

# ORDAINED SERVANT



A meeting of the CEIR with representatives of the Protestant Reformed Church

Published by

The Committee on Christian Education

of

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

July, 2000

# ORDAINED SERVANT

## Statement Of Purpose

*Ordained Servant* exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal *Ordained Servant* will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

## Editorial Policy

1. *Ordained Servant* publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of *Ordained Servant* or of the Church.
2. *Ordained Servant* occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Ordained Servant* does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Published for the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
under direction of  
Dr. James Gidley, Mr. David Winslow, Rev. Larry Wilson and Rev. William Shishko

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***Ordained Servant*** (ISSN: 1525-3503) is published quarterly by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Copies to ordained officers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are paid for by the Committee. It is also available to others in the U.S. who remit \$12 per year; foreign subscribers remit \$17. Periodicals postage is paid at Carson, ND. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Ordained Servant*, 5645 73rd St SW, Carson, ND 58529.

**Please send materials intended for possible publication in *Ordained Servant* to the Editor, G. I. Williamson, 406 Normal College Ave., Sheldon, IA 51201. (Or send it in a text file, by Email to: williamson.1@opc.org). Please send all requests for additional copies of back issues, to the distributor, Mr. Stephen Sturlaugson, 5645 73rd St SW, Carson, ND 58529. Telephone: 701-622-3862 (Email: Sturlaugson.1@opc.org), or you can download any and all back issues of *Ordained Servant* from The Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Web site on the Internet at: <http://www.opc.org>.**



During the past decade the Committee on Christian Education has enjoyed the able leadership of the Rev. Thomas E. Tyson as its General Secretary. With his recent resignation to accept a call to serve as a regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the Committee was faced with the need to choose his successor. It is remarkable that there was complete unanimity in the Committee in determining to call Rev. Larry Wilson to this task. Larry has been a member of the CCE for many years, and has already contributed much to its efforts. Larry comes to this task from a long and fruitful pastoral ministry at Grace OPC in Columbus, Ohio. As you will see from Larry's contribution to this issue of *Ordained Servant*, it was no easy thing for either the pastor or the people to face up to this call. The fact that it was accepted by him, however, as well as by the congregation and Presbytery is indicative of the wise pastoral leadership exemplified in the whole process. It is for this reason that the editor asked, and received, permission to reproduce in this issue Larry's pastoral letter that did so much to help the people of his congregation deal with this unwanted change. We think it articulates clearly the great principles of Presbyterianism that we so highly value.



Since we have indicated the biographical information and source of the continuing articles by Dr. James Gidley and the late Professor J. G. Vos, we do not repeat them in this issue but refer the reader to the previous issue of *Ordained Servant*.



Dr. R. Dean Anderson is a native of New Zealand, growing up in the nurture of our sister church in that land. He now serves as the pastor of two congregations of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). In the article included in this issue, which was originally prepared for the young people in his congregations, we think he says things that the young people in our own churches today need to hear. It is our hope that this material will be useful for study and discussion groups in our

congregations.



In future issues of *Ordained Servant* we hope to deal with such subjects as the following: *The Free Offer of the Gospel*, *The Regulative Principle of Worship*, *Divorce and the Offices of the Church*, *The Two and Three Office Views*, and *Our Ecumenical Calling* (with possible reflections on 'The Godfrey proposal' for a Synod made up of denominations, and the future prospects for NAPARC). If you—or your Session—has already done work in any of these areas and has something to say to the whole church, please send a contribution for possible use in *Ordained Servant*. We also welcome your suggestions for other possible subjects.



We are surprised that requests still come to the editor for copies of past issues, and the like, even though the official notice page clearly states that all such requests should be directed to our distributor Mr. Stephen Sturlaugson. Please—before you call or write anyone about *Ordained Servant*—take the time to read the small print carefully.



“This, then, is the extent of the discretionary power of the church in the sphere of government: She is to add nothing to, to take nothing from, what Christ has commanded in the Scriptures. All her needs are there provided for. She must have a divine warrant for every element of her polity and every distinctive function of government. Her laws are given; her officers are given; and the mode in which those laws shall be administered, and those officers shall act, is given. She can, consequently, make no laws—her power is limited to declaring and applying Christ's laws; she can create no offices—her power is expressed in electing the persons to fill those that Christ has appointed; she can institute no new mode of government—her sole power lies in employing that which Christ has ordained. Her power and her duty alike are summed up in absolute conformity to the Written Word.”



## Biblical Theology and the Session -Part 2

### Redemptive History and the Church Discipline

by James S. Gidley

One of the chief responsibilities of the elders of the Church is to maintain discipline. Therefore, I could not be true to my task of relating Biblical Theology to the Session if I did not speak on this issue as well. Here we may ask: “What is the importance of Church discipline to a redemptive-historical ministry?” Or: “Will Church discipline in a redemptive-historical ministry have a distinctive look or feel?”

At first glance, we are again faced with what may appear to be an antagonistic relationship. One might argue: theologians and redemptive-historicists are at opposite ends of the Reformed ecclesiastical spectrum. Theologians are very zealous for formal church discipline, so much so that they seem to transform the Church into a court of law. It follows that redemptive-historicists, being the polar opposites of theologians, must have a relative disregard, if not disdain, for church discipline.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, the reality is far different from superficial appearances. Once again, I can appeal to my experience. The redemptive-historical ministries in which I have served as an elder have not been lax in the exercise of discipline. Once again, I have the task of arguing that my experience is not anomalous. In fact, I would put before you the thesis that a redemptive-historical ministry cannot long be maintained in the absence of the faithful exercise of church discipline.

This can also be illustrated by example. I know of a pastor who is devoted to the redemptive-historical hermeneutic. He found himself in a pastorate with a weak Session, which would not discipline serious offenses like fornication. In frustration, this pastor began to preach moralistically. I take this example as paradigmatic for what happens to a redemptive-historical ministry when church discipline is neglected.

To paint with a broader brush, I would ask you to consider the history of the Erastian churches of the

Reformation, that is, the churches that accepted the rule of the State over the Church. In particular, consider England, where Hooker argues that the Church and the State are coterminous: each contains exactly the same people. (Richard Hooker was the classic apologist for the Anglican ecclesiastical establishment in the late 16th century, i.e., in pre-Westminster-Assembly England.) He says: “[W]ithin this realm of England...one society is both the Church and commonwealth...In a word, our estate is according to the pattern of God’s own ancient elect people, which people was not part of them the commonwealth, and part of them the Church of God, but the selfsame people whole and entire were both under one chief Governor...”<sup>2</sup> In Hooker’s polity, the State is the nation viewed as a body politic, in which the people are viewed as subjects or citizens. The Church is the nation viewed from its ecclesiastical side, and all the people are viewed as members of the Church. In such an ecclesiastical settlement, we also have an almost universal outward acceptance of the truth of the Scriptures and the cardinal doctrines of the faith.

We could view what happens to a Church under these circumstances from a variety of angles, but I want to focus on the reaction of those most concerned for the Word of God and the purity of the Church. In England, we see the rise of the Puritans, who not only are staunch Calvinists in the main, but who also become noted for a severely experiential sort of preaching. They know that many professing members of the Church of England are not true believers. How shall they preach to them? One way is to preach the law, to bring the unconverted under conviction.

Another focus of Puritanism is centered in the assurance of salvation. You see the problem: when anybody and everybody is regarded to be a member of the visible Church, when to be an Englishman means to be a professing Christian, when everyone acknowledges the “truth of the Christian religion”, and when effective church discipline is made nearly impossible, how is one to tell the sheep from the goats? The answer

is that preachers must instruct their hearers on how to be experts at self-examination,<sup>3</sup> because the only kind of discipline that will be available will be self-discipline.

We then have a ministry that becomes focused first and foremost on the *ordo salutis*, so that church members, most of whom are assumed to be only nominally Christian, may rightly discern whether they have experienced justification, adoption, sanctification, and so on. Combined with this is a strong emphasis on the “evidences” of being a true believer.<sup>4</sup> These evidences inevitably take on a strong tinge of moralism: what should you look for in yourself to distinguish you from the mass of nominal Christians in the Church?

So we have the law to convict the unregenerate and the law to provide evidences to the regenerate. It is not that these two uses of the law of God are in themselves illegitimate. Quite the contrary! They are indeed Biblical, and they are embedded in the very structure of the Shorter Catechism. The problem is the ecclesiastical environment in which the law is preached, and the specific emphasis laid upon it.

One way in which this emphasis manifests itself is in the mode of address to the congregation in preaching. The apostle Paul freely addresses the visible church as saints (Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, etc.) A true Puritan preacher would be reluctant to do this. He knows that he is addressing a mixed multitude of saints and sinners, believers and hypocrites, godly and wicked. Worse yet, he “knows” that many of the hypocrites think they are saints, and some of the saints may perhaps think they are hypocrites. At all events, he must be careful not to give anyone false hopes by a careless, indiscriminate greeting to the congregation.

In one sense, this seemingly small matter — who studies Paul’s greetings anyway? — opens up the very heart of the issue. If you cannot address the visible church as the people of God, you do not have a New Testament view of the church.

When we cross the Atlantic with the pilgrim fathers to New England, we initially have a somewhat more hopeful situation. An effort is made to confine church membership to those who are “visible saints”.

Yet we still have an environment in which everyone perforce acknowledges the “truth of the Christian religion,” and we have laws requiring every citizen, church member or not, to attend worship. Once again, we have a ministry that is strongly focused on instructing believers in the evidences of being true participants in the *ordo salutis*. For example, we have Jonathan Edwards expecting an age (probably the millennium) in which there will be much clearer views among professing Christians concerning the evidences of true piety in the heart: “[T]here will come a time of much greater purity in the church, than has been in ages past. And one great reason of it will be, that at that time, God will give much greater light to his people, to distinguish between true religion and counterfeits...”<sup>5</sup> He proceeds to give fourteen evidences that one is a true believer, and I have some recollection that he was among the more frugal in multiplying the number of evidences among authors of this type of literature in his day. I must confess that I’m in trouble, because I can’t remember what these fourteen evidences are!

The latter history of the New England churches is a melancholy tale, illustrating once again the importance of church discipline. The strict experiential standards for church membership contributes to a situation in which the minority of the populace, perhaps the small minority, are actually church members. At the same time, the whole populace is required to attend worship. In these circumstances, it becomes impossible for the ministry to be supported by the voluntary donations of the church members. Within the first Mayflower generation, the State intervenes by passing laws to support the Church through taxation on all residents, except in Boston, which is able to maintain its ministers by voluntary contributions.<sup>6</sup>

Gradually the theory develops that ministers are not only ecclesiastical officers, but officers of the State: after all, they are supported by State-mandated tax levies. The next downward step in ecclesiastical practice follows naturally from this: when a pulpit is vacant, a new minister is selected not by the vote of the church members only (as one would expect in Congregationalism), but by the vote of the entire tax-paying populace. This is codified in Massachusetts in 1692 — an early instance of the principle of “No taxation without representation.”<sup>7</sup>

Doctrinally at the same period, we have the rise of the “half-way covenant”, which allows baptism to the children of non-members of the church, so long as the parents admit the truth of the Christian religion and do not live scandalous lives. In this environment, it seems inevitable that the churches would become ripe for revivalism, another form of experience-centered ministry of the Word. Yet despite the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 40s, the slide of the church cannot be halted, and much of New England Puritanism degenerates into Pelagianism and Unitarianism by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

What is the point of tracing this history? I maintain that the failure to practice church discipline, including Biblical principles of Church government (such as the distinct government of the church as opposed to the civil government), inevitably distorts the ministry of the Word. And that distortion must be specifically away from the *historia salutis*. First, in the absence of church discipline, preaching must focus on making hearers experts in self-discipline. This requires an inordinate focus on the *ordo salutis* and “evidences.” Second, the amalgamation of the Church with the State leads to a civil theory of the nature and usefulness of the ministry. Taxation of all residents to support the ministry is justified on the grounds of the purely civil good that the ministry does for the entire community. That civil good is primarily the result of encouraging hearers to be morally upright citizens. Thus the ministry of the Word is given another strong shove in the direction of moralism.

I hope that you do not miss the contemporary relevance of this point. As American evangelicals have become increasingly strident about the civil benefits of evangelical religion, what we are hearing is in effect a plea to return to precisely this sort of ministry of the Word which has lost its single-minded focus on the mighty acts of God and sees a major portion of its responsibility to be the amelioration of social evil by encouraging good morals based on Biblical values.

Another prevalent effect of this approach is the belief in the superiority of self-examination to church discipline. Now clearly the Scriptures require self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28); what I am commenting on here is the relative weight that is given to it. Church

discipline, it will be said, is external, sporadic, unable to judge the heart, faulty, partial, etc. Self-examination, on the other hand, has direct access to the heart, can be continual (if not strictly continuous), has full information, etc. Plausible as this reasoning might sound, it conceals an exaltation of self and dependence on self. A genuine estimate of the power of self-examination would be much humbler, as David says in Psalm 19:12: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.”

I would add that I have too often observed among those who overestimate the value of self-examination and personal piety that they are keenly aware of others’ sins and strangely blind to some of their own. It is not that the better devotees of self-examination do not see this problem of the myopia, if not blindness, of the heart and mind. But their response to it seems to be once again to seek to make the individual believer a more skillful expert at spiritual self-microscopy. In the end, there is no escape from self.

I am speaking in part from personal experience at this point. Under the grip of this kind of teaching, as much as I might be told that the escape was to “look to Christ”, I only made “looking to Christ” another spiritual evidence that I had to discern in myself. Was I looking to Christ properly, fully, solely? Was I really looking to Christ? Of course there is a style of preaching that fosters just this sort of inversion: “Obviously, young man, your problem is that you need to look to Christ, and if you’re still having problems, it can’t be the fault of Christ, it must be some defect in the way you are looking to Him.” Thus the comfort of Christ and the gospel is snatched away at the very time it is being presented!

It seems to me that the root problem here is the absorption with personal piety and salvation. I know that some people will immediately accuse me of antinomianism, of advocating impiety. But let them rest for a moment while I make a Biblical point. The chief end of man is not first and foremost to be sure to make it to heaven, but to glorify God, and thus to enjoy Him forever. The center of true piety is not the inward, reflexive movement of self-examination and self-absorption, but the outgoing movement of seeking the glory of God. And inward, reflexive movements of strenuous effort to purify the self can inhibit

the outgoing movement of love to one's neighbors, particularly to the people of God.

My release from this endless spiral of self-absorption was in redemptive-historical teaching. I was led out of this bondage by hearing the faithful preaching of the mighty acts of God in history. I saw that the Bible was not centered on me and my personal salvation, but on the grand march of God through history, directing all things to glorify Himself, and centered specifically in the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. We return once again to 1 Timothy 3:16, "Great is the mystery of godliness ..."!

A few years ago, in the midst of a dry spot in my spiritual life, I began to ask myself if I really knew Christ. I am not speaking of declining assurance of salvation, though this was in some way involved. Rather it struck me that for all my years of Christian experience, for all my knowledge of the Bible, did I really have clear views about who My Savior was? Did I really have an intimate knowledge of my Lord?

I was drawn to the gospel according to Mark. I was struck by the grand march of God through the gospel. It is not so much that Jesus came to His people, but that He passed by them and called them to join Him. He bursts on the scene in the Gospel of Mark and preemptorily calls us to repent and believe in the gospel. What you see in Mark is a Jesus who is resolutely on the march. When he passes your way, you must decide whether to remain preoccupied with your existing concerns—even if they are the concerns of piety—or to drop everything and become a captive in His victorious march.

The center of this gospel is not me and my salvation, but Christ and his victorious march. And that march takes Him not only through paths of splendor, but first through the valley of the shadow of death, to the cursed death of the cross.

You see, faithful preacher of Christ, if you want the people to look to Christ, you must avoid the trap of making them examine their act of looking. You must present Christ to them, in His Divine majesty, in His Incarnation, in His three offices, in his humiliation and exaltation, in His resurrection glory, in His present enthronement at the right hand of God. Call

upon the people to believe, to be sure, but focus their attention on Christ, not on their believing.

I realize that my arguments from church history and from my experience are anecdotal. From a scientific point of view, I have too few data points to confirm my case. Yet I would propose to you this hypothesis, and call upon the historians among you to take it up if you will: There is a synergistic relationship between redemptive-historical preaching and the exercise of faithful church discipline. In a more general sense, I believe that it would be fruitful to study the general historical relationship between the exercise of church discipline, including the form of church government, and the character of the preaching of the Word.<sup>8</sup>

The synergism can be seen in both directions. I have maintained at the outset that redemptive-historical preaching depends on the faithful exercise of church discipline and cannot be maintained without it. But I also maintain that faithful church discipline cannot be sustained over the long haul without the support of redemptive-historical preaching. Why? Because it is always a fatal error to suppose that the purity and piety of the church can be maintained by preaching morality. The power of godliness is the mighty acts of God in history. We have come back once more to 1 Timothy 3:16: Do not miss the significance of that text! Paul tells us "great is the mystery of godliness" (eusebeia = godly life, religion). Godliness, the practice of the Christian life! And the mystery of it is that it is all about Christ: "manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." If you would have a godly church, then preach Christ, and the mighty acts of Christ. For if you take aim at godliness directly by preaching godliness, you will not attain it.

Now I am not advocating that the congregation should never be addressed in the imperative mood. The New Testament is replete with proper commands to the people of God — more of this in the following sections. But what I am saying is that the gravitational pull of moralism is very strong, all the stronger because it acts on us unawares. We live in the very environment of moralism. As Benjamin Warfield, in speaking of the "New Divinity" promoted at Yale University by N.

W. Taylor, and the probability of its effect on Charles Finney, said: "Pelagianism, unfortunately, does not wait to be imported from New Haven, and does not require inculcating — it is the instinctive thought of the natural man."<sup>9</sup>

To return to the question posed initially: "What should a congregation and Session look like that is shepherded by a redemptive-historical ministry?" It should be characterized by the faithful, loving exercise of church discipline. Without this, the redemptive-historical ministry cannot long endure; and without the redemptive-historical ministry, the faithful exercise of church discipline cannot long endure.

#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>The reader will note that as I am trying to dispel a caricature of a redemptive-historical ministry, I am setting it over against a caricature of a theonomic ministry.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, An Abridged Edition, ed. by A. S. McGrade and Brian Vickers, St. Martin's Press, NY, 1975, p. 342. The quotation comes from the Eight Book, Chapter 1, in which Hooker is dealing with the question whether the supreme rule in the Church can be held by the King. In this context, the "one chief Governor" refers to the king.

<sup>3</sup> Self-examination is clearly commanded in the Bible (1 Cor. 11:28). What I am criticizing here is the preponderant reliance on self-examination as an attempt, consciously or unconsciously, to make up for deficient or non-existent church discipline.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Jonathan Edwards opens *A Treatise concerning Religious Affections* as follows: "There is no question of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this: *What are the distinguishing qualifications of those who are in favour with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?*" (emphasis his). *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. I, p. 234, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1974.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235. He is not here speaking of religion in an objective sense, as Christianity vs. Islam, or orthodox Christianity vs. a cult. Rather he is speaking of religion in a subjective sense; his distinction is between true and counterfeit professors of the true religion.

<sup>6</sup> William G. McLoughlin covers the ground from the point of view of the dissenters, principally Baptists, Quakers, and Anglicans, who resented the taxes and sometimes refused to pay them. See *New England Dissent, 1630-1833*, especially pp. 60-61, and Parts II and III, pp. 113-243, entitled "The Baptists' Efforts for Exemption from Religious taxes, 1692-1734" and "Quaker and Anglican Efforts for Exemption from religious Taxes, 1692-1734", Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

<sup>7</sup> A variety of court cases complicates the situation somewhat, giving the citizens a limited veto power over the choice of the congregation, and specifying that disputes between church members and townspeople should be settled by a council drawn from five neighboring churches. See McLoughlin, pp. 126-127. He concludes the discussion with the remark: "In most cases involving the dissenters, however, ecclesiastical conflicts were settled not by church councils but by the courts and the legislature." (p. 127). We find ourselves, despite principle to the contrary, in a situation effectively the same as in Hooker's church/commonwealth.

<sup>8</sup> Theologically, I could also express my point by means of the Reformed understanding of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The Reformed have maintained that there are two keys: the preaching of the Word and the exercise of discipline. By the preaching, the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who repent and believe. By discipline, the kingdom doors are shut against those who prove themselves to be impenitent. It is my contention that neither key can long endure on its own, nor be expected to do the work of the other key.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, ed. by Samuel G. Craig, The Prebyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958, p. 18. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones also comments on this problem with regard to covenant children: "The particular trouble with which we are dealing tends, I find, to be common among those who have been brought up in a religious manner..." (it is clear from the context that he means specifically a Christian manner) "They have assumed that they are right about the first things, but they never have been right about their justification, and it is here that the devil causes confusion. It suits him well that such people should be concerned about sanctification and holiness and various other things... In a sense it is a masterpiece of Satan. He will even encourage us to be righteous as long as he has us confused at this point," *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, pp. 24, 26. I interpret this problem rather differently from Lloyd-Jones. He sees it as a problem to be cured; I see it as a problem to be prevented. What is wrong with our preaching of sanctification that leads covenant children into this confusion in the first place?

**Dr. James Gidley is Chairman of the Engineering Department at Geneva College a ruling elder of Grace OPC in Sewickley, PA. This article was originally an address delivered at the Kerux Conference, June 1999, at Westminster OPC, Westminster, CA and printed in *Kerux: A Journal of Biblical-Theological Preaching*. *Kerux* (Kerux.com on the web) is published three times per year and is available from the Editor, James T. Dennison, Jr., 1131 Whispering Highlands Dr., Escondido, CA 92027.**





## Roadblocks Limiting Church Effectiveness- Part 1

by

Johannes G. Vos

### *Christianity involves a Definite Body of Truth*

In the New Testament four great words stand related to each other. These words are: Truth—Doctrine—Knowledge—Understanding. We live in an age which tends to deprecate the use of the mind in connection with religion. The importance of truth, belief, knowledge and understanding, is constantly being minimized. The great fallacy of the present day is the notion that men can gather figs of thistles—that ignorance and unsound doctrine can produce salvation and a good life.

### *Knowledge of Truth is Essential*

The Bible lends no countenance to this foolish notion. On the contrary, the Bible emphasizes the importance of knowledge. It commands us to use our minds: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind.” We are commanded, not merely to believe the truth, but also to know, understand and love the truth. We cannot really believe it without first of all knowing what it is. And we cannot know what it is unless we learn what it is. The Christian religion involves a body of information that has to be known before it can be accepted and lived.

### *The Fallacy of “Ideals” and “Values”*

God redeems the world not by abstract ideals but by historical events which take place at particular times and places. The ancient Greeks thought of religion as a matter of abstract principles, such as justice, goodness, beauty, order, and so forth. Many people today cherish the same mistaken idea. A man is quoted as saying: “My religion is just goodness, truth and beauty. That is a good enough religion for any man!” But goodness, truth and beauty are just abstract ideas. To say that our religion is goodness, truth and beauty will not make us good, true and beautiful. On the contrary, we will still be the same miserable, inconsistent, selfish people that we always were.

Yet many people—even professing Christians—think of religion as just a matter of certain principles or ideals with a permanent value. These they call “spiritual values.” If they study the Bible, they take the history of Abraham, for example, not as something uniquely important in God’s historical plan of redemption, but just as one example of the operation of a timeless law. Abraham is taken as one example of the principles of “faith” and “unselfishness.” All Bible events are similarly treated, thus becoming mere instances of the operation of timeless laws. The real meaning and importance of any particular event is cancelled. They become mere illustrations or samples of ideals or values. We could just as well pick our examples from ancient Greece or China.

When someone says, “The Golden Rule is enough religion for me,” he is really saying that religion is a matter of ideals, not a matter of historical facts or events. He is really saying that he does not need a Savior, but only an ideal.

### *“Creeds” that are not really Creeds*

From time to time various organizations issue so-called “creeds,” and when you read one of these “creeds,” you find that it is not a creed at all, but only a list of ideals. It is not a statement of facts that people are to believe, but merely a statement of abstract ideals that they consider valuable or worthwhile. “I believe in honesty, I believe in unselfishness, I believe in service . . .”—so runs the “creed.” But such a “creed” is not a creed at all in the Christian sense. A creed is not a mere statement of ideals. It must contain facts to be a real creed. The great Christian creeds contain facts, such as God’s work of creation, the incarnation of Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Second Coming.

### *God redeems by Facts of History*

God’s plan of redemption is not by ideals or values, but by facts of history. God has stepped into the history of this world and done certain particular things

at certain particular times and places. He commanded Noah to build the ark; He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees; He delivered the children of Israel from Egypt by the hand of Moses. And especially, God sent His Son to be born in Bethlehem, to live in Judea and Galilee, to be crucified outside the city wall of Jerusalem, to rise from the dead the third day, to meet with His disciples during forty days, and to ascend to heaven from a particular spot of latitude and longitude on this planet. The redemption of the world is accomplished by these definite, specific, particular events, all of them so very “local,” so very “dated.” What happened outside Jerusalem on a particular day, at particular hours, some 1900 years ago, has done more for the redemption of the world than all the ideals and values that men ever dreamed of.

### *Christianity a Story, Doctrine, Experience*

God has given us the Bible, the record of His actions in human history, and the divine interpretation of the meaning of those actions. The Bible is a very large book. It is full of information; it is packed with historical facts and divinely revealed interpretation of those facts—with facts and doctrines not merely ideals and values. The facts constitute the story of God’s work of redemption. The doctrines constitute God’s interpretation of this story. On the basis of the facts as interpreted by the doctrines, Christian experience is founded. Christianity is a story, a doctrine and an experience. The experience is dependent on the doctrine, and the doctrine is dependent on the story, that is, on the historical facts, the Biblical revelation.

Where the story and the doctrines are unknown, Christianity cannot exist. Where the story and the doctrines are despised and minimized, Christianity cannot exist except in a dwarfed and unhealthy form. To be a Christian one must believe the doctrines of Christianity. This means we must know the facts and the divinely revealed meaning of the facts. There is more to being a Christian than just knowing certain facts and their meaning, but that is the basis of being a Christian, that is the foundation. There is more to a house than the foundation; but, after all, what is a house without a foundation?

### *There exists Gross Ignorance of Christian Truth Today*

The great trouble today is that so many people vainly imagine that they can have the house without

any foundation; they vainly imagine that they can have Christian experience without knowing the facts of Christianity and without believing its doctrines. The utter tragedy today is that we have in the churches—to say nothing of the world outside—a generation of people who are grossly ignorant of the facts and doctrines of Christianity. This is not ignorance about minor details only; it is a gross ignorance about the main things. The result is that real Christian experience is becoming more and more rare.

### *Examples of Present-day Ignorance*

We face today in the Church and in the community around the Church a prevalent and powerful anti-intellectual bias, coupled with gross ignorance of even the most elementary truths of the Christian faith. There are adults who have been communicant church members for years who cannot find a place in the Bible. Others cannot tell which lived first, Abraham or John the Baptist. Such people have not the slightest idea of even the general plan and structure of the Bible. They have only the vaguest ideas of what Christianity is all about.

Once in China a recently converted Chinese Christian asked me whether the Saul who persecuted David was the same individual as the Saul who was converted on the road to Damascus. His ignorance was understandable and excusable in view of the fact that he was a new convert to Christianity. But I venture the opinion that there are communicant church members who could not answer this question correctly if their life depended on it.

### *Two Forms of Religious Ignorance*

Religious ignorance exists today in two forms, which we may designate the plain and the sophisticated. Plain ignorance is the common garden variety, the kind exemplified by the Chinese convert mentioned above. This kind of ignorance is deplorable, but it can be remedied without great difficulty. We should expect it in new converts on foreign mission fields. But in the Church members of years standing such ignorance is a disgrace and a shame.

The other kind of ignorance we may designate as sophisticated ignorance. This kind is much more of a problem in churches at the present day. This is a self-conscious, deliberate type of ignorance. It is vastly more serious than the plain or wild type. Sophisticated ignorance is like a cultivated inbred hybrid—it is

deliberately intensified ignorance. The sophisticated ignorant person prefers to be ignorant. He not only lacks knowledge, he positively despises knowledge. He fancies knowledge to be worthless in the sphere of religion. He regards a professed ignorance as much better and worthier and more spiritual than what he deprecatingly calls “theology,” or, with added disdain, “theological hair-splitting.”

This phrase is a bogeyman of the sophisticated religious ignoramus. By “theological hair-splitting” he means any definite, exact truth or knowledge in the sphere of religion. This state of mind may rightly be described as people glorying in their shame. We face today a deep-seated contempt for knowledge in the sphere of religion. This present-day contempt for knowledge is wrong and is contrary to the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

### *Are Doctrinal Sermons “Too Deep”?*

A pastor said to me that people in some of the congregations where he had preached complained that his sermons were “too deep.” I told him not to worry about that—that the people who said that about his sermons would say the same thing about any truly Biblical preaching. It was not that this pastor was preaching on subtle theological problems or profound and baffling mysteries; not at all; it was simply that his preaching had a definite content of information. It contained facts and doctrines, not merely ideals and values; therefore those accustomed to thinking of Christianity in vague, general terms as a mere set of “spiritual values” objected to his preaching as “too deep.” Any preaching which required them to think would be rejected as “too deep.”

This contempt for knowledge, this objection to any solid doctrinal information as “too deep,” arises from a misunderstanding as to the essential nature of Christianity. Christianity is first of all a story of things that happened—it is a body of specific information; and if we have contempt for information, then we have contempt for real Biblical Christianity, and that means, ultimately, contempt for the God of Christianity.

### *The Tragedy of Religious Illiteracy*

There are church members who have not learned a single new item of truth in the last ten years. They are

intellectually at a standstill, intellectually frozen stiff. Their Christian knowledge is static—a very small quantity of what are called “essential truths.”

The tragedy of such lives is not merely their appalling ignorance of Christian truth, but the fact that they themselves are utterly unaware of this ignorance, and see no need whatever for acquiring any knowledge. They raised their hand or signed their name in some meeting years ago. They “joined the church,” answering a few easy questions at the time. They attend Sabbath school and church sporadically, perhaps once or twice a month. As the years pass, they learn nothing. When they come to die, they will go out into eternity not knowing one iota more about God and His truth than they did the day they “joined the church” years ago.

Such a state of affairs is tragic indeed. Yet this situation exists; it is not imaginary, as every pastor knows only too well. It is one of the reasons for the deadly weakness of the Church at the present day. *“Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider”* (Isa. 1:3).

### *Minimum Knowledge not enough*

The Christian aim is not for a minimum of knowledge, but the maximum. We should seek, not to go to heaven with as little knowledge as possible, but to gain as much knowledge as possible about God and His Word. We should know more at the end of every Sabbath than we did before. If we have not learned something new from God’s Word, we have made no real progress in knowledge. We ministers and church leaders should be like the scribe described by Jesus, who brings out of the treasure house of God’s Word *“things new and old.”*—*“O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.”*—*“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.”*

### *Intolerance of Truth Today*

There exists today an indifference to truth, an intolerance of truth, even an antipathy to truth, in large sections of the Protestant Church. And all churches have been affected by this tendency to some extent. None can claim absolute immunity to this disease. There is a prevalent, subconscious assumption in people’s minds—an assumption that truth is not of the essence of Christianity, and therefore need not be learned. There is a real intolerance of doctrine, coupled

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<sup>1</sup> A brief reference to the period between the two World Wars has been omitted here because it is no longer relevant.

with a demand that sermons be made wholly “inspirational” or “evangelistic,” or that they deal exclusively with what is called “applied Christianity.”

People who cannot give a clear statement of what Christianity is, would like their pastors to preach on “Christianity and Psychology” or “Christianity and the Labor Problem” or similar subjects. What this boils down to is, that they want the fruit but they have no patience with the tree that produces the fruit. This notion of “inspiration” and “evangelism” without a foundation of sound Biblical doctrine underneath is a disintegrating force, and if it gains the victory in any church, that church will cease to be a truly Christian Church and will remain a mere empty shell, a mere monument to the glories of the past.

### *Something is Seriously Wrong*

Lack of conviction of the importance of truth, or doctrine, is also revealed by the free and easy way in which people leave one denomination to join another. The churches joined may vary from slight unsoundness to radical modernism. Hardly ever is the factor of orthodoxy considered; the real factors contributing to the decision are rather convenience, popularity, and the personality of the pastor of the church joined.

In many families the entire younger generation on reaching the age of 21 years, or soon after, will forsake the pure and faithful church in which they were brought up, and join some other more popular, less demanding church, leaving only their aged parents to continue alone and forlorn in the old church. And this happens even in the families of deacons, elders and ministers. Something is seriously wrong.

### *People Inhibited from Learning Facts*

All of this is part of the picture of present-day intellectual decadence in religion. By and large, people are unable to give an ordered and intelligent account of their faith, and they consider it unnecessary to do so. This anti-intellectual bias results in a serious inhibition on the part of the very people who need religious knowledge and indoctrination the most. By their foolish and childish prejudice they are inhibited from ever acquiring the knowledge they lack. Like a child who is so sure that whole-wheat bread tastes bad that he will not even

eat one slice to find out what it really tastes like, the person who is prejudiced against doctrine will not even listen to one sample of it with an open mind that he might find out whether it is really as unpalatable and indigestible as he assumes. This person is the victim of his own prejudice. He is inhibited from acquiring the very thing he requires for a healthy religious life and growth.

### *The Roadblock Must be Removed*

It is a commonplace among ministers and church leaders today that indoctrination is needed. Resolutions of synods and general assemblies call for indoctrination. But what people fail to realize is that there is a tremendous roadblock in the way of indoctrination. You cannot indoctrinate people who have buried in their mind an assumption that doctrine does not matter. The minister who would indoctrinate his people must first cope with the roadblock. There is a great stone on the door of the minds of many of his people. That stone must be rolled away first of all. Otherwise when the minister starts to instruct the people in Christian truth, their minds will click shut. An impenetrable curtain drops into place. After that all they hear is words. The words do not register.

No doubt many ministers have had the experience I have had, of having some person ask an intelligent question on some point of Christian truth, and the question asked concerns something which was preached on in a recent sermon. It may be that the question was thoroughly discussed and answered in the light of Scripture, and the person inquiring was there and heard the sermon. But somehow it just didn't register. He is unconscious of ever having heard the matter discussed before. For he had an inhibition against Christian doctrine which prevented the sermon from registering in his mind. First the inhibition against knowledge must be removed, then the lack of knowledge can be dealt with.

### *The roots of sophisticated ignorance*

The plain or common type of ignorance has no special roots. A person recently converted from paganism is ignorant of Christian truth because of his pagan background and his previous lack of opportunity to learn the truth. Many people in America, too, are ignorant of Christian truth, not because of a perverse disinclination to learn anything, but because of their

very limited opportunities. It may be that the only church or religious teaching that reaches them brings a non-doctrinal type of message; consequently they do not and cannot really learn anything.

### *Ignorance didn't just happen*

But the cultivated or sophisticated type of ignorance is something quite different. This kind does not come from mere lack of opportunity to learn. It has deeper, more sinister roots. This sophisticated type of ignorance did not just happen. It has been promoted, it has been “put over” on the Christian world. By deliberate, premeditated action, the contempt for doctrine has been instilled in people’s minds by religious “experts” and leaders.

Basically, the anti-intellectual bias of the present day, and the contempt for doctrine which exists in the Protestant Church, has resulted from the life and work of three men. These men all lived more than 100 years ago. They are Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, and Albrecht Ritschl. All Germans, they all discounted the intellect in religion, and emphasized the emotions or the will in place of the intellect. It is a strange paradox that these three men themselves were intellectual giants, yet they discounted the importance of the intellect in religion and emphasized something else instead.

Millions of people who have never heard the names of Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, are yet very much under the influence of these three men. Many people in the churches are unconsciously influenced by this dominant trend of the times.

### *Truth supplanted by “Experience”*

Immanuel Kant, of course, laid the groundwork for divorcing religious truth from “metaphysics,” that is, from the ultimate reality beyond what can be known by the senses. Schleiermacher and Ritschl followed Kant and put his philosophy to work in the realm of religion. Schleiermacher lived 1768 to 1834. He has been called “the father of modern theology.” The son of a Prussian army chaplain of the Reformed confession, he earnestly studied the writings of Kant. Schleiermacher’s chief theological work was *The Christian Faith According to the Basic Principles of the Evangelical Church*, first published in 1821, but later revised and republished. In this famous book

Schleiermacher held that the real essence of Christianity is not to be found in the creeds but in *religious feeling*—the feeling of dependence on God, communicated by Christ through the Church. This puts religious feeling in place of Biblical truth. Schleiermacher held that the content of preaching is to be obtained from the religious consciousness of the preacher. Though called “the father of modern theology,” Schleiermacher really destroyed theology and put in its place a study of the religious consciousness of man. The object of knowledge is no longer God as revealed in Scripture, but man as a religious being. Schleiermacher stressed method rather than content; he rejected truth and knowledge in favor of feeling; he substituted subjective religious experience for objective divine revelation in the Bible. It is not too much to say that Schleiermacher was the real founder of modernism.

### *Truth supplanted by “Spiritual Values”*

Albrecht Ritschl lived 1822 to 1889. He was the son of an Evangelical pastor in Berlin, Germany. Ritschl aimed to free religion from what he considered the tyranny of philosophy. He limited theological knowledge to what he considered the bounds of man’s need. Ritschl was not interested in God, but only in what God can do for man. It would not be unfair to say that Ritschl was concerned with the usefulness of God rather than the glory of God. He was interested in religion, not in theology; in experience, not in truth. He was concerned with “value” rather than with doctrine.

Ritschl rejected all “forensic” ideas of Christianity, that is, the idea of Christ’s atonement as a satisfaction for the broken law of God, and justification as imputing to the believer the perfect righteousness of Christ. Instead of these truths, he stressed chiefly the idea of the family or fatherhood of God. Ritschl stands for the false antithesis between theology and “metaphysics,” that is, between Christian doctrine and absolute truth. According to Ritschl, the important question is not who or what Christ is, but what is His “value” to us. If Schleiermacher may be called the founder of modernism, Ritschl is the real father of that perversion of Christianity which regards it as primarily a set of “spiritual values.”

Sophisticated ignorance in the Church is not to be explained simply by neglect. It is the logical and inevitable result of a definite philosophical and theo-

logical point of view which has been deliberately promoted by the “experts.”

### *The Effect of Revival Movements*

Another root of sophisticated ignorance is found in the revival movements in American Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The various revival movements, from the Great Awakening down to the present day, have been a mixture of good and evil, a mixture of the real work of the Holy Spirit with much that was merely human and even contrary to God’s will.

Jonathan Edwards gave a very careful appraisal of the revival movement of his day. He regarded it as a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Yet he came to see that there was another side to the matter. The Great Awakening had an aftermath. In 1741 the revival was at the peak. Just a few years later, as early as 1744-1748, in Edwards’ own congregation at Northampton, Massachusetts, the church was utterly dead, according to Edwards’ own admission. He states that during the four years 1744-1748 there was not a single conversion in the parish.

Charles G. Finney is often spoken of as a very great leader of American Christianity. The unsoundness of Finney on some of the doctrines of the Bible is seldom mentioned. But that multitudes responded to Finney’s preaching and that many were converted to Christ cannot be denied. However, again there was an aftermath. This is very interestingly described in the late Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield’s second volume on “*Perfectionism*,” pages 25-27. Warfield quotes from an account of Finney’s work which was published in 1835: “The writer entertains no doubt, that many true conversions have occurred under the system to which he is referring. But as with the ground over which the lightning has gone, scorching and withering every green thing, years may pass away before the arid waste of the church will be grown over by the living herbage.” Warfield adds: “Finney came back in 1855 to Rome (N.Y.), the scene of one of his greatest triumphs in 1826. Now, however, his preaching elicited no response. He has himself told us of it. . .”

### *The Mirage of “Inspiration”*

The great revivals were partly of God, certainly, but there was an admixture of evil, too. They were

not an unmixed blessing. For from the history of American revivalism there has come down to our day the false antithesis between revival and sound doctrine.

We see this reflected today in those who would stress only evangelism as the remedy for the church’s troubles, and who cannot see that for a real and effective evangelism there must be a much greater emphasis on truth, on knowledge, on doctrine.

We see it, too, in the idolatrous worship of what is wrongly called “inspiration,” which really means, all too often, merely a powerful stimulation of the religious emotions, without an accompanying knowledge and conviction of truth. Revivalism that stresses the emotions and the will at the expense of the intellect leads to sophisticated ignorance in the churches in the end. It has been proved so time and again.

### *How Can we Cope with the Roadblock of Ignorance?*

It is easier to diagnose this disease than to prescribe an effective remedy. Yet there must be a remedy, though it may be a slow and painful one.

First of all, pastors and religious teachers must have a strong and clear conviction of the absolute importance and relevance of Christian doctrine. Doctrine is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. It is to Christianity what bones are to the human body. It is not relatively important; it is absolutely important. It is of the essence of Christianity. Without it there can be no real Christianity. Unless the leadership is absolutely clear and convinced on this proposition there can be no real progress.

### *Preach What People Really Need*

In the second place, ministers should absolutely refuse to compromise with or cater to the demand for a non-doctrinal type of message. It is a temptation to compromise with this demand. Ministers may be powerfully tempted to cater to the desire for a non-doctrinal message. They should count the cost and say No!

We are the Lord’s servants; our commission is from Him, not from our congregations. We are to be

true to Scripture at any cost. This means more than avoiding denials of Biblical truth. It means setting ourselves a long-range program of constructively preaching the contents of the Bible in their true meaning and relationships.

*Sinful Lust for "Inspiration"*

The lust for "devotion" without information is sinful. It is one of the great sins of the Church of our day. A large part of the religious press caters to it, as do the pulpits of many popular denominations. But it is sinful. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind."

We should absolutely refuse to bend on this issue. If we lose our job we are no worse off than the true prophets of old. We should have the courage to stand up, plainly and pointedly, for the real nature of the Christian message, in spite of the fact that the skimmed milk diluted with limewater which appears in some popular denominational religious publications may appeal strongly to some of our people.

*Try Hard to Make Doctrine Interesting*

In the third place, doctrine should be made as interesting as possible. The notion that the truth is dull and dry is unfounded. It will of course always be dull to the unconverted. To the Greek it will be foolishness and to the Jew a stumblingblock. But it need not bore the spiritually awakened. It takes work to make doctrinal sermons interesting, but it can be done. We cannot please everyone in a congregation—even our Lord did not accomplish that when He was on earth in the flesh—but we can preach so as to please God, and accomplish His real purpose in our preaching. That, after all, is what we are in the ministry for.

Preaching doctrine does not mean preaching only formally doctrinal sermons. The minister who has Christian doctrine in his mind and heart can bring it out in biographical, historical, expository and other types of sermons. None of these, if truly Biblical, can be divorced from the doctrinal content of the Bible.

Also, doctrine should be served up in very moderate doses at first. People's capacity to digest it has become so weakened during the past generation or two that heavy doses will be likely to cause acute indigestion. "Easy does it." Line upon line, precept

upon precept, here a little and there a little—but it must be the genuine article, not the popular counterfeit that consists only of "ideals" and "values."

*The Fruits of Doctrinal Preaching*

Ministers who preach the doctrinal system of the Bible will have the satisfaction, from time to time, of seeing another member of their congregation gaining doctrinal consciousness, and suddenly coming to a clear realization of what Christianity is really about. That makes one more member who will never again scoff at doctrinal preaching as "too deep" or "theological hair-splitting." That makes one more member who will be a real asset to the Church and not a mere dead weight or liability religiously. And it constitutes one more proof to the minister that his labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I believe, too, that we should do all we can to awaken in the membership of the Church an appetite for good Christian literature. Lend good books, recommend good books, quote from good books. Not all books are equally suited to all Christians. Books have to be matched to people's progress and capacity. But real Christian literature can play a great part in making people awake and alert to the truth of God's Word.

Johannes G. Vos was a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N. America. He served as a missionary in Manchuria from 1931 until 1941, and later taught Bible at Geneva College for many years. This material first appeared in a periodical created and edited by Rev. Vos called *Blue Banner Faith and Life*. The material which originally appeared in that periodical is now the property of the Synod of the RPCNA, and this excerpt is reprinted with their kind permission. It will be continued in the next issue.



## A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR DEACONS

by

William Shishko

Pastor of

The Franklin Square, NY Orthodox Presbyterian Church,

### INTRODUCTION:

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

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

The second half of the material deals with the deacon and his work, beginning with the character of the deacon

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

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

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

William Shishko, pastor  
Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
Franklin Square, NY

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### *DEACON TRAINING PROGRAM (Program Prospectus)*

PURPOSES: The purposes of this series of classes are:

1. To give an overview of the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture and containing principles for the general work of the diaconate;
2. To provide an introduction to the qualifications necessary for those who serve as deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
3. To present an outline of the responsibilities of those serving as deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Franklin Square.

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

Westminster Confession of Faith, (Free Presbyterian Publications Edition)  
Berkhof, Lous. *Summary of Chirstian Docrine*(Eerdmans).



## A Training Course for Deacons

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Berghoef, Gerard & Lester DeKoster. *The Deacon's Handbook*. (Christian's Library Press)  
Coppes, Leonard J. *Who Will Lead Us?* (Pilgrim Publishing Company)  
MacNair, Donald J. *The Living Church* (GCP)  
Kuiper, R. B. *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Banner of Truth)  
Deacon's Manual & Policy Manual (OPC, Franklin Square)

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

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

### **CLASS OUTLINE:**

#### **WEEKS 1 – 3: AN OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

*"Deacons must...hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience."* (1 Tim. 3:8,9)

Week 1: God & Man

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

Week 2: Christ & His Work

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

Week 3: The Church & Last Things

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

#### **WEEKS 4 – 6: THE DEACON AND HIS WORK**

*"Let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless"* (1 Tim. 3:10)

Week 4: The Deacon as a Man

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

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

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

Week 5: The Deacon as an Officer: General Considerations

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

Week 6: The Deacon as an Officer: Specific Applications

Required Reading: Berghoef & DeKoster, pp 135 - 181 - Coppes, pp 139 - 154

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

OPC, Franklin Square Deacon's Manual & Policy Manual

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

- A. Deacons must possess a basic understanding of the fullness of the Christian faith as it focuses on Christ Himself. i.e., "the *mystery* of the faith."
  1. Office in the Church represents Christ in His offices.
  2. The office is meaningless apart from the faith. The faith guides what is done through the office. The office presents the faith, e.g., Stephen, Philip.
- B. This understanding must have become a part of the man, usually through time and experience coupled with regular feeding of the mind, i.e., "*holding* the mystery of the faith."
- C. It must be an understanding which inhabits a man who is truly *God's* man, i.e., "in a *pure conscience*." - Cf. 1 Peter 3:16-21.

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

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

## A Training Course for Deacons

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1. Some areas: *How* is mercy to be shown? To whom? To what extent? What are the biblical principles that bear on issues like a church budget, salaries, the church building, areas of diaconal involvement, etc.
  2. Necessitates: a. Private study, thought, and prayer. b. Diaconal consultation and intercession. c. Consultation with the session.
- B. (WCF II) There must be a wise, sensitive, and increasingly obvious manifestation of various attributes of God in the work of the diaconate.
1. Redemption: Word & deed. Officers officially represent the words & deeds of the Redeemer. Deacons especially represent His deeds, e.g., Mk. 10:45, "I came not to be deaconed to, but to deacon."
  2. Those diaconal deeds represent God! E.g., God-man = Servant. Deacons are servants. God is father to the fatherless & provider/protector of widows. Deacons do this, too, in the name of Christ.
  3. Other attributes: Holy sovereignty, with all advancing the Kingdom of God; Mercy, cf. Jn. 12:6, Gal. 2:10. Justice, 2 Thess. 3:10, etc. All have reflections in diaconal work.
- C. (WCF III, V) There must be a wise, healthy, consideration of implications of both divine sovereignty and human agency in many of the more difficult matters deacons will face, cf. III:1, V:1,5.  
E.g., Issues re. famine relief in certain regimes, cf. Rev. 6:5f. See James 5:14f, 1 Cor. 11:30.  
NOTE: Always seek counsel from Elders. Need of ongoing communication with them.
- D. (WCF VI) There must be an ever-present consciousness of the curse, sin, its multiple effects, and how best to deal with these.  
I.e., Specific sin & the blanket effects of sin, e.g., poverty, needs of elderly & widows, cf. 1 Tim. 5:8-16.
- E. (WCF VII) There must be an unashamed differentiation in our dealings with those who are inside or outside of the covenant of grace  
Cf. Deut. 15:1-3, 7-11. Gal. 6:10. See Coppes, *Who Will Lead Us?* pp 138-149.
1. To Believers: Diaconal ministry is a demonstration of God's promised mercy to the people of God, e.g., Jesus feeding the multitudes.
  2. To Unbelievers: God's goodness shown to them through the diaconate is designed to lead them to repentance, cf. Rom. 2:4. See Coppes, *Ibid.* p. 141.
- F. (WCF VI) There must be a constant recognition that every "temporality" given to the diaconate is a trust from God.  
Cf. Deut. 8:10, 18, e.g., Finances, building, church possessions, other acquired proper-ties, savings, etc.
- G. (WCF VIII) Deacons must have an increasing appreciation of the person, work, and offices of Christ as the one mediator between man and God, cf. Matt. 16:13-18 (See J. Owen, Vol. 1, "The Divine Glory of Christ", 1 Tim. 3:15f, cf. vs. 9).
1. Person: Truly God. Truly man. (VIII:2)
  2. Work: Humiliation. Exaltation (VIII:3)
  3. Offices: Prophet. Priest. King.
- Select Bibliography:  
William Blaikie: *The Public Ministry of Christ; The Inner Life of Christ*  
John Flavel, Vol. 1. *The Fountain of Life*  
Henry Martyn: *The Shadow of Calvary*  
John Murray: *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*  
Octavius Winslow: *The Glory of the Redeemer*
- Note: Ultimately and really, deacons represent and serve Jesus Christ. This is the nature of church office. Cf. John Sietsma, *The Idea of Office*, p. 57.
- H. (WCF X – XV) Deacons must cultivate a growing understanding of the way of salvation, and a growing facility in presenting it to others. E.g., Acts 7 (Stephen); 8:26-35 (Philip); 1 Timothy 3:13
1. "Ordo Salutis" (X– XIII), cf. J. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*  
NOTE: Special care in understanding justification. Sensitivity to adoption, cf. WCF XII.
  2. Gospel Call: Saving faith (XIV) & Repentance (XV)  
NOTE: Deacons will have opportunity to bring the Gospel to others in course of their work.
- I. (WCF XVI) Deacons must be particularly aware of their responsibility to stir up others to good works. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10, Heb. 10:24, "paroxusmon".
1. Nature of Office: Heightened responsibility to do what applies to every believer.

## A Training Course for Deacons

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2. Particular role of diaconal office: Love & good works.
  3. Practical suggestions: a. Delegation. 2. Motivation (vs. mere sympathy). 3. Information.  
Cf. Berghoef & DeKoster, *Deacons Handbook*, pp 83-88, 143-146. 4. Communication.
- J. (WCF XVIII) Deacons must give attention to the often deep and complex questions related to the issue of assurance of salvation.
1. Why?
    - a. Reality of Christian experience, esp. in churches that emphasize the necessity of vital/experimental religion, e.g., 1 Peter 1:5-15.
    - b. Reality of diaconal ministry. Often (usually?!) on unexpected occasions.
  2. How?
    - a. Give due personal attention to the issue of assurance of faith and salvation.
    - b. Give special attention to the benefits of assurance, cf. XVIII:3
    - c. Minister to others those texts and insights that have been most helpful to you, cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7.  
Select Bibliography:  
William Guthrie, *The Christian's Great Interest*  
Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*  
Thomas Hooker, *The Poor, Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ*
- K. (WCF XIX:2,5,6) Deacons have an official responsibility to give special attention to the details of the Old Testament law and to regularly make legitimate application of these to their diaconal labors. Cf. Relation to proposition A above.
1. Examples: Tithe (Deut. 14:22-29, etc.); Indebtedness (Deut. 15:1-6); Generosity to the poor (Deut. 15:7-11, etc.) Inheritance questions (Deut. 21:15-17); Usury (Deut. 23:19f.)  
Cf. James 1:27, Deut. 14:29. 1 Cor. 9:9-11.
  2. The "Theonomy" Question, cf. G. Bahnsen, R. Rushdoony, etc.  
NOTE: Importance of considering these questions jointly with the Elders.
- L. (WCF XXI:8) Deacons should be especially sensitive to ways in which works of mercy can be done on the Sabbath.
1. Diaconal Works & the Sabbath, e.g., Mk. 2:23-28, 3:1-5, etc. Official leadership here, as with Christ.
  2. Practical Suggestions: Visits and tapes to shut-ins, nursing home ministries, food & hospitality to visitors, needy, etc. This should be led by the deacons.  
NOTE: This is one of the most neglected aspects of Sabbath keeping in the Reformed community.
- M. (WCF XXV:3) No view of the diaconate and its work may ever be permitted to blur the ministry of the word as the distinct and primary work of the church, cf. Acts 6:2-4.
1. Warning: Errors of "equal primacy of preaching & deaconing"; deacons as social workers representing the Church, etc.  
NOTE: Be careful to preserve the distinction between what deacons do as a diaconate and what Church members do individually and in concert with others, e.g., crisis pregnancy centers, Christian schools, Christian labor unions, etc.
  2. Encouragement: Effective diaconal work encouraging the primacy of ministry of the Word *will* result in increased biblical diaconal work to an expanded church, cf. Acts 6:7
- N. (WCF XXV:2) Deacons must be aware of the true population of the church they are called out to serve, and their correct responsibility to each particular member or family.
1. Diaconal responsibility focuses on the Church, cf. Acts 6:1, Gal. 6:10.
  2. Categories of "Church" to which deacons are responsible: Poor, widows, orphans, elders. Also, church needs beyond the local level, e.g., presbytery, denominationally, internationally through church connections, etc.  
NOTE: Always keep proper spheres of responsibility in mind, e.g., extended families, local churches, etc.
- O. (WCF XXVI, esp. sections 1,2) The application of our confessional doctrine of "The Communion of the Saints" should be a specific study and burden of the diaconate.
1. Language of Obligation, cf. 1Thess. 5:14, 1 Jn. 3:16-18, 2 Cor. 8 & 9, etc.
  2. Extent of concern, cf. XXVI:2b, 2 Cor. 8 & 9.

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3. Elements necessary for this: a. Conviction of responsibility. b. Determination to work at it. c. Prayerful wisdom and creativity. d. Patience!
- P. (WCF XXXII, XXXIII) Deacons ought to have clear, experimentally cultivated views of man's eternal state and of the judgment to come.
  1. Why? Ministry to comfort saints and to warn sinners is inevitable for deacons. Evangelistic work of deacons.
  2. How? Meditation, cf. 2 Cor. 5:11. Make use of items like S. Rutherford's Letters, R. Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, sermons by J. Edwards, etc.

### III. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR A DEACON:

- A. Macroscopic View, Acts 6:3
  1. "Good reputation" ("martus"): Legal import, i.e., "credible witness." Trustworthy.
  2. "Full of the Holy Spirit": Godly; Representing the One filled with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, cf. Jn. 3:34. One clothed with the character of Christ.
  3. "(Full of) wisdom": Ability to APPLY truth and godly insight in day to day life.
- B. Microscopic View, 1 Tim. 3:8-13

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

  1. "Reverent" ("semnous"): Umbrella characteristic. Honorable, dignified, courteous. Commanding respect and trust.
  2. "Not double-tongued: ("di-logous") e.g., "Forked tongue." Making commitments he is unwilling or unable to keep. One who is trustworthy and dependable. "His yes is yes!"
  3. "Not given to much wine", e.g., Mediterranean customs of hospitality included giving wine to guests. Must be manifestly self-controlled. Ill discipline in one area is indicator of ill discipline in other areas.
  4. "Not greedy for money." Not obsessed with material gain. Weakness in this area could create distrust in those who know the deacon handles funds. It can also bring an analogous attitude toward regarding temporalities in the church, i.e., , Empire building or stinginess vs. liberality.

NOTE: Constant need to balance sobriety with a benevolent spirit.
  5. "Holding the mystery of the faith, cf. I & II above, with a pure conscience", cf. 4:2, 1 Peter 3:13-17.

I.e., , One who does what is right regardless of the cost. One who does not give in to wrongdoing, knowing the cost. (Emphasize the importance of a pure conscience!)
  6. "Tested": Passed the test, cf. Rom. 12:1,2. cf. Directive #3, C (below)

NOTE: The "provenness" comes first, not afterward!
  7. "Women/wives": Not "deaconesses". Probably: Wife of deacons, cf. vss. 2, 12. Or: Women who assist deacons, i.e., unordained deaconesses.
    - a. "Reverent": Commanding respect, cf. #1 above.
    - b. "Not slanderers", i.e., , Not "devils" (!), i.e., , Malicious gossips, cf. Titus 2:3.
    - c. "Temperate": Sober. Moderate. Careful. Both feet firmly planted on the ground!
    - d. "Faithful in all things": Truly godly person. Woman who represents the faithfulness of Christ, the Faithful One.
  8. Domestic Qualifications:
    - a. "One wife husband": Not a playboy. No doubt about his faithfulness to his wife (if he is married). Remember that deacons have a special responsibility to minister to widows, including young widows. Great danger of temptation here.
    - b. "Ruling children will" ("proistemi"): 1) To put one's self before; lead. 2) Care for: Caring leadership of children. The deacon manages his house with this concern in view.
    - c. "Manages his own household well.": Including his wife! All is in order, e.g., bills are paid,
    - b. Biblical priorities, godly home management.

NOTE: This is what deacons must provide for the church, "the household of God."
- C. Basic Directives for Cultivating These Qualifications:

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1. Diligence and regularity in exercises which develop personal piety.
2. Serious attention to the breadth of duties connected with home management.  
NOTE: Home is nursery of the church. Officers are outstanding nurserymen.
3. Natural demonstration of these qualifications in the context of corporate church life.  
NOTE: You do not make yourself a deacon. Neither does the Church. The Church must recognize the Deacon that Christ is making you.

### IV. THE DEACON AS AN OFFICER: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The Biblical Backdrop: Acts 6:1-7 (I am presupposing that this is the origin of the diaconal office.)  
i.e., , this is "stage setting" for the "furniture (tables!) of present diaconal service.
1. The diaconate grew up out of the soil of practical necessity in the life of the early Christian church.  
Cf. vs. 1a. The Church was growing! cf. Situation in which OT eldership/judges began, Ex. 18.
  2. The terrain was affected, frankly, by some of the most banal, aggravating effects of the curse, vs. 1b.  
I.e., , This is the real world of church life & diaconal work!
  3. The diaconate originated for the purpose of relieving the other group of officers of certain "delegatable" official responsibilities so that what is primary in the church might be maintained, vs. 2.4. cf. "It is not pleasing/desirable". Not: "It is wrong."  
NOTE: Never forget the primacy of the ministered Word of God in the Church, cf. Jn. 17:17, Rom. 3:2, 1 Tim. 5:17, 1 Tim. 3:15, 4:6, 11, 13-16, 2 Tim. 1:13f., 2:15, 3:14-17, 4:1-5, etc.
  4. The diaconate was established as an understood, accepted, and well-received outgrowth of orderly congregational life, vs. 3-5.
  5. Deacons possessed/possess official authority for service in the Kingdom of God, vs. 3b, 6b  
I.e., "appoint over this business" ("kathistemi": seat, authority over; to put in charge) - cf. Matt. 24:45,47; 25:21,23, Heb. 2:7, 8:3.
    - a. Not to be understood as OVER those primarily vested with authority, i.e., Elders/Bishops.  
I.e., This is acknowledged by responsibility of deacons to Session.
    - b. Neither to be understood as WITHOUT AUTHORITY to act officially within a given sphere or spheres of responsibility. vs. 3b.
  6. Normally the office carries with it divine blessing appropriate to the effects of conscientiously performed diaconal labor, vs. 7. i.e., Growth of word of God & multiplication of disciples. This came because the primacy of the ministry of the word of God was secured. The office of the deacon is a standing testimony to this.  
Summary:
    1. This does not detract from the general responsibility of every believer to serve. This type of general Christian service is effectively accomplished by making disciples by the Word of God.
    2. We are dealing with an *office*, i.e., one vested with the authority of Christ specifically to exhibit His servanthood in the Church.
    3. The diaconate is neither a "sub-pastoral function" nor a service that merely provides care for the needy. It is an *office* given charge of any temporality which would otherwise be managed by the Elders.  
Cf. J. H. Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 201: "*It must be perfectly obvious to every candid mind that the entire secular business of the Church was entrusted to the Deacons; that one specific duty is mentioned, in accordance with the general method of Scripture, as a specimen of a class, and that the reason of the appointment determines the extent of the duty involved*"  
- Leon Morris, BAKER'S DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY, "*The function of the deacons may well have been administrative and financial.*"
    4. The purpose of the diaconate: To preserve the primacy of the Word of God ministered in the Church, and (now) the Elder's work of prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- B. The "Tables" of Actual Contemporary Diaconal Work
1. The Table of the Genuinely Needy Among God's People, cf. Coppes, pp 139-154, 105-138.
    - a. Esp. widows & orphans, (cf. Js. 1:27. OT references, e.g., Ex. 22:22, Deut. 10:18), those

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- providentially impoverished (Gal. 2:9f., 2 Cor. 8,9, etc.), handicapped.
- b. Not to subsidize luxuries, options, etc.  
NOTE: This serves to exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven among Christ's people, i.e., showing a Father who provides our needs (*not* our wants!)
2. The Table of the Church as an Organization.  
I.e., "Church": Visible instrument through which the Word of God is spread. Something that, in its entirety, is to be "holy unto the Lord", cf. Zech. 14:20f, 1 Tim. 3:15.
    - a. Its physical facilities, cf. 1 Cor. 10:31, etc.
    - b. Its relation to State & Society, cf. Matt. 22:21, 2 Cor. 8:21.
    - c. Its budget, cf. Biblical principles of liberal frugality and faithful reasonableness.
    - d. Its public presentation, cf. 'Man *does* look on the outward appearance" (1 Sam. 16:7)
    - e. Its functioning during public meetings for the purpose of stated ministry. e.g., Greeting at door, ushering, preserving order, heating & cooling of building, emergencies, etc.  
NOTE: All must work for maximum furthering of Word of God.
  3. The Table of the Pastor(s).
    - a. Adequate compensation for Minister/Teaching Elder, and consideration of his legitimate ministerial needs. NOTE: This is best done by asking him, and encouraging openness.
    - b. Other "temporalities" delegated to them as necessary, e.g issues regarding provisions for a minister's housing, provision for his "retirement" (medical insurance, etc.)  
NOTE: This mandates close interaction with Elders as fellow officers.
  4. The Table of the Lord, i.e., "The Lord's Table."  
I.e., This serves to epitomize the official relation of the deacons to the stated ministry of the Word. (This is also true with deacons taking up the offering).
    - Summary: The work of "official service". Representing the "other side" of the Saviour's work (Matt. 20:28)
    - Cf. J. Owen, WORKS, Vol XVI, p. 147: "*Whereas the reason of the institution of this office was, in general, to free the pastors of the churches who labour in the word and doctrine from avocations by outward things, such as wherein the church is concerned, it belongs unto the deacons not only to take care of and provide for the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind; such as are providing for the place of the church-assemblies, of the elements for the sacraments, of collecting, keeping, and disposing of the stock of the church for the maintenance of its officers and incidences, especially in the time of trouble or persecution. Hereon are they obliged to attend the elders on all occasions, to perform the duty of the church towards them, and receive directions from them. This was the constant practice of the church in the primitive times, until the avarice and ambition of the superior clergy enclosed all alms and donations unto themselves.*"

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

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

- A. Daily:
  1. Give habitual attentiveness to your personal communion with God and growth in grace, e.g., Bible reading, devotional reading, prayer. You must not leave your first love, cf. Rev. 2:4.  
NOTE: This is necessary to keep you pliable in the hand of your Master.
  2. Cultivate a "diaconal mindedness" before God and your fellow man.
    - a. *Before God:* Especially prayer for the church and its members over whom you have specific responsibilities. This brings a reciprocal effect: It encourages your overall diaconal ministry with and to them.
    - b. *Before Man:* Sensitivity to human situations. Holy meditation concerning how to deal with them.  
NOTE: Seek, under Christ, to be a master of the "How", e.g., Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:25-37.  
- Summary: Your "daily distribution", cf. Acts 6:1, must be as constantly in mind as is the ministry of the Word. Carry it about as a burden of your heart.
- B. Weekly: Your involvement in regular congregational life.

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1. Lord's Day meetings: The most heightened and obvious manifestation of diaconal ministry, because this time is the most heightened and obvious manifestation of the ministry of the Word.
    - a. *Before Worship*: Lighting, heating, cooling, sound system, setting up for Lord's Supper and/or baptism, general appearance of the building, ushering, urging silence before worship, etc.
    - b. *During Worship*: Offering, being prepared for emergencies, knowing how to deal with any disruptions that may come, e.g., crying babies.. Nursery. Heating & cooling, etc.
    - c. *Following Worship*: Counting offering and being sure it gets to Treasurer, lighting off, general tidiness, locking doors, etc.

NOTE: Never forget role and authority of the deacon, particularly at this time.
  2. The Prayer Meeting:
    - a. Be sensitive to expressions of personal and congregational concerns bearing on the work of the deacons, e.g., Illnesses, financial difficulties, etc.
    - b. Be sensitive to expressions of possible diaconal matters beyond the local level, e.g., Ministers in distress, etc.
  3. Periodic Evening Labors, e.g., Committee meetings, visits to needy, hospital visits, work at building.
  4. Other Worthwhile Projects.
    - a. Be careful not to over-extend yourself. Keep priorities of service: Family, Church, Other projects.
    - b. Give continual consideration of your gifts and present needs. Seek your greatest usefulness, cf. Matt. 25:14-30. E.g., Service on Presbytery & GA level.
- C. Monthly:
1. Attend the Board of Deacon's meeting, and come prepared for what is to be done.
    - a. Importance of minutes properly taken and recorded.
    - b. Importance of a docket/agenda, possibly presented in advance on paper. Keep this standard, but functional, cf. Robert's Rules of Order re. Agendas for business meetings.
    - c. Importance of motions, thorough discussion, consensus/vote, carrying through on decisions made.
    - d. Wisdom of taking your time! cf. Prov. 19:2, "It is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, and he sins who hastens with his feet."
  2. Never be reluctant to consult with the Session: Free, regular communications with Elders, cf. Like communication between husband and wife regarding their children! cf. FG,OPC, XI:5. OPC Franklin Square Deacon's Manual, pp 7,8.
  3. Do not permit material concerns to gradually eliminate personal concerns.
    - a. Purpose of diaconal work: Relieve elders. Focus is on *personal* provisions.
    - b. Suggestions: Ask elders: "How can we be of help?" Give them time to consider and answer. Be sensitive to needs beyond the local level, cf. 2 Cor. 8,9, esp. 8:14.
  4. Allow no tolerance for questionable, dishonest, or sloppy financial and legal practices. e.g., financial reports, payment of bills, complying with codes, etc. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:21.
  5. Remember: You have an increasingly committed congregation with which to work.
    - a. Make mental and/or written notes of needs, gifts, people. Link them up! Do assessments. Develop and use committees as necessary, e.g., committee to work particularly with the elderly.
    - b. Never forget: "Church" is people ....not programs!
  6. An increasingly prominent project: Information to encourage liberality by the congregation. E.g., Report on Lord's Supper Sundays, Bulletin announcements/inserts, prayer meeting, newsletter, etc. I.e., Work to see the spirit of 2 Cor. 8,9 increasingly present in the congregation.
- A. Yearly:
1. Review Form of Government, church By-Laws, Deacon's Manual, Training Class notes, other relevant materials. i.e., A stirred pool cannot grow stagnant and usually will not get polluted!

NOTE: Share what you read & learn. Practice diaconal cross-pollination.
  2. Importance of self-assessment, goal-setting, and planning.
    - a. *Self-assessment*: Regarding your past performance individually as a deacon and corporately as a board.
    - b. *Goal-setting*: 1 yr. 3 yr. 5 yr. 10 yr. esp. re. temporal concerns, e.g., building improvements. e.g., Work days, capitol improvements, major renovations, manse improvements, etc. Be sure to include planning, i.e., "How do we get there from here?" Use committees where that is necessary,

- appropriate, and helpful.
3. Be wisely frank with congregational reports.
  4. Elect officers, e.g., President, Secretary, Treasurer. Be clear as to their responsibilities (These should be presented in church by laws.)

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SOME PERSONAL QUESTIONS  
FOR THOSE MEN CONSIDERING THE OFFICE OF DEACON

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

1. Do I regard myself as have a good testimony as a Christian, a Christian husband, a Christian father, a Christian church member, a Christian worker, and a Christian neighbor?
2. Do I manifest the marks of godliness that are an evidence of being "full of the Holy Spirit"? Is "reverence" a primary mark of my character?
3. Do I possess the sanctified "horse sense" to apply my Christian faith to day-by-day matters of problem solving, stewardship, and interpersonal relations?
4. When I make a promise, do I keep it? Am I able to keep personal matters in confidence? Is my wife able to do the same?
5. Am I given to excess in any area of life? E.g., alcohol, spending, television or computer use, etc?
6. Am I a "lover of money", or do I use my earthly possessions as a steward so that I might honor God and serve others generously?
7. Do I have a pure conscience before God?
8. When I am given a task, do I fulfill the work to the best of my ability? Do I enjoy serving others? Am I willing to take on necessary tasks that I even regard as unpleasant?
9. Does my wife have a good Christian testimony, i.e., Is my wife known for her reverence, careful speech, moderation, and faithfulness in all things?
10. Am I marked by absolute loyalty to my wife, so that I can honestly say I am a "one wife husband"? Am I a *good* husband to my wife?
11. Do I rule my children and my house well? Do I take the necessary time and make the necessary decisions and actions to do so?
12. Am I willing to take and make the necessary time to serve conscientiously as a deacon?

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**Periodicals**