

The Office of Deacon

Introduction

- A. There exists widespread confusion about the office of deacon in the local church.
- B. Nearly every church denomination has a different understanding of what a deacon is and what a deacon does.
 - 1. Most of our notions about the office of deacon come from the corporate world and culture, not Scripture.
 - 2. Within the New Testament, the office of deacon is a very simple position to describe

I. Key Words

- A. Deacon
 - 1. *διακόνος* (*diakonos* – 1 Timothy 3:8) – a servant
 - 2. *διάκονοι* – (*diakonoi* – 1 Timothy 3:12) – one who serves
- B. How the words are used in the New Testament
 - 1. Servant - one who serves at a meal – John 2:5, 9
 - 2. Servant – one who waits on tables – Acts 6:2
 - 3. The servant of one who is a master – Matthew 22:13
- C. First reference to deacons as a distinct office – Philippians 1:1

“Paul and Timothy, servants (δοῦλοι) of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers (ἐπισκόποις) and deacons (διακόνους) . . .”

- 1. By the time Paul wrote Philippians, the office of deacon was part of local church practice.
- 2. Paul’s instructions to Timothy about the oversight and management of a local church include a delineation of the qualifications for the office of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

II. Qualifications for the Office of Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

- A. Deacons are to be godly, mature men (vv. 8-9)
- B. Deacons are to be “tested,” i.e., men of proven wisdom and stability (v. 10)
- C. Deacons must have a godly wife (deaconess) (v. 11)
- D. Deacons must be the husband of one wife, with a well-managed household (v. 12)

III. What Does a Deacon Do?

- A. The New Testament office of deacon is a position of service
 - 1. Nowhere in the New Testament are deacons presented as “ruling;” their role is always presented as someone who serves others
 - 2. There is no entity in the New Testament called “the Board of Deacons”
 - a. The idea of deacons functioning as a board of directors is a cultural adaptation from the corporate world into the polity of the local church.
 - b. Based upon the New Testament teaching about this office, any authority delegated to a deacon comes from the elders/pastors/bishops
 - 3. Deacons do not exist to protect the assembly from wayward pastors nor do deacons serve as spokespersons or representatives from the body to the pastors (i.e., they are not like members of the House of Representatives)
 - a. It is not their role to be a “check and balance” on the pastors
 - b. It is not their role to hire/fire pastors
- B. Deacons assist the elders/pastors/bishops in ministering to the body
 - 1. Deacons do whatever the pastors assign to them
 - 2. Deacons are designated as servants, whose purpose is to allow pastors to focus time and energy on the principal responsibilities of their office – prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1, 2)

III. Specific Duties of Deacons at CBC

- A. *The Deacons shall assist the Pastors in the administration and spiritual welfare of the church, subject to the final authority of the members. They must also carry out their legal responsibilities required by the State of Michigan for non-profit organizations. (CBC Constitution)*
- B. Management of benevolent funds
- C. Serve as liaisons **for** the pastors **to** Adult Bible Fellowships
- D. Minister to individuals and families in the assembly as needed and/or requested by the pastors
- E. Perform all of the legal duties required of trustees for not-for-profit corporations by the State of Michigan
- F. Ensure the preparation of the elements for Communion and the logistics for baptisms
- G. Interview candidates for church membership as requested by the pastors

IV. Key Questions about Pastors and Deacons at CBC

- A. Does CBC have a church board? No. Our Constitution does not mention anything called a church board, board of deacons or some other ecclesiastical body
- B. Can a woman be a deacon? No, but she can be married to one and that makes her a deaconess. A man is not qualified to be a deacon if his wife is not qualified to be a deaconess, and vice-versa. We do not have a separate office of Deaconess.
- C. If all pastors are equally called and qualified, why do we have one who is called the “Senior Pastor?”
 - a. The biblical pattern reflects that God works through a “chain of command” whereby there can be multiple leaders who are led by a senior or main leader, e.g., Moses led Israel’s judges in the wilderness, Joshua led all other Israelite leaders, chief priests led other priests, James was the chief elder of the Jerusalem church
 - b. The Senior Pastor leads the pastors, who then lead the church
- D. Who holds the Senior Pastor accountable? The other pastors do, with the assistance of the deacons, if needed.
 - 1. One of the reasons we require pastors to publicly and verbally give assent to the Doctrinal Statement, Constitution and Church Covenant each year is for purposes of accountability.
 - 2. The biblical and moral authority of a pastor to serve in that office derives from his commitment to Christ, the Word of God and God’s calling on his life, which a congregation recognizes
 - 3. If the Senior Pastor or any of the pastors were to drift doctrinally, spiritually or morally, the other pastors would intervene
 - 4. The CBC Constitution describes a process for addressing such a situation