 20:15, 17). **TRUE-FALSE**
4. The consequence of sin is death. But God wants to give us eternal life instead of eternal death (Romans 6:23). **TRUE-FALSE**
5. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** He bore our sins by offering His life on the cross for our salvation (Hebrews 9:28). **TRUE-FALSE**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____



Jesus Is The Answer
Bible Study Course
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Lesson 5

HOW DOES A SINNER BECOME A SAINT?

There is a universal search for happiness. Many people are trying to find it in the fast-lane of life: alcohol, drugs, and immoral living. But happiness cannot be found in any of these places. God didn't put it there. He put it at the foot of the cross where His Son died that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. When we come to Jesus, the search is over. Won't you come to Him today?

Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. The only race of people who has sinned is the Russians (Romans 3:23).
TRUE-FALSE
2. Because all are guilty of sin, we all are subject to death (Romans 6:23).
TRUE-FALSE
3. The only way that all of our sins can be forgiven is to confess them to God (1 John 1:9).
TRUE-FALSE
4. It is alright to go to your pastor or priest to get salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9).
TRUE-FALSE
5. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** After a sinner confesses (admits) his sins to God; seeks to obey God's commandments; and is sanctified by faith in Jesus, God calls him a saint (1 Corinthians 1:2; Revelation 14:12; Psalms 50:5).
TRUE-FALSE

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____



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Lesson 6

SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE LAWLESS?

Satan has the Christian world torn between law and grace. Some believe that Christians don't have to keep God's Ten Commandment Law because of God's grace. Others believe that Christians must keep God's Ten Commandment Law in spite of grace. Jesus is our Example! What did He do?

Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. God is a king. He has a law that His people must obey (Exodus 24:12). **TRUE-FALSE**
2. God's Ten Commandment Law is so important that He did not trust any man to write it. He wrote it Himself with His own finger (Exodus 31:18; 32:16). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. God's law is just as holy as He is (Romans 7:12). **TRUE-FALSE**
4. Jesus destroyed God's Ten Commandment Law when He came (Matthew 5:17- 18). **TRUE-FALSE**
5. The most important thing that we can do to prove that we love Jesus is keep His Ten Commandments (John 14:15). **TRUE-FALSE**
6. It is OK if a born again Christian breaks one of the Ten Commandments once a week if his minister tells him to (James 2:10-11; Matthew 5:19). **TRUE-FALSE**
7. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** When we keep His Commandments we "abide" (remain) in His love (John 15:10). **TRUE-FALSE**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____

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Jesus Is The Answer
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Lesson 7

WHO OR WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. When we allow Him to live in us, He enables us to live a Christian life. I want Him to live in me, don't you?

Directions: These statements are either TRUE or FALSE. Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the Comforter, Holy Ghost, Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of God (John 14:16-17, 26; Luke 11:13; Genesis 1:2). **TRUE-FALSE**
2. The Holy Spirit teaches us the words of Jesus, reproves us when we are wrong, guides us into all truth, and helps us to understand the future (John 14:26; 16:8, 13). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. When we rebel against the Holy Spirit, He is grieved (Ephesians 4:30). **TRUE-FALSE**
4. Proof that we have the Holy Spirit is our obedience to God's Word, and our possession of the fruit of the Spirit (Acts 5:32; Galatians 5:22-23). **TRUE-FALSE**
5. If we want the Holy Spirit, we will have to wait a long time and do something extraordinary (Luke 11:13). **TRUE-FALSE**
6. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** He is the One who asked God to send the Comforter to dwell in us (John 14:16, 26). **TRUE-FALSE**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

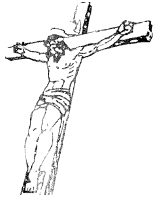
Date _____

Jesus Is The Answer

Bible Study Course

(Regular)

Lesson 8



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF JESUS' SECOND COMING?

Jesus told His disciples that certain signs would occur in the economic, social, religious, and supernatural worlds to indicate that He is coming soon. What are these signs?

Directions: Read the Bible texts at the end of each statement, then circle TRUE or FALSE, and FILL IN THE BLANKS. **PRAY FIRST!**

1. One of the major signs in the religious world indicating that Jesus is soon to come is that all religious leaders are telling the truth (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24). **TRUE-FALSE**
2. One of the signs in the social world is all of the nations are at peace with each other (Matthew 24:6-7). **TRUE-FALSE**
3. The signs in the supernatural world indicating that Jesus is soon to come are that immediately after the persecution of God's people during the Dark Ages (538-1798 AD), the _____ was darkened; the moon became as _____; and the _____ fell from the sky (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-13).
Note: The persecution of God's people was cut short as Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:21-22. The persecution ended in 1776 instead of 1798. Immediately after 1776 these events began to happen: **The Dark Day** (May 19, 1780, in New England). "The sun rose clear and bright. At about nine darkness gradually developed. That evening the moon appeared blood red . . ." [R.M. Devens, *Our First Century* (Everett Dick)].
Nov. 13, 1833- The Falling Stars "... There was scarcely a space in the firmament (sky) which was not filled . . . with these falling stars." *The Amer. Jour. of Sci. & Arts*, vol. 25 (1834), p. 382.
4. **JESUS IS THE ANSWER.** He is coming soon to gather all His elect from all over the world (Matthew 24:30-31). **TRUE-FALSE**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____

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APPENDIX C
SURVEY MATERIALS

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry Department

Informed Consent Form

Title: A Ministry for Deacons and Deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that Reflects the Ministry of the Deacons in the First Century Christian Church

Purpose of Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to develop and implement a strategy for ministry for deacons and deaconesses of the Mt. Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church that will reflect the ministry of the deacons in the first century Christian church.

Inclusion Criteria: In order to participate, I recognize that I must be an adult, 18 years of age or older, of a sound mind, a head deacon, head deaconess, pastor or designee of a church denomination other than Seventh-day Adventist.

Risks and Discomforts: I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

Benefits/Results: I accept that I will receive no remuneration for my participation, but that by participating, I will help the researcher arrive at a better ministry for deacons and deaconesses.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that my involvement in this survey is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any pressure, embarrassment, or negative impact on me. I also understand that participation is anonymous and that neither the

researcher nor any assistants will be able to identify my responses to me.

Contact Information: In the event that I have any questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may contact either the researcher, Vincent E. White, Sr. at avasbp@att.net, (Tel: (256) 722-8988), or his adviser, Dr. Kenley Hall at kenley@andrews.edu, (Tel: (269) 471-6366). I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Witness

Signed at: _____ Church

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Deacon and Deaconess Ministries

1. Do you have people in your church serving as: Deacons ___yes ___no, Deaconesses ___ yes ___ no
2. What is the size of your church membership? ___ Less than 50, ___ 51-150, ___ 151-300, ___ 301-1000, ___ 1001 plus
3. How would you describe your church's worship style? ___ Formal/High Church, ___ Evangelical, ___ Charismatic, ___ Orthodox, ___ Conservative
4. How many deacons and deaconesses serve your church? Deacons _____, Deaconesses _____
5. What is the age range for Deacons ____ - ____, Deaconesses ____ - ____?
6. What is the term of office for Deacons _____, Deaconesses _____?
7. What kind of training is given to your Deacons and Deaconesses?
Deacons: _____

Deaconesses: _____

8. What types of Inreach and Outreach Ministries are your Deacons and Deaconesses involved in? (Inreach—Ministries that nurture and/or meet the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of your members. Outreach—Ministries that nurture and/or meet the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of non-members). Deacons
(Inreach): _____

(Outreach): _____

Deaconesses (Inreach): _____

(outreach): _____

9. Explain the process that is used to select Deacons and Deaconesses.
Deacons: _____

Deaconesses: _____

10. What qualifications must a person have to serve as a Deacon; as a Deaconess?
Deacon: _____

Deaconess: _____

11. What are the responsibilities of a Deacon and Deaconess?
Deacon: _____

Deaconess: _____

12. Where would a Deacon and Deaconess be positioned on the Organizational Flow Chart of your church?
13. Define the make-up of your Deacon and Deaconess Boards, such as: Officers, Chain of Command, Assignments, etc.
Deacon Board: _____

Deaconess Board: _____

VITA

Vincent E. White, Sr.
109 Ellacott Drive
Huntsville, AL
35806

Education

Oakwood University, Huntsville, AL, June 5, 1983
B.A. Theology and B.A. Social Work

Andrews University Theological Seminary
Berrien Springs, MI, June 2, 1985
Master of Divinity

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, December 15, 1995
Master of Social Work

University of Tennessee Medical Center
Knoxville, TN, August 30, 2002
Clinical Pastoral Education

Employment

South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
June 30, 1981-Present
Pastor

Ordination

June 18, 1988

Military Service

October 24, 1966-October 8, 1968
U.S. Army