THE WORK OF A DEACON

Revised

A HANDBOOK

Approved by The 22nd Quadrennial General Council of
The Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of
The Americas June 10, 1978, Revised 1999
Fuller Normal and Industrial Institute, Greenville, S.C.
**Preface**

In the course of the growth of an organization, changes and adjustments must be made in order to maintain goals and objectives. Without these adjustments and reorganizations the organization will either become stagnant or it will go haywire and fail to achieve the goals which brought it into existence.

The Church of Christ is unique in that it is continuously revitalized by the Holy Spirit. However, as a human institution there is a need for a definition of its officers and their roles. This is a very basic principle of management and is by no means unbiblical for this principle is used in the setting aside of the seven (Acts 6:1-8). The qualifications and duties of these men were set forth initially.

The office of deacon has evolved over the years from a position held by a lay person to a position of local clergy. In like manner the responsibilities have also been changed and/or expanded according to the needs of the particular Church body. The office now varies with the theological outlook and/or policy of the Church in which it functions.

In the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas the office of deacon is based upon the biblical foundation of the office. While the pastor has oversight over the entire assembly, the deacons have the responsibility of managing those things which will help the pastor do a better job in the Word and the work of the ministry in general.

It is my purpose to put the office of deacon in perspective and make clear to those persons called upon to be deacons their responsibilities to the past, the community of faith and the world at large.

Patrick L. Frazier, Jr.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

What is a Deacon?

The Origin of the Office

The Qualifications of the Deacon
  Moral Requirements
  Domestic Requirements
  Spiritual Requirements

The Office of the Woman Deacon

The Work of the Deacon

Appointment and Term of Office

Honor and Rewards of the Deacon

The Deacon and the General Church

The Deacon and Pastoral Relationships

Deacons in Fellowship

The Deacon Relating to the Membership

The Deacon in the Marketplace of Life

Helping Your Local Church

Despising the Church

Church Discipline
INTRODUCTION

In the New Testament, Church needs of various kinds arose within congregations. These needs called into existence the office of the deacon in the local Church. In the early Church the office of the deacon varied with the needs of the particular congregation. It was universally accepted that these persons were called to be the servants of the Family of God. In the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas, the deacons first serve the pastors by becoming thoroughly acquainted with the vision that God has given to the pastor for the particular congregation. The deacons must develop a working relationship with fellow deacons as well as with the pastor so that, with unity, they will move toward the vision God has given. It is from this position and relationship that deacons can effectively serve as a lifeline to meet the needs of the Church family. They should serve under the leadership of the pastor to the extent that each member grows in the faith to maturity.

For a full understanding of the office it will be necessary to go into the history, meaning, and qualifications of the office. It will also be the objective of this manual to set forth the duties and expectations of a person called to be a deacon in the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas. There are expectations on the local, district, and national levels.

What Is A Deacon?

Four primary Greek words shed light to open our understanding of the ministry of deacon in the Scripture. They are "diakoneo," "diakonos," "diakonea," and "diako." We will look at the root words that are used to convey the concept. Our English word "deacon" is a transliteration of the Greek words. The translators used English letters for the Greek word. Words in the New Testament that are transliterated rather than translated are an indication that there was a theological issue during the translation that is connected to the particular word.

Baptism is a word of this type. The Greek word "baptism" literally means "immerse, dip or plunge." During the 1600's, when the Bible was translated into the English language, baptism was not practiced in Christian circles by dipping, plunging or immersing. To avoid raising theological problems over the validity of other modes of baptism, the translators chose a neutral term that could be given any meaning by the interpretation.

This is also true of the word "deacon." The Greek word for deacon occurs many times in the New Testament and in most cases is properly translated. Occasionally, when this same word is used in connection with an office in the Church, the word is not translated but transliterated. This is an indication that the word "deacon" is given wide interpretation. In order to further understand, it is necessary to look at the biblical words and see how they are used throughout the New Testament.
1. Diakoneo literally means "to be an attendant, to wait upon."

In the New Testament it refers to waiting on someone at a table as a waiter (Luke 22:24-27); serving someone in any way (Matthew 4:11; 27:55; Acts 19:22; II Corinthians 8:19); taking care of (II Corinthians 3:3; Acts 6:2); helping or supporting someone (Matthew 25:24; Luke 8:3; Romans 15:25); the ministry of a Church official "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (I Timothy 3:10). This particular word is translated several ways in the King James Version: minister, serve, administer, and as the office of a deacon.

2. Diakonia literally means "service or attendance as a servant."

In the New Testament it refers to all types of service (Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 4:12; Acts 6:4); the service necessary for the preparation of a meal (Luke 10:40); the service or function of all New Testament ministries (I Timothy 1:12; Acts 20:24; I Corinthians 12:5; Colossians 4:17); and, support or distribution especially of alms and giving to the poor (Acts 11:29; Romans 15:31; II Corinthians 8:4); a specific ministry in the body of Christ (Romans 12:7). This word is translated "serving," "ministry," "ministration," "relief," "office," "service," "administrations," "ministering."

3. Diakonos literally means "a waiter, attendant, servant or minister."

In the New Testament it refers to a personal servant (Matthew 20:26; 23:11; John 12:26); a helper or an encourager (I Thessalonians 3:2; I Timothy 4:6); an official of the Church (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8). This word is translated "minister," "servant," "deacon." The apostles and other prominent Christians are seen in this capacity (Colossians 1:23; Ephesians 3:7; II Corinthians 3:6).

4. Diako - Although this word is not found in the New Testament, it is significant in this study because it is generally regarded as the root word from which the other three are derived. It literally means "to run or hasten on errands."

When viewed all together, it becomes evident that these words are closely related and that they are used in the primarily two ways, an unofficial way and an official way. In the unofficial sense, they refer to any kind of serving - ministry in the home, ministry of angels, ministry of civil rulers, ministry of various servants and ministry of all believers regardless of their calling in the Body of Christ. It is in this sense that every Spirit-filled believer is to have a "servant's heart."

These four words are also used in an official way. It is very clear from certain passages that these words are referring to a special class of people who have proven themselves and were thus designated "deacons" or literally "servants." These would be people who had distinguished themselves in this capacity by their excellence and were utilized by the churches in certain designated areas of responsibility. This, then, became a specific office for which qualifications were set down. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Jesus Christ which are at Phillipi, with the elders and deacons" (Philippians 1:1).
The Origin of the Office

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected during the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples into them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Phillip, and Prochoeus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the Apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-6).

This passage in Acts tells us the origin of the office of the deacons. Although this fact is not specifically stated in the passage, the spiritual qualities for these men, and tradition all seem to suggest that this is the case. If this is not the beginning of the new office, then we have no other scriptural reference where the beginning is recorded. From this foundational passage we can gather many insights and guidelines for the establishment of deacons in the Church.

1. Deacons were a matter of practical consideration. The apostles chose deacons to meet a particular need they could not meet themselves due to the growth of the Church. The early Church developed in response to need. As long as the Church was small there was no need for deacons. As the Church grew and responsibilities grew, the apostles realized that they could no longer meet certain needs of the people and still be faithful to fulfill their commission of feeding the flock of God. The apostles were not being proud when they looked for someone else with whom to share their responsibility. They were merely recognizing that their primary ministry was handling the Word of God. It became necessary to delegate the "serving of tables" to others. In doing so, they did not neglect their responsibility. They used men of proven character to assist them in meeting the needs of the people. This did not elevate these seven men to equal status with the apostles or in any way establish a new realm of authority. The deacons were given to the leadership to assist them, just as the Levites were given to assist Aaron in the priestly office.

2. Deacons were initiated by the leadership with the consensus of the people. They were set in office by an action of the leadership. The idea of deacons did not come from the people. God directed the leadership in solving a very real problem. Those in leadership saw a need and the best way to meet that need. They communicated their desires to the people, asked the people to participate in the selection of suitable helpers, prayed over those selected and set them in their place of service. Although the people were given a voice in the matter, the leadership had the final and directing voice. The apostles approved those who had been selected by the people because they met the qualifications which the apostles themselves had laid down.

3. In the various geographical areas of the early Church, the office of deacon was recognized. The Church at Philippi had deacons (Philippians 1:1) The Church at Ephesus seems to have followed this pattern because of Paul's letter to Timothy while he was in Ephesus (I Timothy 3:8-13). Early Church history tells us that this became a universally accepted office among the Churches.
QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

We must know that God does not just want anyone to care for and serve His people. He does not just want anyone to "wait on tables." He does not take just anyone who volunteers for the job. God is very particular about every person who has responsibility in His house. When the apostles looked for helpers, they asked for men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and Wisdom (Acts 6:3). As the function of deacons developed in the New Testament, Paul gave more concrete definitions to their required qualifications. These qualifications are not put forth as ideals to be aspired to, nor is the office to be given to someone so that these qualities can be cultivated. Everyone who is set in as a deacon should already possess these qualities.

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 3:1-13).

These qualifications are summed up in terms of moral, domestic and spiritual.

Moral Requirements

1. Not double-tongued (I Timothy 3:8)

One who is double-tongued says one thing to one person and gives a different view of it to another. This would imply that a deacon must not be a gossip.

2. Not given to wine (I Timothy 3:8)

This individual must be above reproach in his personal habits; should not be one who indulges in intoxicating substances. Whatever he does will have great influence upon others.

3. Not greedy for money (I Timothy 3:8)

This is put in stronger terms than even in the qualifications for elders. Perhaps because when the deacons are in a place of assisting and helping others, they may be tempted to accept monetary gifts from those to whom they minister.

4. Blameless (I Timothy 3:8)

In every area of life he must be above reproach. This includes all business dealings. He must be an example of a godly lifestyle.
5. Proven (I Timothy 3:8)

The word used here means "to test, scrutinized to see whether a thing is genuine or not." The office is not given to promote maturity. Those given this position should already be living the life of a servant before they are entrusted with the title of the office.

**Domestic Requirements**

1. Husband of one wife (I Timothy 3:12)

   God's laws are a priority for this man who has undivided affections. He is loyal to God's ideal for marriage - one man, one woman, for life.

2. Ruling his own house well (I Timothy 3:12)

   This qualification is probably not to determine rulership ability, but to determine the nature of the deacon's Christian walk. The deacon must first be a good parent in the home.

**Spiritual Requirements**

1. Full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 6:3)

   Natural ability is important, but secondary to the motivation and empowering of the Holy Spirit. It is far better to use someone who is sensitive to God and lacking natural ability, than to use someone who relies on natural ability alone.

2. Full of Wisdom (Acts 6:3)

   Individuals working in the name of the leadership will need wisdom because they will find themselves in emotional situations where they know facts that they could use in a wrong way. They must know how to behave wisely.

3. Grave (I Timothy 3:8)

   This term denotes a seriousness of mind and character which will inspire the reverence, awe and respect of others. He takes life seriously, especially the Christian life and without a sour face.

4. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (I Timothy 3:9)

   This person must be right with God, so that along with material relief, he may also bring spiritual encouragement.
These qualifications indicate to us the importance that God places on all manner of service in the Church. They closely resemble the qualifications that God has set down for elders. One main difference is that there is no mention of deacons having the ability to teach or rule the house of God (I Timothy 3:2,5,12). It is clear that deacons are not those in final authority, nor are they ordinarily the teachers who handle the Word. They are, as their name indicates, the servant order in the Church.

**Office of the Woman Deacon**

Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things (I Timothy 3:11).

There is good evidence that many women served in the New Testament Church as deacons. In the passage just quoted Paul makes special admonitions to women who function in this capacity. The King James Version makes it seem that these qualifications are only for the wives of deacons. Careful analysis of the passage seems to indicate a whole new class of workers. Let us look at the passage.

1. The Greek word translated "wives" in the King James may also be translated "women." Either translation may be accurate and the word is translated these two ways consistently throughout the New Testament. Whether "wife" or "woman" is used in any particular passage is the translator's choice and can only be determined by the context. The general rule applying to this word is that it should always be translated "women" unless the context clearly implies that it is referring to a wife. The King James translators felt it should be rendered wives in this case. Other versions such as the New American Standard translate it "women." This is probably the more accurate choice, since there is no real grammatical justification to link them to the deacons that are mentioned in the previous verses (I Timothy 3:8-10).

2. The term likewise that is used here is the same word used in verse 8 to introduce the deacons as opposed to the elders. In the context this term seems to denote a transition from one class to another. If so, the new class in verse 11 would be that of a woman deacon.

3. It seems strange that Paul would state the qualifications for the deacon's wife when he states no such qualifications for the wife of an elder. Obviously the role of an elder is much more important in terms of authority and responsibility, yet Paul lists no qualifications for the wife of the elder. This apparent inconsistency also suggests that these women in verse form a category all of their own.

There is additional evidence that women did function in this capacity in the New Testament Church. Church history speaks of women deacons. There also seem to be several women who functioned in the work of serving in the New Testament. In all of the examples listed below, a form of the word "diakoneo" is used.
1. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2)

Phoebe is the clearest example because she is obviously a woman ("our sister") and she is called "a servant of the church." The word "servant" here is the same word translated "deacon."

2. The ministering women (Luke 8:1-3)

Several women who had been healed by Jesus evidently traveled with Jesus and the disciples at times to serve them in the areas of material substance.

3. Dorea (Acts 9:36-40)

This woman was vitally involved in ministering to the necessity of the saints. The New Testament does not specifically call her a deacon, but the ministry she had related clearly to the function of a deacon.

Considering all these things, it is easy to conclude that the New Testament Church had many women who functioned as "servants of the Church." To these women Paul adds a few additional qualifications.

1. They are not to be slanderous.

This term denotes a person "given to fault-finding with the demeanor and conduct of others, and spreading innuendoes and criticism."

2. They are to be sober.

This refers to sound mind and good judgment, as opposed to emotional judgment.

3. They are to be faithful in all things.

A woman deacon should be known for the fact that when she is given a responsibility she is always faithful to carry it out.

4. They are to be grave and reverent.

She must conduct herself in such a way that she commands the respect of others.

There are many responsibilities in the Church that could best be handled by a godly woman. The first century Church evidently found this to be the case. In our day there are many areas where women can be of tremendous assistance to the work of God. Whenever we fail to use all of the ministries that God has set in the Body, we hinder that Body from reaching its full potential. Whenever we fail to recognize true ministries in an individual we hinder that person from reaching his/her full potential. Every believer begins with a servant's heart. Out of those who have demonstrated a true servant's heart and attitude, the eldership appoints choice servants to function in the office of the deacon.
THE WORK OF THE DEACON

The references in the New Testament make it clear that the general function of the deacon is to perform various services of a practical nature in the Church, thus relieving the elders of burdens which might interfere with their ministry of spiritual oversight. The passage in Acts 6 reveals that the duties are mainly to aid in the distribution of relief to the poor, a practical service designed to free the apostles for the ministry of the Word and prayer. This passage seems to imply that these seven men did not necessarily do all the work themselves but were given the oversight in these areas to make sure that the job was carried out in a systematic and impartial manner. Acts 6:3 mentions that the apostles were looking for men that they could "appoint over this business."

In Philippians 1:1, Paul mentions this class of people in his greeting. This is unique because it is the only letter where Paul includes the deacons in his address to the Church. Paul had received a love offering from the Church at Philippi while he was in military custody in Rome. Paul responded with a letter of encouragement and thanksgiving. In addressing this letter to both the elders and the deacons he seems to be acknowledging that each had an important role in the gift he had received. If Acts 6 serves as a pattern for us, it is likely that the idea to send an offering came from the eldership while the deacons were the ones who organized it, collected it, and saw to it that the offering was delivered properly.

The only other passage of Scripture where the office of the deacon is mentioned, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, lists the qualifications for the office. All of the qualifications listed are very much suited to practical ministry. The most striking note here is that teaching ability and ruling ability are not necessarily required of a deacon.

There are many practical ministries within the house of God that could be done by others to relieve the leaders of a tremendous burden. When a Church is small the pastor does it all. As the Church grows, it becomes impossible for the pastor to handle every matter personally. Bivocational pastors also need help getting the job done. There comes a time when help in natural areas becomes necessary so that those in spiritual oversight can truly give themselves to the Word of God and Prayer.

There comes a time when someone else will do the bulletin, keep the books, type letters, answer telephones, arrange weddings, supervise cleanup, organize the ushers, operate the nursery, and distribute to the needy. God has provided the ministry of deacons as a means through which all of these things can be done properly and excellently.

APPOINTMENT AND TERM OF OFFICE

A distinguishing factor in the ministry of the deacons is the means whereby they are set into their places of service. The only example of the setting-in of deacons is in Acts 6 where they are set apart by the laying on of hands of the leadership with the approval and in the presence of the assembly. This must serve as the pattern for us.
The Bible is silent concerning the term of office for a deacon. The silence seems to indicate that there is no specific term. This would imply that a deacon remains a deacon as long as he does the work of a deacon and as long as he qualifies under the original requirements of the office. All those who began as deacons did not necessarily serve in that capacity all their life. Phillip became an evangelist.

**Honor and Rewards of Deacons**

"For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 3:13).

For those who serve well there is honor and reward. Serving well requires diligence, faithfulness, responsiveness, sensitivity, thoroughness, and sacrifice. Stephen and Philip were such men.

Those who serve well purchase for themselves a good degree. Not a B.A. or a Ph.D. This is a God-given degree. It may mean that they gain a good reputation and are held in high esteem by others. It may also mean that in serving well, this office becomes a stepping stone to greater levels of ministry. The Greek word here means "step" and may imply that the office is preparatory for eldership. Many New Testament ministers began as servants. Timothy served Paul (Acts 19:22). John Mark served Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5). The best example is that of Philip who began waiting on tables and ended up as a great evangelist (Acts 8:5-6; 21:8). The Old Testament suggests a similar pattern in the Moses/Joshua (Exodus 24:13; Joshua 1:1) and Elijah/Elisha relationships (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Those who serve well inherit great boldness in the faith. Stephen is a striking example of this. As he was faithful in small things, God promoted him to greater things. Soon Stephen appeared as bold as a lion, doing signs and wonders (Acts 6:8). This was not part of his original job description, but sprang from a life of service and devotion to God. Stephen had so much boldness of faith that he preached the boldest message in the book of Acts. He went from faith to faith as a faithful servant in the Church.

**The Deacon and the General Church**

The deacon should be a person who loves the Lord, his Church, its doctrine, its leadership, and its polity. He should be thoroughly familiar with the Basis of Union, Creed, general rules and judiciary rules. He should be able to function with few technical errors with regards to the way his Church functions.

The deacon should be a staunch supporter of the programs of his Church. All of the local Church's obligations to the general Church should be viewed by the deacon "as unto the Lord." He must keep in mind that his office came into being in order to give the minister time to preach and pray.
Bishops and elders have the responsibility of the perfecting of the saints. Along with all of the other ministers, they perform and supervise four essential ministries of the Church; (1) the ministry of the word, (2) the administration of discipline, (3) the oversight of property and finance, and (4) the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

These men have been consecrated and ordained for their tasks and should be looked upon in that light. These men need the prayers of good lay leaders because only a leader could truly understand how to pray for them. Deacons are leaders who can and should pray for their leaders. Each deacon should endeavor to know and understand the duties and authority of those who guide the Church and his own duties and authority under their leadership and under Christ. From this understanding there will develop a fellowship that will foster deeper respect and appreciation and spiritual growth in the Body of Christ.

The general Church recognizes the need of a good deacon in every Church and in times of necessity may feel the need to appoint deacons in a similar manner to its appointing of pastors. The appointment may be by word of mouth but is no less authoritative or important. Therefore, the deacon, like the pastor, must keep in mind that he is at the disposal of the general Church as well as his local Church.

In churches having varying forms of episcopal polity, the exact extent of the deacon's authority and responsibilities are derived from the general Church. This principle holds true even though the deacon is chosen by the local assembly. The pastor has the right to reject any candidate. It is the Presiding Elder who ordains the deacon. The Presiding Elder has the right to check the qualifications of any candidate by questioning the pastor or the candidate, or both.

**THE DEACON AND PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The relationship between the deacon and his pastor must be one of mutual respect, fellowship and cooperation. In this relationship the deacon is not an assistant pastor. All of the authority exercised by the deacon is exercised under the leadership of the pastor. In this relationship the deacon should always keep in mind that his office came into existence in order to give the minister more time for prayer and preaching. In order to assist his pastor with some of his administrative tasks, the deacon should keep up with the progress and needs of every auxiliary in the local Church. He should also be aware of all district and national functions.

It must be in his heart to project the best possible image of his local Church and to see that the image projected is a true image of the Lord Jesus Christ. If his pastor is fully confident in his dedication and loyalty the Church will hear more life-giving sermons because his pastor is free to study and stay before God.

Most pastors are overburdened because of the demands made on their lives. Most of them work on a secular job where their minds are continuously bombarded. They come home to family responsibilities like everyone else. The deacon should realize that pastoring is a full time job whether he has a full time pastor or not. If he does not have a full time pastor he should realize that his pastor needs even more help because the part-time pastor is expected to have the same kind of accomplishments at the end of the Church year.
There are often many organizations demanding the attention and time of the pastor. There are hurt feelings when it is felt that the pastor does not give equal attention. This leaves little time for study, meditation and prayer in preparation for worship services or for feeding his own soul.

The deacon board should arrange with the pastor to have a deacon assist each week. It will be the responsibility of this deacon to make himself available for:

1. ideas or problems he may want to "run by" someone else in confidence;
2. visiting and/or arranging for the visitation of the sick and those with special needs;
3. calling on families where death has occurred and being helpful in any possible manner;
4. visiting with the pastor where and when he feels it desirable;
5. helping the pastor encourage the operation of all auxiliaries;
6. making arrangements for the visits of officials and other ministers.
7. carry out any other program requiring attention at the time of service and make himself available for service requested by the pastor.

The deacon board should assign men who, early Sunday morning, check to see that the platform is neat and orderly, and that the pastor's Bible and hymn book are readily available. If the minister likes a glass of water or juice, then it should be arranged. Unless it is against the pastor's wishes, the deacons should visit him in the study before the service to inquire if there are other needs to be met. If the pastor wears a robe, a deacon might help him put it on. His pastor may also want him to pray with him. There may also be deacons praying with the ushers and the choir before worship.

In the absence of the pastor, the deacon is in charge. It is the deacon's duty to perform the specific tasks given by the pastor in his absence. The speaker for the service will be the person appointed by the pastor and that will be the extent of the speaker's services. If the pastor has the confidence in the deacon, he may allow the deacon to choose the speaker. If this is the case, please choose carefully. Whoever speaks will be a reflection upon your pastor, your Church and your judgment. It should always be remembered that the chief administrative officer in the local Church is the pastor. The overseer of the local Church is the pastor. Deacons are not told to shepherd the flocks. This admonition is given to ministers (1 Peter 5:2). All Christians are to care for one another but only the minister is responsible for oversight.

**Deacons in Fellowship**

There is a need for mutual respect, fellowship and cooperation. Each deacon performs the same service of love. There is no hierarchy or tenure of service on the deacon board. The chairperson is the coordinator of the board’s activities so that someone can give account of those activities.

Correction of certain errors made by members should be made during the regular pastor and deacon’s meeting before the regular monthly council meeting. Certain errors can be avoided by systematic study of the Discipline of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas
and other pertinent materials. Each deacon should strive to know as much about his Church as possible.

There should be such a spirit of cooperation among the deacons that it becomes infectious throughout the congregation. The spirituality of the board is an important part of the Church's total spirituality. Deacons, individually or as a group, must be an example of scripturally active Christians.

THE DEACON RELATING TO THE MEMBERSHIP

As a leader of the membership the deacon has a duty to uphold the standards of Christian conduct. He begins by being in subjection to his pastor and the principles of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas. He is the joyful servant of all.

His relationship with the members does not place him in the position of big boss nor does he allow himself to become a garbage pail for criticism of the pastor. He is a humble servant. His loyalty to his pastor is unwavering. While easy to communicate with, the deacon should not accept negativism concerning the pastor, elder, bishop or any other church personnel, local, district or national. He must not indulge in gossip about members or leaders of other denominations.

The deacon should make sure that he knows the duties of every officer involved in the operation of the local Church. While it is not his duty to train the officers, he should know enough to lend intelligent assistance. He must be able to sometimes be a first source of help before taking an issue to the pastor without usurping any of the pastor's authority or even appearing to do so. He should also encourage timely reporting at council meetings.

The deacon should endeavor to gain the confidence of each member for the purpose of doing his job well. The relationship should be such that presenting Church needs and obligations (financial and otherwise) sets up no barriers. Financial matters were a part of the duties of the early deacon. There are national, district, and local Church responsibilities. There may also be inter-church fellowships which carry financial responsibilities. Encouragement to total stewardship should always be fostered. An enthusiastic attitude towards the stewardship of time, talent and resources, financial and otherwise, will make meeting the Church's spiritual and material obligations a matter of great joy. A good deacon will help his members keep up with their total stewardship responsibilities.

Fellowship is the sharing of two or more people in a common possession. This word is one of the descriptives of the life of the early Church. The Church is a group of people who have one king and share in one gift of salvation in Jesus Christ (Jude 3). There is a sharing of all things, including the suffering of Christ for the Gospel's sake (Phil. 3:10). There is also a promised share in Christ's glory and rulership (I Timothy 2:12). There is an intimate union between God, Christ, and all Christians through the Spirit (I Corinthians 1:9; II Corinthians 13:14; John 1:3-7).
The basis of this fellowship is love. This is not love that seeks its own but seeks the well-being of others even at the expense of self. This attitude is not an option. It is a command.

The Church is not only a unified organization but an organism - a living organism. Christ cannot be properly shared by a divided people. Even the Communion service is designed to bring us together. We share the communion in a common service.

THE DEACON IN THE MARKETPLACE OF LIFE

He is in the world like any other individual. The persons with whom he works, does business or even plays must be eyewitnesses of Christ in the life of an individual. All of his dealings are above board in every way. On his job or in the practice of his profession, he should be known for his excellent work and sterling character. The image that he projects must be genuine at home and in the larger community as well as at Church.

HELPING YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

There are many little things that a deacon may be able to do in order to bring improvement to the Church. The deacon should ever be searching for ways to improve the life of the body. Since the Christian's life is a life-style of total commitment, total commitment to total stewardship is essential.

1. The Stewardship of the believer is very important to the body and to the world as a witness to what Christ has done in the believer's heart. Total stewardship has to do with committing everything to Christ and his cause. Life as a total commitment is the normal Christian way of life. Required reading on the subject is listed in the bibliography.

2. Church growth is a subject that we just talk about. We have been waiting for they, Lord, to do what He told us to do. If there is to be any lasting growth there must be diligence on the lay level.

Here is an opportunity for the deacon to provide spiritual and practical leadership along with his pastor. Some of the ways are:

a. Discovering growth principles
b. Respect Biblical principles
c. Yield ourselves to God's unswerving purpose
d. Effective evangelism
e. Rightly discern the Body
f. Rightly discern the community
g. Find new groups and ways to disciple
h. Reproduction through planned parenthood
i. Structuring for growth
j. Risking for growth

A selection explaining these principles is found in the bibliography.

3. The building of morale and fellowship is essential to the life of the body. Proper relations and fellowship do not just happen, they must be prayerfully worked at. The maturity of a deacon makes helping individual members grow and mature in the full measure of the stature of Christ a real joy.

The scriptures concerning the building up of the saints have been isolated and studied. The book is in the bibliography as required reading.

The deacon's personal devotional life must be consistent if he is to be the man that God would have him be. He must be a man of constant prayer and meditation. The task before him is that of a servant and not of a lord. It is only through prayer can the deacon maintain a spirit of humility and at the same time be ready to chastise when necessary.

The deacon should also be at home in the Word of God. There should be no excuse for the mishandling of a spiritual situation because of ignorance of the Word of God. The Word must be hidden in his heart because young members are looking for him to be an example of what the pastor preaches. The deacon should also know the Word in order to be able to witness in words as well as by example.

Every organization in any church should be directed towards the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God. If at any time anything is organized in the name of Christ and cannot be related to the advancement of God's Kingdom, it does not belong in the Church of Christ. If this is true we must relate every auxiliary to winning souls to Christ.

4. The Trustee Board has the responsibility of seeing that the Church's property is properly deeded according to state law and in accordance with denominational policy. These papers should be made readily available to the new pastor upon his arrive. The question may be asked, "Why show it to each new pastor?" Each pastor has the right and responsibility of knowing that the Church of which he is pastor is properly set up. If there are any questions along these lines, he is expected to be able to answer correctly.

The position of trustee is not one of authority but function. The pastor and deacon board give direction. There are some decisions which may require the entire local Church, district or even the general Church. In such cases the trustees are only to carry out the wishes of the body (local, district, or general) always reporting promptly to the proper party or parties.

The trustee is one who, where possible, has a knowledge of business and related affairs. He is one who loves the Church of God in general and his Church in particular. He is in regular attendance and knows what is going on spiritually and temporally. Even though the trustee may not have the same qualifications as the deacon, he is full of the Holy Ghost, honest, sincere, dependable, an example in the Church and in his community and able to conduct business. This is not a position just to give someone something to do.
The trustee should be among the first to realize that an attractive Church is a witness of Christ to the community and shows reverence to God. The trustee should do all within his power to keep his Church attractive. If there are things that he can do, he should do them. He can organize clean-up campaigns among the members to clean the sanctuary, plant flowers, etc. The trustee is one who looks towards the future. He realizes that building programs, etc. should meet short and long-range goals.

The trustee realizes that the prompt payment of the Church's debts is imperative. This is a witness to the faithful stewardship of his church to the business community. In order to keep up with current expenses, present or planned projects, and future expansions, money is necessary. Trustees are able to take the responsibility of raising the necessary funds for the church's programs in a way that honors God and continues the development of faithful stewardship on the part of the church's membership.

How does this board add to the Kingdom of God? (1) The life of the trustee is a witness to the world of what Christ can do in a life; (2) The attractive Church facility is inviting and conducive to worship; (3) The prompt payment of bills keeps the business community reminded of the stewardship of the believer.

5. **Treasurer** - The treasurer is the guardian of the Church's monies. He keeps the proper party or parties informed about assets and pledges. He will pay all authorized bills also.

6. **The Financial Secretary** will keep a record of all monies collected and paid out by the finance board.

7. **The Finance Board** - It is the responsibility of the finance board to take care of the pastor and visiting ministers. It is the duty of this board to see that the ministry and general Church are supported adequately.

Why support the general Church?

The general Church has the responsibility of providing spiritual leadership, financial backing for needy projects and general programs for the growth of the local Church. We could go on reasoning and presenting, but these three should be sufficient food for thought.

Your pastor deserves to be taken care of. Your pastor is a servant of God with a peculiar task - "the building up of the saints," "the declaring of the whole counsel of God," and the general shepherding of the flock. He is often overworked because many times he has to have a secular job to support his family.

God has always provided for those who watch over his people and appear before Him on their behalf. In the Old Testament, so important was the job of the Levites that God did not allow them to have an inheritance with Israel to detract from their service to Him (Deuteronomy 18:1-8). These servants of God received a portion of the sacrifices offered.

We often take it for granted that Jesus ate on a regular basis but we never seem to ask how. However, Luke makes it known to us that there were certain women who took care of Jesus
out of their sustenance (Luke 8:2,3). Someone was even taking care of Jesus and his disciples during his earthly ministry.

After the ascension of Jesus, his disciples never went back to fishing. How were they provided for? We must remember that in the book of Acts the early saints had "all things in common."

Many sold their land and brought the money to the apostles to be distributed to the necessity of the saints (Acts 4:32-37). Doubtless, included in this distribution were the needs of the apostles. In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul vindicates his apostleship. In his vindication he also talks about his right to be taken care of by the church at Corinth. Even though Paul did not ask them for anything while he was among them, he was entitled to their financial support. It was Paul's choice to work with his own hands and ask no man for anything, not normal policy.

A man of personal ethics will not speak for himself even under adverse circumstances. The board ofdeacons should take his welfare seriously enough to periodically review what their pastor receives. If there is a periodic lag, then a plan should be formulated to prevent such lags.

The finance board, along with the pastor, should make arrangements to prevent lags in support to the general Church.

The support to the general Church also helps spread the gospel at home and abroad.

A GOOD DEACON

A good deacon is one who, answering God's call, commits himself fully to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A good deacon is an informed deacon.

A good deacon is a cooperative deacon.

A good deacon is a working deacon.

A good deacon brings to the solution of problems consecrated common sense.

A good deacon is genuinely humble.

8. The Sunday School is the primary education agency of the church. It deserves and requires the attendance and attention of all members of the body. The deacon should actively participate, encourage others to participate and work closely with the superintendent on proposed projects and programs.

The Sunday School is the most important educational organization in the local Church. The deacons should be among the leaders in the support of this organization by precept and
example. Sunday morning should find the members of the board of deacons actively participating in their respective Sunday School classes. There should be no doubt that the deacons are Sunday School one hundred percenters.

The Sunday School is not just the period on Sundays when the Bible is taught according to age levels, it is the expression of stewardship and witness. Each Christian, especially those who are appointed superintendents, officers and teachers, has the responsibility of the stewardship of the Word of God, the financial and moral support of the Sunday School and its activities. It is the responsibility of each officer, especially teachers, to lead those under his care to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

9. The Missionary Department is dedicated to the support of missionaries and education. Missionaries are essential to the spread of the gospel and to the carrying out of the Great Commission. The missionary department supports the training of young minds and the training of Christian workers and ministers to reach the lost more effectively.

The home mission should actively engage in reaching the lost and building the home front. The mission should not be considered an exclusive enclave. Ways of reaching out should be discussed, planned and put into action.

One of the ways of reaching out is through cottage meetings. When arranging the cottage meeting:

a. Choose an unsaved home.
b. Ask permission well in advance.
c. Give exact hours and be in and out within the given time.
d. Sing convicting but not loud songs.
e. Do not act as though you were in church - no long prayers nor testimonies. The talk should be short and to the point.
f. Do not take over the home. If things are not as you would like them, ask permission to rearrange or accept it as is.

10. H.Y.P.U., Junior Missionary and the Y.P.I. departments are designed as training and outreach organizations for the youth of the church. It is important for young people to know that they play a role in the life of the Church. Youths are sometimes anxious to work but often must be given direction. This is best done if the above three organizations are kept functioning.

In cases where there seems to be a lack of interest, much patience is required. The Church's interest in its youth or organizations must not wane in the least. Adult leaders should be enthusiastic, especially deacons, because they are in part responsible for the functioning of the total Church community. Wholesome enthusiasm is one way of keeping down confusion and destroying despair.
DESPIRING THE CHURCH

I Cor. 11:22 "...or despise ye the Church of God...?"

This thought or question is drawn from the Communion chapter where their bad behavior was a shame to the Church at Corinth. In this section we will consider other ways that we sometimes despise the Church without intending to do it - not realizing the implications of our thoughtless actions.

After Pentecost, when the spirit descended they were all baptized into His body. The Church is more than an earthly organization. It is Christ's body. At conversion each one of us becomes a part of the body. Some have prominent positions - eyes, tongue, hands, etc. - but most Christians occupy a minor, insignificant, hidden place inside the body, probably a minute cell. But if that hidden cell is damaged the whole body suffers.

Jesus' present occupation is building the Church, Matthew 16:18, "...upon this rock I will build my Church..." This is not an edifice of stone but a living body. Do we despise this Church? To despise means to treat with contempt, to loathe, abhor.

I. How may the Church be despised?

1. The unbeliever or atheist ridicules the Church as a despicable, useless organization.

2. The Christian, of course, would not despise the Church in this matter. Unfortunately the Christian adopts more subtle means.

   A. Forsaking Church attendance. Heb. 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." When we do not attend Church it is a way of saying to the community, "Church attendance is not important. It is good to go to Church if you feel good, the weather is good, and you have no other engagement and you have plenty of time." This is despising the Church for you are treating it lightly in that you recognize other things as having greater importance and prominence in your life. Of course we recognize that those who are really ill cannot come to Church, but we are speaking of those who get a headache at Church time, but it fades away in time to go out to dinner at noon.

   B. We despise the Church by accepting its benefits without accepting responsibility:

      1. We take our children there to be dedicated but never take them to Sunday School.
      2. We take our young people there to be blessed but never erect a family altar at home.
      3. We have our names on the Church roll but live like heathens or unbelievers.
      4. We go to Communion once a year or once a month but never seek to win the lost.
      5. We enjoy Christmas and Easter programs but never learn the other truths of the Word.
6. We take our dead there to be buried but continue to live wickedly without preparing for death ourselves.

7. We despise the Church by reducing it to a social club for business, entertainment or matrimonial purposes.

C. By failing to make preparation for the service. We expect the preacher to study, pray and prepare well. Each member should also prepare. It is good and proper to come to Church dressed neat and clean, but the most important preparation is to come spiritually prepared by prayer and Bible study. Come in the spirit of expectancy, expecting God to feed your hungry soul. Bring your Bible, a pencil and a bit of notepaper to mark or record your blessing.

D. By failing to listen or being irreverent during the service. God dislikes irreverence. Remember that you are in God's house to worship Him. It is not only what we hear but also how we hear.

E. We despise the Church by lax religious beliefs, view and convictions regarding doctrine. There is no excuse for religious stammers in the pulpit or pew. We learn how to market, sew, cook, do business - everything for the daily life - but can we prove Deity of Jesus Christ? If we cannot prove the doctrine from scripture then it is on us and the Church.

F. By wrong and inconsistent lives. The Church has a responsibility to keep a clean house. As a member of the congregation you bear a heavy responsibility before the community. To live wrongly after professing salvation is despising His Church.

G. By unworthy giving to the Church. To a small child you give forty cents for a candy bar but only ten cents to give to the Church. Is this showing respect or disrespect? If I recognize that giving to the Church is giving to the Lord, then my gift reflects the extent of my love for Him, my Creator and my Savior. Under law we would expect to pay a tithe (one tenth). Under grace we ought to give the tithe plus a love offering. We ought to give in the light of the gift given us (God freely gave his son: The Son freely gave His life).

H. By using my talents poorly. I sing for entertainment of others but refuse to sing in the choir. I speak at gatherings and entertain and exhort but never use this talent toward the Lord. I have a splendid personality for my friends and business associates, but never use this talent for the Lord for soulwinning. Consciously or unconsciously we are saying, "My talent is too good to be wasted on that small Church." Caution: False humility is a form of pride. I believe that this is despicable in the sight of the Lord. Remember the Church is His body, not just a weak earthly organization. God and the Church ought to have the first claim on my life.

I. By being a Christian detached from the Church. This is extreme separation. The Church is not holy enough for me, too many hypocrites in it. I can sit at home and watch Oral Roberts on television instead of attending Church. This is despising His Church. His Body.
J. By refusing to join the Church. This is saying, "I am too good for that Church."

II. Results of despising the Church of God.

1. The Lord Jesus must feel terribly hurt; we are sinning against Him.

2. The earthly organization is weakened. The Church needs you and you need the Church.

3. The sinner is stumbled and turned away from the Savior. A clean strong Church attracts sinners to Christ.

4. As a result the Christians who do attend are weakened and overburdened. The tasks are too great for so few people.

5. Basically the non-attender is the loser.
   A. Spiritually, for your spiritual life is stymied.
   B. Economically. God gives to those who give to Him.
   C. Morally. You need the moral teaching and strengthening of the Church.
   D. Physically. God requires that you leave work and worship Him one day in seven.

III. Remedy for despising the Church.

1. Recognize your sin. You have despised the precious Body of the Lord Jesus.
2. Confess the sin to the Lord Jesus, I John 1:9, and He will cleanse and forgive it.
3. Promise God that never again will you be careless in this important matter.
4. Pray and ask God to teach how to honor and respect the Church. Tell your pastor that you have erred but that he can count on you to be a much better member in the future, beginning today.

**CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Church discipline is almost like the weather. We talk a great deal about it but seldom do anything about it. Paul expected Christians to use Church courts, not government courts. 1 Cor. 6:1-3, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?"

Discipline means taking corrective measures as punishment in order to maintain the good conduct of church members. This is a practice seldom made effective in our Churches today. For some reason we fear to use the principles of discipline found in the Holy Scriptures. We are afraid that people will not come back or that others will not join. We are afraid that the Church will lose income if we check the evil of fellow believers. The Apostolic Church was strong because it was pure. Our modern Church is weak because we have compromised our position and condoned sin in the members.
I. When to teach discipline.

I believe that it ought to be taught immediately after conversion. Alongside them we ought to teach them the punishment for disobedience. Upon entering the Church and its responsibilities the candidate ought to be informed on this important point.

II. What to teach regarding discipline.

1. Basis of our authority to administer discipline. Matthew 18:15-17, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and publican."

   A. Go to the erring one alone to exhort him to repent.
   B. If he resists, take with you two or three others as witnesses.
   C. If he continues to harden his heart inform the Church.
   D. If he insists on resisting consider him as a sinning heathen man.

2. Occasions for discipline:

   A. False doctrine (Titus 1:13). Our educational system needs a house cleaning of false teachers.
   B. Open sin. 1 Timothy 5:20; Hab. 1:13; Romans 7:13. Let us pray and ask God to make sin so terrible that we strive to punish it or exclude it from our midst.
   C. Immorality. 1 Cor. 5:1-5. This man was excommunicated for he had committed fornication with his own mother or step-mother.

3. Extent of discipline. Deliver the individual to Satan for the destruction of the body (1 Cor. 5:5). Also, 1 Cor. 5:13; 1 Tim. 1:20. What does one do when the sin or crime does not merit excommunication? If the guilty one shows genuine repentance, keep the guilty one from the communion table and any public office for a set period of time (see discipline of the F.B.H. Church).

III. How to teach discipline.

First, the Church and particularly the deacon board, and mother board must live clean disciplined lives themselves, above reproach in word and deed. This is a great responsibility:

1. In humility. 1 Cor. 10:12. Do not lord it over a fallen soul. If the temptations and circumstances were similar perhaps we would have committed an even greater sin. This is no place for "holier than thou" feelings.

2. In sincerity. Remove the beam from your eye before you mention the mote in your brother's eye (Matt. 7:3-5). Some may take the attitude that, "I am not perfect, therefore,
I will not discipline my brother." This is wrong: If God gives me responsibility I am expected to exercise it.

3. In love. 1 Cor. 13:4. We must certainly deal in love. Love is our strongest lever against the one whom we are trying to bring back to the strict paths of righteousness. He may respond to our love when he may resist our words and arguments. Be sure to exercise plenty of patience if there are signs of genuine repentance.

4. By scripture. Be sure that you can prove that that which he has done is sin from the Bible. The Church is founded on scripture and its actions must be the outworkings of the doctrines and principles laid down in the word of God.

5. By testimony. Be willing to share personal experiences (some) on the subject. This will help us establish mutual trust. This will help us deal with him as a brother.

May God give us the courage of our convictions to exercise godly discipline (Acts 20:28).

**READING LIST**

1. Good study Bible
2. Concordance
3. **Discipline of the F.B.H. Church**
4. **Tenants of the F.B.H. Church**
5. **Stewardship: Total Life Commitment**
   R. Leonard Carroll
6. **Convert Conversation**
   William E. Winters
7. **Building Up One Another**
   Gene A. Getz
8. **The Ministry of the Church & Pastor**
   Paul L. Walker
9. **Ten Steps to Church Growth**
   D.A. McGavran & Winfield C. Arn
10. **How to Study the Bible**
    Richard W. DeHaan

**1,3,4 REQUIRED READING**
DIDLIOGRAPHY

Egerton, M.W.  *A Functioning Deacon in a New Testament Church* (No City-No Pub.-No Date).


NOTES