



Diaconal visits

1. An overview of the deacons' task

a. The new Form for the Ordination of Deacons

It is not often that the Form for the Ordination of Deacons is read during a worship service. Once, perhaps twice a year the congregation hears it. Therefore, a brief review of the form at the beginning of this conference¹ may benefit us in a number of ways. It may remind us of the deacon's calling and oath, may help us in gaining a perspective of the topic, and, since it has been recently revised, bring to mind the Scriptural foundation for the office.

The new form, adopted by the General Synod of our Canadian sister churches in 1983, is similar to the one adopted by our Dutch sister churches in 1975. The old form, dating back to 1586, was greatly influenced by the thoughts of John a Lasco, superintendent of the Foreign Protestants in London. These foreign Protestants were refugees and as such suffered from homelessness, unemployment, family disruptions, sorrow and loneliness. It is, therefore, not surprising that the work of the deacons received much attention and was emphasized in church documents.²

The need for a clearer Biblical explanation of the office's origin and a more detailed description of the deacon's task constituted the reasons for a new form. It succeeds on both counts.

b. The new form – a survey

The differences between the new and the old form become immediately apparent when we look at the Bible texts printed in the margin. For example, instead of going directly to the New Testament as the old form did – and as the new Dutch one does – the *new* form goes back to the Old Testament, to the roots of the deacon's work. The Old Testament abounds with God's concern for the poor, the oppressed, the widows, the strangers and the orphans. God through Moses impressed upon Israel the obligation to show mercy to the needy and the new form lists eight texts from Deuteronomy, highlighting the concern of our heavenly Father.³

Dr. C. Van Dam summarizes the Old Testament principles for the diaconry as follows:

1. There are two main motivations for the care of the poor:
 - The LORD who had set His people free wanted His nation, His most precious possession, to remain in the joy of their deliverance and free from all want and oppression, be it financial or otherwise.
 - Everyone was to be able to execute his office and calling. Poverty cannot form an impediment to that in the covenant community.
2. The poor and needy are all those who because of special needs cannot share in the joy of the covenant and cannot fulfill their task and responsibility in the covenant community. We must, therefore, never see the needs of the poor in too restricted a sense (for example, only financial). All the different needs of "poor and needy" must be met by the covenant people as a whole.
3. The LORD never waited for extreme needs to develop before taking action. The detailed legislation shows how in many and various ways the poor and needy were to be constantly remembered and provided for. The extreme needs and hardships that did develop were due to disobedience to God's law.

4. Man is but a steward of his material possessions, and must never be in bondage to them, but remain truly free as God's possession and use his material possessions for the well-being and the freedom of the children of God. Israel's wealth and possessions were entrusted to them for the benefit of all.
5. The LORD saw to it that Israel's non-covenant neighbours shared in many of the material and non-material benefits of the covenant.⁴

The inclusion of Old Testament teachings about the work of mercy is a valuable addition to our new form.

The new form then quotes the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. None of these were in the old form. We hear how Christ came not to *be served* but to *serve*. For this service (*diaconia*), our great Deacon humbled and emptied Himself of heavenly glory and honour. He became one of us, even our Servant. This service took the form of teaching and healing, feeding of the hungry and compassion for the afflicted.

The greatest demonstration of our Saviour's love came when He laid down His life for those whom He called friends (John 15:13-15). Believers focus on that priestly sacrifice at the supper dedicated to the memory of our Lord's death. It unites the family of God around one table. *Deacons* promote that *koinonia* or common sharing of Christ's benefits. The Dutch form points to Luke 22:27 where the question of who was greatest arose. Jesus taught that normally the one who sat at table was greater than the one who served. "*But I am among you as one who serves.*" Regrettably our form does not include this reference. Both forms point to Christ's example of washing the disciples' feet and quote John 13:15: "*I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.*" These words of Christ, spoken just prior to the institution of the Lord's Supper, show how Christ's sacrificial death, as remembered at the Lord's table, lies at the heart of all diaconal service.

Our new form then proceeds to the church of Pentecost as described in the Book of Acts and the letters of Paul. The church of Pentecost put Christ's teachings and example into practice. The Book of Acts tells us how an active ministry of mercy alleviated poverty, need and loneliness in the ever-growing church of Jerusalem. Again, the old form did not refer to this.

Next, the form applies the Scriptures to the church in the present age. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ teaches that He will judge mankind on the day of judgment according to the degree of mercy shown to those who were hungry, ill-clad, thirsty and imprisoned. "*As you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to Me,*" Christ explains. Those who neglect this vital ministry of mercy will receive condemnation. Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, 16 and 1 Peter 4:9 enjoin all Christians to show hospitality (even to strangers), generosity and mercy. This leads to that crucial phrase, "*no one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness and poverty.*"

After this the form points out how Christ appointed deacons for the promotion of this ministry of mercy. Acts 6 finally enters the picture (the old form began with it). Some of the roots for the office of deacon (as well as for the office of elder) can be found here.⁵

Then follow the responsibilities of the deacons in summary form. They must promote the progress of charity in the church. That does not mean that they need to do everything themselves, neither should they deceive themselves into thinking that they can achieve a perfect state of affairs. Deacons must mobilize the congregation, "*equipping the saints to do the work of ministry or service (diaconia)*" (Ephesians 4:12). For this purpose they must acquaint themselves with the existing needs and difficulties, as well as encourage the members of the congregation to practise "*the faith working through love.*" The Dutch form specifically states that they must do this "*door huisbezoek*" (by home-visits). Although not explicitly stated, it is implicit in our form. How can deacons otherwise become acquainted with the needs present in the congregation and exhort all members to show mercy?

Not only the gathering, management and distribution of offerings for the needy, but the relief from worry, the comfort for the distressed, and the friendship for the lonely are included in the deacons'

task. We can be thankful for the fact that the *new* form says much about ministering comfort, mercy and love to the afflicted, distressed, lonely, sick, handicapped or poor.

In conclusion, the form points back to the general aim of deacons' work, namely that *"God's children will increase in love to one another and to all men."* The three texts mentioned (Galatians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; and 2 Peter 1:7) underline this purpose and norm. *"May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you,"* Paul writes to the Thessalonians. *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith,"* Paul tells the Christians in Galatia.⁶

I hope that this survey of the form has put us in the right frame of mind for our main topic: diaconal visits.

2. Guidelines for special visits by deacons to those in need

a. Discovering needs

In this section we will pay attention to the special visits deacons make to those who are in need. The phrase "a needy person" is difficult to define. Someone can be indigent for a number of reasons. Need can arise from sickness, pregnancies, bereavement, unemployment, marital breakup, bankruptcy, handicaps, or accidents. All such persons need care. We certainly should not limit the concept of "the needy" to those who are financially poor. At this juncture it might be good to ask: how do deacons become aware of those who are in need? There are some obvious answers. People themselves may approach the deacons. Ministers or elders, while visiting the congregation, may discover unmet needs and pass them on to the deacons. Members of the church may alert the deacons to an existing need. Good communication between offices brings about coordinated help. When this occurs, biblical counsel combines with the hand of mercy to bring both relief and hope. The general visits by deacons, to be discussed later, will also help to spot problems.

Generally speaking deacons should arrive on the scene before the indigent approaches them. Most people hesitate to approach the deacons. When they finally do so it may indicate that the problem is already out of hand.

The ministry of mercy must function well in the congregation, if problems are to be discovered. Reliable, approachable, loving and caring deacons advertise themselves. The members of the congregation will sense it, and read it in the information the deacons make available. That way deacons themselves engender support from the members and earn the trust of the needy. That is the key to discovering needs.

b. Confidentiality

Deacons must practise confidentiality. The apostles received the gifts of the members and distributed the same to those in need. Needy members did not know who gave the gifts; donors did not know who received the gifts. There was confidentiality. In Reformed churches such confidentiality plays a key role in the support of the needy members. To be in need is, to many, enough of a problem, to have it made public increases the shame and stigma.

In addition deacons request many details from those who are to receive help. Such private and personal information must be kept confidential. I would suggest that no one (not even the deacon's wife) but a fellow-deacon should share that information. Violation of the confidence that a person has in a deacon can cause untold grief. I am sure that each one of us has heard tales of woe from and about people who will have nothing to do with the deacons after experiencing such a breach of trust. Church members should be able to tell deacons all their troubles without the threat of exposure.

The deacons, however, should not be blackmailed into keeping silent about un-confessed and unresolved sins. They must be dealt with and the help of the minister and elders must be sought. It

must be understood clearly that in such cases any vow of confidentiality is conditioned by this important point.

Confidentiality must also be observed when deacons report to one another. In reporting such visits deacons must use the same caution as elders do. (Elders do not give a full, factual account of their visits, nor do they relate anything, told in confidence.) At consistory meetings the deacons need not explain each "case." Only when elders and ministers ought to be involved in it, should a full report be given.

c. Vulnerability

Those who are in distress or are afflicted often feel vulnerable. Tension, fears, sorrow, and anxieties leave such Christians open to hurt. The thought of a deacon's visit is enough to make a person apprehensive and nervous. That should be kept in mind when a visit is made. One way to overcome this is to behave naturally and be humble. See them as fellow sinners redeemed by grace. Make it clear to them that all of us could be caught in a similar situation and that we are called *"to bear one another's burdens."*

In certain cases deacons need to correct faults, reprove sinful habits, insist on godly patterns of living, and inculcate new practices. That means conversion, the putting off of the old nature and putting on the new nature in Christ. As sinful people we do not accept that but resist it. This will present problems to the deacons. In order to help a member with this, deacons need understanding, compassion and firmness.

d. A listening ear

To listen well is an art few of us learn to perfection. Yet it is indispensable. On special visits listen to what is said. Do not assume that everything is understood and ask questions. Be interested and put yourself in their shoes. Also listen for what is not said, for that will often reveal just as much as what is said.

Members are often plagued by troubles, loneliness, distress or anxieties. They need someone to talk to; someone who will listen to them with interest. Only by listening well will a deacon know what specific biblical comfort to bring. The Scripture passage he had intended to read may have to be changed as a result of what he has heard. His prayer must also reflect this.

e. Assessing a need

When deacons go to a member who needs care for the first time, it would be wise not to go alone. Two deacons hear and know more than one. It insures that the matter is well discussed, and well attested. The responsibility for making decisions is shared. It is a biblical principle and worthy of full adherence.

In assessing needs one is required to broach the subject politely and brotherly, and then sit back, allowing the members the opportunity to relate their needs. Listen and, if the case involves facts and figures which you need to remember, take notes. Probe further to make sure that all facets of a case are uncovered.⁷ For instance, if a widow explains that she does not have enough to pay her bills, deacons should make further inquiries. Can she function in a normal way in church and in daily life? Does she have enough to contribute to church and school? If she cannot, there is something wrong. Can she live decently and reasonably? If she can never go out or take a holiday, then deacons need to ask further. Do not be short-sighted but take the overall situation into account and provide accordingly. Only in this way do deacons, in distributing gifts of money, truly offer help. You do not pay certain items on a budget, e.g. the school or a car. No, you offer what is needed to meet a Christian budget.

In cases of material need deacons will ask for such a (family) budget. That is very helpful. It means that all factors, not just one or a few, are looked at. Deacons can then assess whether the members practise good stewardship, or are too thrifty or too extravagant. Many needy members do not have such a budget. They live from week to week spending money left and right. Before long their wallets are empty. Require that such members make a budget. If necessary help them with it.

In some cases members need to learn to live within their means; in other cases they need encouragement to ask for help so that they can live decently. Of diaconal practices in the past it has been said that they provided members with too much to die, but too little to live on. That should not happen anymore.

At the conclusion of the visit the deacons should summarize briefly what they will report and recommend, and what the members should do themselves.

f. Other dimensions of need

As we learned from the form, diaconal aid is more than handing out money. A considerable part of diaconal visiting concerns other needs.⁸ The emotional needs of the elderly, of the widowed, of the lonely and/or single members, of single parents, or of the handicapped should not be overlooked. A variety of complicating factors often accompany such needs. Those who are chronically ill need visits and Christian cheer. Handicapped members, especially those in institutions, require diaconal attention. Divorce increases and brings its share of troubles. Unemployment creates spiritual as well as material difficulties. Business problems, such as bankruptcy, can signal a spiritual collapse as well. Alcohol abuse multiplies woes. These are just a few of the problems deacons will have to face.

Obviously, much counsel and comfort needs to be given in such situations. Often the efforts of the deacons need to be coordinated with those of the minister and elders and perhaps together they will pay a visit. As the form says, comfort from the Bible should be given. Prayer, in which the specific needs are brought before the throne of grace, should conclude such visits.

g. Return visits

Depending on the nature of the need, deacons will repeat special visits. On such visits they usually bring the needed funds. For other types of need they will return as often as they can and as is necessary. Often they will enlist others to show mercy and care. Coordinating domestic help for expectant mothers or for those who cannot fulfill those duties, is just one example. The deacons will still be busy visiting. Those simple visits by deacons in which a member sees the care of the Saviour mean much, much, more than deacons often are aware of. Apprehension often prevents us from making visits, but once a visit has been made, we experience how good it is to share God's mercy with someone else.

A few words about selecting passages from the Bible might be in order. In sharing the Scriptures, use can be made of the sermons, texts discussed at Bible-clubs or passages read and studied at home. General Bible-knowledge is a prerequisite for deacons as well as for elders. They are then able to substitute the selected passage with another, which better addresses the need just discovered.

h. Reporting

As stated above, a report should only include the essential facts. It is also a good practice to record these essentials briefly so that one can refer back to them when needed and so that new deacons can look up past discussions and decisions concerning the same persons. This in no way violates confidentiality. Needless to say, the minute book should be stored securely.

i. Prayer

Up to now little has been said about the deacons themselves. Where will they find all the needed resources? We offer no formal training to deacons, even though the Bible says deacons should be tested before they are appointed (1 Timothy 3:10). Then if they are approved, they can be appointed. Apparently Paul envisages some form of training, a type of apprenticeship programme which combines Biblical instruction with practical experience. Our deacons receive this only once they are in the office! As Reformed churches we ought to consider whether we fulfill the Scriptures in this regard. Ongoing reformation might be in place in the preparatory training we offer to, and require of, deacons.

How then do deacons find the resources needed for their tasks? In Reformed churches this comes from the general training in the Scriptures at home, in schools, at catechism classes, at Bible-study societies and through church related activities. All this is invaluable but is it enough? As the form says, *"we are unable of ourselves to do all this."* Prayer is needed. Together with the study and meditation of the Bible, deacons need to approach the throne of grace to ask help for those in need (Hebrews 4:14-16), and for the resources of compassion for themselves. For as Peter says, *"whoever renders service (diaconia), as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 4:11).

3. Guidelines for general visits by deacons

a. Purpose

Even as we can distinguish between the regular home-visits and the special visits made by elders, similarly we can distinguish between the general diaconal visits and the special visits of deacons. However, the general visits are not common among us and may need some more explanation.

First of all, we quote the Form for Ordination:

*"It is therefore the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the church. They shall acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties, and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy."*¹⁹

This in a nutshell states the purpose of general (home)visits by deacons.

b. Format and length

The visit can be conducted by one or two deacons. If it is done by one deacon, then the visit will be kept somewhat less official and more casual, which is probably good. Also, visits by one deacon mean that the congregation can be covered more quickly and without interrupting the ongoing work of mercy. On the other hand, some deacons will be hesitant to make such visits alone. They have more confidence, if accompanied by a fellow-deacon and it will add to the official character of the visits. It means that two people listen to the information given and both can contribute to the visit. It also allows for a better assessment of the visit afterwards. No firm rule can be given, but the pros and cons must be weighed before deciding how it is to be done.

The visit could begin with a short prayer and a short Bible reading. This insures proper respect for the visit. Otherwise it might degenerate into a social visit with people coming and going. It is good to finish with a brief prayer in which needs that have been encountered should be remembered.

Particularly if several visits have been brought to a member or family before, each visit does not have to be long. Visits should not last more than thirty to forty minutes unless circumstances dictate that more time be taken, although initial visits will probably last longer. Generally a deacon should be able to visit two homes in an evening.

c. Points for discussion

The following points for discussion for such visits can be offered.

1. To see to the good progress of charity in the church and to promote the same, give a quick overview of the ministry of mercy as taught by the Bible. Use the Form for Ordination of Deacons to guide the discussion. Briefly outline how mercy was to be shown in the old covenant, how it was fulfilled in Christ and how the New Testament church showed mercy.

The Bible reading can be a good point of departure for such a brief outline.

Suggested Scripture passages:

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 - Matthew 25:31-46 - Luke 10:30-37 - Acts 4:32-37

2. To promote the progress of mercy, outline the existing needs in the congregation. With a growing church, people do not always know all the real needs. Give a list of the handicapped members. Those who care for such members often welcome some relief for it is an exhausting task. Tell about single members and single parents who are often lonely and who need comfort. Many older members suffer physical disabilities and love visits. Widowed members suffer more from loneliness than we know. Urge members to show love and hospitality for such members, especially on Sundays. Where it concerns the poor give general information but no details.
3. To acquaint themselves with the existing needs in the congregation, deacons should ask if there are any needs in the family that are not met. Often needs are forgotten or ignored but nothing should be taken for granted. One will need to combine a fine blend of penetrating questions and brotherliness. People do not like others to pry into their private affairs, to be too official, or to be too personal. Yet, in order to gain a correct and meaningful picture of a member or family, a deacon will need to ask some probing questions in a brotherly manner. In addition, ask the members whether they know of any needs in the congregation which are not being met. Often members already practise the love of Christ in a variety of ways. It will be instructive for deacons to hear about this. Members often know of existing needs, and may know more than the deacons do.
4. Probe to see if the members in that home have any special talents, besides the gifts for our common calling to practise mercy and generosity, to offer for the progress of mercy in the church. Promote the work of mercy *"to one another and to all men."* Try to ascertain the variety of gifts from the Holy Spirit present in the congregation. Encourage them with the apostle's words, *"as each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's grace"* (1 Peter 4:10).
5. Make the members aware of the purposes of the Sunday collections. Often there is a lack of knowledge about these. This will also open another avenue, namely, explaining to members the various diaconal agencies or organizations in the church and sister-churches, as well as in the community, which could use our support. Deacons should have a list available which should contain information about the collections and the diaconal organizations.

d. Reporting

The deacons should report these visits on one of their meetings and a record should be kept of any relevant information so that future deacons can benefit from them.

e. Frequency

The term of office for a deacon is usually three years. Therefore, it would be good to visit the members assigned to a deacon once during those three years. Besides these general visits deacons must pay other special visits. That means deacons should not try to over-extend themselves, but be realistic about what can be accomplished. More general visits than once every three years seems unnecessary and would make the visits meaningless and mere custom.

On the other hand, visits every three years do not seem superfluous, since situations do change and since people need to be reminded constantly about the need for the ministry of mercy in and by the church.

f. Division of responsibility

Good organization and division of the workload will help these visits. In order to divide the workload deacons will have to assign a proportionate number of addresses to each deacon. Division of the membership into wards promotes this. In many congregations there are half as many deacons as there are elders. Each deacon is then assigned one ward of the church. He knows who are under his personal care. The church directory can list the deacon assigned to each ward. The ward deacon can lead a visit, if it is made by two deacons. Members know to whom they can turn for

help. This is much better than having deacons generally responsible for the whole congregation. Overall, a good division of the workload brings order and satisfaction.

4. Notes on the discussion

Since the discussion on a paper often includes much worthwhile material, we include some of it. The input of the various deacons at the Armadale Conference was very worthwhile. The questions and answers have been grouped.

- a. *Are deacons not performing the tasks of elders when they are given the mandate to pay visits to bring comfort and to offer instruction as well as to show mercy? For example, visiting lonely members or elderly members is also the task of elders. To offer biblical comfort to the sick is the elder's work as well. Will the elders not feel that deacons are infringing on their territory?*

Undoubtedly the work of deacons and of elders will overlap at times. Even as elders and ministers often visit the same addresses for the same purpose, so elders and deacons may indeed visit the same members. It would be wise that elders and deacons then inform each other in order to coordinate their efforts, even as ministers and elders do. But elders should not feel as though deacons intrude on their territory. That both offices offer their services for the same needs demonstrates the unity among the offices. After all, all offices come from Christ who has the three-fold office. In Christ the offices find their unity. Moreover, elders and deacons will place different accents on their visits. Deacons show mercy and comfort, eager to serve and to activate members to show help those in need. Elders oversee the flock and administer all the benefits of Christ. The deacons must not involve themselves in matters of church discipline.

- b. *Making general visits to all members seems something new. Where does this idea come from?*

Deacons have always been involved in activating the membership to show mercy. Deacons should not think that they need do all the work. They are catalysts in marshalling the members to do "the work of service." To do this they need direct contact with the members. Moreover, deacons need to become acquainted with the needs in the church. That requires visits, besides obtaining information about those needs from other members, deacons or elders. In order to give members information about needs and about services available, the deacons need to have contact with the members. The general visits to all members is an excellent means to do all these things. I do not think that this is something new. Deacons have paid acquaintance visits to all new members or to newly married couples in some churches. These visits are similar in character and purpose. Deacons have also visited all members, given information, and sought support from the members for specific needs. The general visits, in a sense, give this good custom more prominence and systematize the good practice.

- c. *Confidentiality was stressed in the paper. What if members ask for details about those in need? Can such information be given?*

That depends on the specific need. If financial help is being given, do not give particulars. Give only general information which will stimulate other members to offer help. The rule should be to say as little as possible. If there are needs such as loneliness, sickness, unemployment, or accidents, then it is good to inform the members of the congregation. That can only help. In smaller congregations such information spreads spontaneously and quickly. In larger congregations more work is needed to inform the members. Sometimes the bulletin can be used, if the need warrants that.

- d. *What if those who receive help inform other members that they receive help from the deacons and even tell how much they receive? Sometimes such members compare notes with other needy members so that they can "bargain" with the deacons for more support. What do the deacons do with such a violation of confidentiality?*

One must insist that confidentiality is a two-way street. It strikes me as very odd that members break the confidentiality which deacons maintain for their benefit. Maybe it is symptomatic of our social welfare system in which people become accustomed to complaining about the help they receive freely. If necessary, deacons can reprimand such members who cause jealousy, competition and unrest in the congregation.

- e. *When are deacons allowed to assume the responsibilities of members who cannot handle these themselves? For example, some members just cannot handle money, no matter how much advice they receive. Can deacons then take over certain specific responsibilities so that the funds of the deacons are not squandered?*

If members are unable and unwilling to act as stewards of Christ's goods, then deacons must correct, reprove, urge, instruct, counsel, and encourage in order that members change their ungodly habits. They must work hard for such change or conversion, to use biblical language. As God has maintained our responsibility, so deacons should continue to hold members responsible for their own duties. Even if this means that members will make mistakes, that is a risk deacons must take. If mistakes are made, this offers deacons a splendid opportunity to reinforce the points made in their instruction. Only in exceptional cases should deacons take over the responsibilities of members. If they do, the deacons should transfer the management of the budget, for example, back as soon as possible.

- f. *How can deacons quickly choose texts to meet the specific needs they hear about during their visits?*

One is usually amazed at the resources God gives. If pressed, our minds usually can recall a suitable text. But if not, why not admit that openly, promising the member(s) to consider that point at home and to pay another visit to discuss that point? That need not be shameful. Most of us have to do that. We are not omniscient as God is.

- g. *How long should the general visits take? Are two or three visits per night not too ambitious?*

If visits are made to a family for the first time, it will take longer than a follow-up visit. Also, if problems surface, then the visit will take longer or a repeat visit will be needed. A well prepared visit does not need to take long. Some preparatory work will be necessary, for our members need to become used to such visits. Deacons will have to introduce them to the congregation, maybe at a congregational meeting. Some information in the church bulletin will help as well. Then the visits will usually not take longer than an hour, if the deacons lead the discussion and do not allow the visit to be rendered ineffective by small talk.

- h. *Should deacons open with prayer and Bible reading or should they end with it?*

Elders have similar questions. It is best to remain flexible. In some cases it might be better to wait with the reading of the Bible. But in general a short prayer and reading of the Bible sets the tone and enhances the character of the visit.

W Huizinga

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6. C. Trimp: 'Lord's Supper and the Diaconate,' *DIAKONIA*, 1-2.
7. C. Van Dam: 'The Covenant Service of Love for the Joy and Freedom of God's Children,' *CLARION*, Vol. 27 (1978), 234ff., and 282ff.; and reprinted in *UNA SANCTA*, Vol. 12, p. 5ff.
8. 'The Diaconal Task: Some OT roots and their continuing significance,' *DIAKONIA*, II-2.
9. G. Van Dooren: 'The Task of the Church in Relation to Public Welfare,' *CRM*, Vol. 20, nos. 11, 12 (May 29 and June 12/71).

¹ Deacons' Conference held Aug. 5, 1989 in Armadale, Australia.

² P.Y. DeJong, *Ministry of Mercy in the Reformed Churches*, 16-17, *Diakonia*, Vol.II-1.

³ Cf. C Van Dam, *The Diaconal Task: Some Old Testament Roots and their Continuing Significance*, 30-36, *Diakonia*, Vol.11-2).

⁴ C.Van Dam, op. cit. p.33.

⁵ cf J.van Bruggen, *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk*, Kampen:Kok, 1984, pp65-77, for further discussion of this passage in relation to the work of both elders and deacons.

⁶ It might be beneficial to delve into this aspect of helping the needy of the household of faith in other parts of the world, as well as the question of diaconal help to those in need outside the church, here and abroad.

⁷ cf. the excellent, brief article, *Pointers for Elders and Deacons*, 15-16, *Diakonia*, Vol.I-1.

⁸ We refer here to the literature available on this. *Deacons Handbook*, 158-160; *Pointers for Elders and Deacons*, and the excellent book by P.Y. DeJong, *Ministry of Mercy*.

⁹ Form for the Ordination of Deacons, p.631.