



---

## DIACONAL SERVICES

---

### CONFESSION OF FAITH. Chapter 26. Of the Communion of Saints

I. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

II. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

III. This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away, Or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

THOMAS E. PECK (1822-1893), Presbyterian professor of theology and polity, Union Theological Seminary, VA

“This communion [of saints] is most impressively exhibited in two ordinances, both of which are emphatically denominated by the word communion, to wit: the Lord's supper and contributions. . . . This view of contributions accounts for the importance ascribed to them in both Testaments. They are the tokens . . . of the reality of the communion of the saints. . . . [I]n relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities and necessities' . . . the communion of saints was first and most conspicuously exhibited in the primitive church; and it was in connection with this form that the deacons first appeared. . . . The prime aspect, then, of the office of deacon is that of a representative of the communion of saints. The word may be and is preached where there are no saints, and therefore no communion; it is conceivable also that ruling elders may exercise their authority in a dead church; but deacons have nothing to do, except in a church which has life enough to show itself in a ministry to the saints.” From Thomas E. Peck, *Notes on Ecclesiology*, 2nd edition (Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1892), pp. 206-208.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Diaconal service belongs to the whole body of Christ, after the pattern of her Savior, as an outward expression of inward grace, in evidence of and witness to love for the Lord in His people (Matt. 20:26-28; John 13:34-35; Matt. 25:31-46; John 17:22-23; Rom. 10:12-13; 2 Cor. 9:8-11; Gal. 5:13-14; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:17-18; 1 John 4:20; CF 26.1).
2. Diaconal service refers to the spiritual service of saints relieving each other in outward things, as necessity requires and as prudence and the Word of God directs (Acts 2:44-45; 11:29; Rom. 12:10-13; Gal. 6:10; 2 Thes. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:16; 6:7-8; James 1:27; 1 John 3:16-18; CF 26.2).
3. Diaconal service must not violate a member's privacy (1 Thes. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:13); nor is it in conflict with the duty of each one to "bear his own load" and "work in a quiet fashion and eat their own bread" (Gal. 6:5; 1 Thes. 4:11-12; 2 Thes. 3:12); nor does it relieve family members from responsibility to provide for one another (1 Tim. 5:4, 8); nor do the obligations we have toward one another "take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions" (Ex. 20:15; Eph. 4:28; Acts 5:4; CF 26.3). Rather such service must be offered with sensitivity to those in need, voluntarily, from the heart, according to one's calling and ability, out of love for the Lord and His people (Acts 11:29; Rom. 12:8-9; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 14:26b; 2 Cor. 9:7).
4. Diaconal service, as an expression of the communion of the saints, is to be extended to members of the congregation, and as God provides opportunity, to all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord (Matt. 12:48-50 w/Mat. 25:31-46; Acts 6:1-6; 19:29; 2 Cor. 9:12-14; 1 Thes. 4:9-10; CF 26.2).
5. In Diaconal service the needs of the body are supplied (2 Cor. 9:12; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) when in humility each one is prepared to ask for help (Mat. 7:7-11; John 14:14; James 4:2-3), and both give and receive (Acts 20:35; Eph. 4:28) to the glory of Christ and the upbuilding of His Church (Eph. 4:7-13; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 5:5).
6. Diaconal service is exercised representatively: first, by individuals; next, by a few together; and finally by the body through the officers appointed for that purpose (the Deacons), as the need requires and prudence directs (Lk 10:27-37; Mat. 18:15-17; Acts 6:1-6).
7. The office of Deacon is spiritual, "one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus". The office of Deacon is not one of rule (which belongs to the Eldership), but nor are the Deacons the janitors for the meeting place. Rather the Deacon, with the assistance of qualified women of the congregation (1 Tim. 3:11), is to be devoted to the equitable and orderly expression of "the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need" (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; BCO 7-2; 9-1—9-3, 9-7).

## GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

1. a. If you see a need (as in the principles above), and can provide help (consistent with your own responsibilities and resources), take the opportunity as a calling from the Lord by His providence and ask if you can be of service.  
b. If you have a need (as in the principles above), ask for the help of a brother or sister in Christ.
2. If you cannot do all that is required yourself, seek the aid of one or two others (and if appropriate, let the Deacons know of your efforts).

3. If the matter requires more than a few people or is likely to extend over time, will require the financial resources of the congregation or the administrative services of the officers, call the Deacon with responsibility for the kind of need in question.
4. The Deacon called will assess the need and determine how the Congregation can help (in consultation with the other Deacons if necessary), review his list of those willing and able to serve in this area, and call upon a member who has previously expressed willingness to assist the Deacons in organizing help.
5. The responsible Deacon will also call the Pastor to inform him of any spiritual need attending the matter, and so that the Pastor can pray, and lead the congregation in prayer, as appropriate.
6. The one helping to organize the effort will communicate to the others on the list, arranging to help as directed by the Deacons, and report back to the responsible Deacon what has been done.
7. The one(s) receiving help should communicate to and through the responsible Deacon with respect to any further needs or adjustments to the help provided.

#### NHPC DIACONAL SERVICES

Benevolence Planning/Development

Bereavement

Building Fund

Care for Children During Services

Financial Emergency or Destitution

Housing/Hospitality

Meals

Meeting Place Care & Development

Needs of Broader Christian Community

Training (w/Pastor Coffin)

Transportation

Visitation of Shut-ins

Work Assistance