


First RP Church of Beaver Falls Third Annual Christian Life Conference

*Learning to Do Good Deeds
to Meet Pressing Needs*



Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath
Bartholomeus Breenbergh
c. 1630

Learning to Do Good Deeds to Meet Pressing Needs

Session 1 - Friday Evening

Hearing the Call as We Worship to Love Mercy

Session 2 - Saturday Morning

Emphasizing the Vital Role of Deacons in Mercy

Session 3 - Saturday Morning

Developing a Congregational Approach to Mercy

Session 4 - Lord's Day Evening

Bringing Forth the Sabbath Fruits of Mercy

Learning to Do Good Deeds to Meet Pressing Needs

Titus 3:14

*Our people must also learn
to engage in good deeds
to meet pressing needs,
so that they will not be unfruitful.*



Learning to Do Good Deeds to Meet Pressing Needs

*Developing a Congregational
Approach to Mercy*



Deacons and the Congregation

Ideas for Developing
Diaconate Organization
&
Congregational Cooperation

Diaconate Class



Class on the Diaconate

September 20th

The Deacon & the Office

Lecture on Office & Qualifications

Barry York

Process of Election & Ordination

Barry York

Deacons' Relationship to Session

Jason Camery

October 4th

The Deacon & Mercy

Lecture on Mercy Ministry

Barry York

Sycamore's Mercy Policies

Jason Camery

Relationship with Rescue Mission

Robert Jones & Ron Visser

October 18th

The Deacon & the Church

The RPCNA Vows

Barry York

Involving Others in Service

Jason Camery

Caring for the Building

Robert Jones

Finances of the Church

Scott Hunt

Sycamore Reformed Presbyterian Church *Policy Statements for Deacons*

The role of deacons in Christ's church is set forth in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3, and is described in the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, "Directory for Church Government," Section III. Because the relationship between the Session and the Deacons is crucial to the growth of a healthy church and its ministry, the following sets forth the guiding principles we will seek to operate by at Sycamore RP Church.

Organization

The "Directory for Church Government" states the following:

The diaconate is a spiritual office responsible for the ministry of mercy and stewardship of the congregation. It is neither a ruling nor a teaching office. Its exercise, like the whole church, is under the oversight of the session and its function is administrative.

To fulfill this office the Deacons will be organized in the following manner:

- The Deacons are under the authority of the Session. The Deacons have specific responsibilities assigned to them by the Session in the three primary areas of Ministry of Mercy, Stewardship of Physical Property, and Treasury of Congregation (see below).
- Those ordained and installed as Deacons in Sycamore RP Church will retain their office until relieved of their responsibility by action of the Session.
- The Deacons will choose a Chairman to be responsible for calling their meetings, organizing their work, and communicating to the Session. The Deacons will also choose a secretary.
- The Deacons will meet on the first month of a new quarter (January, April, July, October) with the Session for prayer and devotions, to give an update on their work, to seek ways to serve, and to review the previous quarter's finances. The Deacons will meet as regularly as they deem necessary and can invite member(s) of Session when needed. Special meetings will be called to handle significant issues.

Areas of Responsibility

1) *Ministry of Mercy*

- The Deacons will establish procedures for assisting persons in need, first for members and adherents of our congregation and then for people in the community. They will seek to involve other members of the church in the use of their gifts.
- The Deacons will seek to cooperate with, receive counsel from, and provide counsel to other Biblical churches and agencies when deemed appropriate.
- The Deacons will consider how the physical property and budget can be best suited to meet the various needs of the congregation and community.

Diaconate Policies

2) *Stewardship of Physical Property*

- The Deacons will be responsible for the opening and closing of the building on the Lord's Day and other congregational functions. They will develop a checklist for making sure the building is appropriately secured and managed when empty.
- The Deacons will be responsible for the maintenance of the facility. They will organize work nights, develop a maintenance checklist, maintain the cleaning schedule, and be sure the domestic supplies are adequately stocked.
- The Deacons will develop in cooperation with the Session a long-term list of suggested projects to further redeem the building.

3) *Treasury Work of Congregation*

- The Deacons will be responsible for the collection, accounting and deposit of regular tithes and offerings as well as special ones (Compassion, mission work, etc.).
- The Treasurer of the congregation will be overseen by the Deacons and be one of their number whenever providentially possible. He will have responsibility to keep track of income and expenditures, and will prepare and present quarterly and annual budget reports.
- The annual budget of the congregation will be set by the Session who will seek the counsel of the Deacons and the approval of the congregation at its annual meeting.

Handling Mercy Requests

Sycamore Reformed Presbyterian Church Mercy Request Policy

When someone outside the church contacts us via phone or personally about helping them with shelter, food, clothing, bills or monetary needs, please follow the procedure outlined below.

1) Ask the following questions, being sure to write down the information.

- Name?
- Contact info?
- Particular need?
- Family structure?
- Job?
- Do you receive government assistance?
- Why has this need arisen?
- Have you asked any family members for help?
- Do you belong to or attend a church? If yes, why are they not helping you?
- Have you approached any government agencies, Rescue Mission or other churches for help already in this area? If so, why did they deny you?
- Why did you contact us?

To be honest, not only does this help us assess the need, but it will often reveal those who are merely panhandling and tends to chase away those wanting a quick buck (Do not be surprised if they hang-up or leave angrily). Also, if in this process the questions reveal obvious sin (i.e., "my live-in boyfriend used the money for drugs"), immediately ask them, "Have you ever considered that your need is the consequence of the spiritual problem of not obeying God?"

2) If they continue to seem responsive, then ask, "If we assist you, are you willing to receive information about God's word and the church?"

If they are not, we warn them that their hunger or need could be God getting their attention about their sin and they are ignoring His message. We then politely tell them we will not be able to help them if they will not listen to the Lord. Jesus fed the 5000 only **after** they had listened to Him for many hours.

3) If they do agree for spiritual instruction, tell them you must talk to the deacons to see how we can best address their need and that we will get back to them as soon as possible (try to make it that same day if possible). Make it clear that you are not authorized to give them money at any time.

4) Contact Ron Visser or Robert Jones at the Mission to have them checked through the database to see if they have received help or if these men know the individual or family (often they do). Then formulate with Ron or Robert the best plan for meeting the need and/or speaking to the person.

5) Usually a deacon will then contact them on behalf of the church and arrange for bringing the food, giving the ride, helping with a bill, etc. We always go with more than one person to meet the need and give them a church brochure, share a testimony, and invite them to church.

6) Always pray for the person(s) at our next gathering.

Handling Mercy Requests

Sycamore Reformed Presbyterian Church Mercy Request Questionnaire

When someone outside the church contacts us via phone or personally about helping them with shelter, food, clothing, bills or monetary needs, please follow the procedure as outlined in our *Mercy Request Policy* and ask the following questions, being sure to write down the information.

1) Name _____

2) Contact info _____

3) Particular need _____

4) Family structure _____

5) Job _____

6) Do you receive government assistance? _____

7) Why has this need arisen? _____

8) Have you asked any family members for help? _____

9) Do you belong to or attend a church? If yes, why are they not helping you?

10) Have you approached any government agencies, Rescue Mission or other churches for help already in this area? If so, why did they deny you?

11) Why did you contact us?

Office Use Only:

Date _____

Action taken _____

Working with Christian Agencies

**Remember They are an Arm of the Body,
not a Replacement for the Church**

***Work with the Agency;*
Do Not Just Send People to It**

**Example of a Partnership
*Men with a Mission***

Men with a Mission

Personal Mentoring

Scriptural Grounding

Vocational Training

Congregational Living

Transitional Planning

Further Ideas

Praying Regularly for the Deacons & Their Work

Highlighting Great Work Already Being Done

Assigning Specific Responsibility w/ Accounting

Having Ongoing Training & Coordination in Mercy

*Surveying and/or Visiting Folks with Elders
to Assess Gifts and Their Service in the Church*

Avoid the “God-Complex” (or “Extreme Takeover”)

Defined to be “a subtle and unconscious sense of superiority in which they believe that they have achieved their wealth through their own efforts and that they have been *anointed* to decide what is best for low-income people, whom they view as inferior to themselves.”

-Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, p. 65

We are not to be messiahs!
Recall Christ’s words in Luke 4:18,
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because He *anointed Me*
to preach the gospel to the poor.”

True Compassion

Read & Discuss Luke 10:25-37

As Jesus tells this story, who are the true villains in it? Read Leviticus 19:34 and Deuteronomy 14:27-29. Discuss why the neglect of the hurt man by the first two men was especially grievous.

Look again at verse 25. What was the man's original question? According to verse 29, what was he wanting to do? At first glance, how might Jesus' answer and his final command appear to be encouraging this direction? Yet how does further reflection on the story he tells show us this is not the case? Look up Exodus 22:21. How might this help in understanding this story?

In *Ministries of Mercy*, Tim Keller says, "The poor and needy are a test. Our response to them tests the genuineness of our _____." What do you think goes in the blank? Why?