



# **Deacons**

## **Workbook: The Ministry of Compassion and Service**

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# Introduction

Congratulations! If you are reading this, you undoubtedly have received a call from your church's nominating committee asking you to consider serving your church as a deacon!

You have quite a task before you—answering your church with “yes” or “no.” Your response to the call should not be taken lightly. The church is calling you to assume significant responsibilities as an ordained leader. Can you imagine answering that awesome invitation without help? The good news is that you don't have to!

The resource you hold in your hands has been designed to guide you through the discernment process. Beginning with the call from the nominating committee, this resource will help you discern whether you have the gifts and the grace in your life to say yes.

If you say yes to serving as a deacon, this resource will help you come to terms with the process: election to office, preparation for your ministry, ordination to ordered ministry, and installation as a deacon.

Deacons in the PC(USA) bear responsibility for the “ministry of compassion and service” (*Book of Order*, G-2.02). The work of the deacon is ancient, described first in Acts 6:3–6, where the apostles assigned to “seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” the task of waiting at tables at the daily distribution of bread to poor widows in the community. Out of this early work has grown the work of the deacon in “compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress” (G-2.0201).

It is important to note that the deacon's responsibility for compassion is more than just one-to-one kindness; it extends to include seeking justice for those “burdened by unjust policies or structures.” There is, therefore, a powerful social justice component inherent in diaconal calling.

This resource may be used as a self-guided study, as a group study, and as a ready reference. For a self-guided study, you can start at the beginning, reading the articles and completing the activities at your pace, perhaps meeting regularly with a friend or two. For a group study, suggested lesson plans are offered (see p. 83). Even longtime deacons can use this resource to inform their ongoing ministry.

In addition, you will need a Bible, copies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s constitution (*Book of Confessions* and *Book of Order*), and a pen or pencil.

So, you've received a call. Turn the page and let's get started.





# The Call to Serve

You've been called to consider ordered ministry in your congregation.

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (teaching elders and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church (*Book of Order*, G-2.0102).

What are your initial thoughts and feelings about ordered ministry?

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What does *ordered* signify to you?

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What does *ministry* signify to you?

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You've been called to consider ordered ministry in your congregation. That's right—*called*, not just asked to fill a slot.

The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience, the approval of a community of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a council of the Church (*Book of Order*, G-2.0103).

What are your initial thoughts and feelings about the three dimensions of call?

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What does *being called* signify to you?

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**Starting on the next page, read an article on call. As you read, open your heart to connections between Eugenia's story and yours.**



## Coming to Our Senses: The Call of Christ to Lives of Love and Service

*Eugenia Gamble*

Last night—or, rather, early this morning—the telephone rang. It rang into my deep sleep with a piercing sound that caused rapid heartbeat and an awkward fumbling for the receiver. There is something about a call in the night that sets our cells on edge with a knowing that, whatever it is, the news cannot be good. For me last night, it was a wrong number, someone else's news misdirected to me by a transposed number. As I lay in bed trying to go back to sleep, I reflected on the sudden, unexpected, and sometimes frightening nature of the calling of Christ.

My mind went back to my experience of the call to ministry. It, too, was a sudden, unexpected, and terrifying wake-up call in the middle of the night. No flashes of light, no angelic appearances, no literal ring of the phone, but a knowing of presence that came over me and an awesome sense of being brought into a larger life story than the little one I was living as a twenty-one-year-old recent college graduate with a degree in poetry writing and a job as a cocktail waitress. There was a feeling of awakening, of embarrassment (all call experiences, it seems, involve a process of making peace with our undeserving), of awe, of stark terror, and of giddy joy. Where would the journey take me? What would the path be like? Who would accompany me? Would the church accept me? Would I have to become someone altogether different from the

young girl/woman that I was? Was this a call, or was it just my wanting somehow to be needed or necessary? Questions arise in all of us, perhaps when considering church membership or when the nominating committee calls to ask if we will serve as an officer.

Before going any further, I want to make it abundantly clear that—although my experience of calling has culminated, to date, in 30 years of pastoral ministry—pastoral ministry is not the most fundamental aspect of my call. It is simply a way that I was led to live it out. God loves us and invites every person into a new way of life. We answer that call in different ways. In the Reformed tradition, an understanding of calling is fundamental to how we view ourselves. We are called into relationship with Christ, and we believe responsibilities in the church, in the spiritual life, in the political sphere, and for the mending of all creation and the moving of the world toward God's values of justice, freedom, and peace issue from that relationship.

Here is a simple truth. God has a purpose—a unique, specific, focused, compelling purpose for each of our lives. It is something that, before the beginning of time, was set out for each person to do and to be. It is something that, in the doing and being of it, will provide freedom, mediate healing, and/or further the cause of justice, peace, and the name of Christ in the world.

This calling is not something that can be given to another to answer on our behalf, nor is it something we devise, root out, wrestle to the ground, choose, aspire to, or maybe even naturally recognize. God initiates the call on our lives and controls it.

Think about our old ancestor Abraham (Genesis 12:1–5), winding his way to work one day just like every other day in a life that was good and bad, filled with compromises and successes, yet built over a deep grief, a barrenness that lay next to his heart like a piece of lead too dangerously close to vital things to remove. Without warning, he heard a whisper in his heart that life could be more. If he would risk the journey, his life could be used for the blessing of the world. Abraham did not control the timing of this call, nor the direction that it would take him. It was not something he could manage. It was simply something to accept or reject. It was simply someone to accept or reject. That is the way it is with our calls as well. They are invitations to a relationship with which we are graced with goodness so that we may be the vehicles of grace for others. They are loving invitations, not command performances. Barrenness still lies before us, and we may choose it if we want.

The precious core of our calling is that we are the objects of God's desire (Isaiah 43:1–7). The call comes to us from a God who asks us to live fearless lives of risk and promise and to turn away from lives of barrenness, misplaced longing, and grief-stained apathy. The questions that God asks are, "Can you yet believe that I am good? Can you yet believe that I love you? If so, will you act on that belief so that I can make my will full?"

Jesus shows us another aspect of the sacred dance with God that is the call of God. In Mark 1:14–20, the call to follow includes the call to repentance. The word that Mark uses for repent means "to change one's mind." It carries some of the meaning of the Hebrew word for repenting, which means "turning back toward" or "coming to one's senses." It may be difficult to think of James, John, Andrew, and Simon coming to their senses by leaving their jobs and families to follow an itinerant rabbi. That is what they did. They snapped out of the despair of long waiting into the hope of a new day. Like cold water splashed on the face of a fainting person, the call from God brought them to their senses.

Answering the call on your life is the supreme act of coming to your senses, too. In saying yes to Christ and all that following Christ means, we realize that we are not accidental visitors to this place and our lives. We are deeply loved creations fashioned for a holy purpose—maybe not grand, perhaps unsung, but nevertheless a holy, holy purpose. That purpose is to worship God, love God, serve God, declare God, and offer our bodies, minds, spirits, and gifts toward whatever ends the Beloved desires.

Our calls began in the heart of the Lover long before we knew. They issued forth to us in the stories of our faith. They became truly available to us, walked with us, in the person and work of Christ. They whisper to us still, in every restless moment, when we draw a glass of water and remember, on some level, the waters of our baptism, the seal of our calling, when there is a glimpse out of the corner of our eye of the people we might yet become. Our calls ring inside us when

we see a need in our homes, churches, and world, and we wonder how we can respond. They cut through our priorities with one phone call from a nominating committee or a Spirit nudge to make a commitment to a particular congregation. They leap to action when

the phone rings in the night, and our first response is, "Oh, God." They snatch us to our senses in the midst of a world gone mad when we look at the wreck of a human life and think, "Perhaps it does not have to be that way. Here I am, Lord. Send me."

**My thoughts about being called:**

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## You and Your Baptism

You are the object of God's desire and a recipient of God's love. God created you in God's image, redeems you, and continually pursues you. One of the ways we experience God's call is through baptism:

Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God's gift of grace and also God's summons to respond to that grace. Baptism calls to repentance, to faithfulness, and to discipleship. Baptism gives the church its identity and commissions the church for ministry to the world (*Book of Order*, W-2.3006).

Remember your baptism. Write your memories, or tell your story to a friend. What was most significant about your baptism? If you were a child at the time, what did your family tell you about your baptism?

Note the number of times you see the word *grace* in the *Book of Order* excerpt above.

What is grace?

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In what ways have you experienced the grace of God in your life?

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What does it mean to you to be summoned or called to God's grace?

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The following statement from the baptismal liturgy is all about grace. As you discern your sense of call, read the statement at least once a day, inserting your name where indicated.

For you, little one,  
the Spirit of God moved over the waters at creation,  
and the Lord God made covenants with his people.  
It was for you that the Word of God became flesh  
and lived among us, full of grace and truth.  
For you, [name], Jesus Christ suffered death  
crying out at the end, “It is finished!”  
For you Christ triumphed over death,  
rose in newness of life,  
and ascended to rule over all.  
All of this was done for you, little one,  
though you do not know any of this yet.  
But we will continue to tell you this good news  
until it becomes your own.  
And so the promise of the gospel is fulfilled:  
“We love because God first loved us.”<sup>1</sup>

Another way we experience God’s call is through church membership:

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim on a human life and of entrance into the membership of the church. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God’s love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The baptism of those who enter the covenant of membership upon their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior witnesses to the truth that God’s gift of grace calls forth a response of faithfulness. Thus, the triune God, incarnate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, gives to the Church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership (*Book of Order*, G-1.0301).

**What is the meaning of Presbyterian church membership? Turn the page. As you read Susan’s article, open your heart to faithful ways you have expressed your church membership and discern God’s call and grace in your life.**

1. Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “Variations on the French Reformed Church Baptismal Liturgy,” [presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/variations\\_on\\_the\\_french\\_reformed\\_church\\_baptismal\\_liturgy1.pdf](http://presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/variations_on_the_french_reformed_church_baptismal_liturgy1.pdf).



## Being Presbyterian

Susan R. Andrews

### Anna

Anna is a thirty-year-old single woman who is a successful lawyer in a large metropolitan area. She lives a comfortable and busy life, but she finds herself restless and unfocused much of the time. She has started attending worship with a local Presbyterian congregation, drifting back to the church where she was confirmed fifteen years earlier. She is looking for something to give meaning to her life and a way to serve others beyond her small, private world.

### Yoshi

Yoshi grew up in Japan, where he was raised by Shinto parents. When he came to the United States to study and work as a research scientist, he left all religion behind. But recently he has married Beth, who is a practicing Christian, and he finds something deep and compelling about her life of faith. He has started reading the Bible and exploring theological ideas, and he finds himself opening up to the presence of God through the weekly ritual of worship. Yoshi feels drawn to Jesus Christ and yearns to make a commitment. But he still has intellectual doubts about some of the traditional doctrines of the faith.

### Keisha and Don

Keisha is married to Don. They are both Army officers who move around every two or three years. Such constant mobility is hard on the family, but Keisha and Don have learned that the church welcomes them wherever they go. Their faith always has been strong, simple, and nourishing, and they quickly find a congregation in each new community where their gifts and talents are welcomed warmly.

Anna, Yoshi, Keisha, and Don represent different kinds of members in Presbyterian congregations today—each approaching church membership from a different place on his or her spiritual journey. Anna will join a church by *reaffirmation of faith*, returning to an active life of faith after a long period of inactivity. Yoshi will make a *profession of faith*, claiming Jesus as Lord for the first time in his life, not out of intellectual certainty, but out of a heart yearning for a personal relationship with God. And Keisha and Don will join by *transfer of letter*, easily moving from one community of faith to another, finding a common story and a spiritual family wherever they go.

Being Presbyterian is a commitment to a covenant relationship: a relationship with a living and risen Jesus, and a relationship with a vulnerable and growing community of faith. Three central values or ideas shape our lives as Presbyterians:

1. **Covenant:** Presbyterians claim God's covenant made with us through baptism. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, God says to us, "I will be your God and you will be my people—no matter what." God fulfills this covenant promise repeatedly by forgiving us, re-creating us, and encouraging us through all the failures, struggles, and perplexities of life. The ultimate expression of God's tenacity and love for us comes through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—where God's Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, taking every moment of human living and transforming it into the likeness of God. Such extraordinary love and faithfulness are the heart of God's covenant with us. And this holy covenant becomes the model for our human covenants—our promises to be loving, faithful, and constant in all the relationships of our living.

2. **Community:** In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul offers an organic image of the church. We are the body of Christ: an interconnected, interdependent, integrated community of believers, dependent on one another to make the church whole. Our covenant commitment is not just with God, but also with one another. As Presbyterians, we admit our need for others and their need for us.

3. **Commitment:** Just as God stays connected to us no matter what, we are called to stay connected to God faithfully, regularly, and permanently—in good times and in bad. Loyalty and fidelity are becoming rare values in our fast-paced and novelty-oriented world.

It takes long-term commitment and disciplined participation to change us and root us in what is important. Every Presbyterian is a *minister*: one who serves God. And commitment is the fuel that energizes our ministry, year in and year out.

Being Presbyterian is a matter of *trust*, not intellectual certainty or moral perfection. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we do not have to understand or know all the doctrines of the faith. Neither do we have to master all the disciplines of a mature spiritual life. Profession of faith is the beginning of a journey toward the knowledge and certainty of God, and it will take the rest of our lives to complete this journey. To trust is the key.

But trust in Jesus Christ becomes alive only through *discipleship*—through obedient living, loving service, and daily disciplines of faith. The *Book of Order* is explicit about what faithful church membership requires:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life

- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may

be increased and made more meaningful (*Book of Order*, G-1.0304).

As members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are called and equipped to be the yeast, salt, and light of Jesus Christ in God's spiritually unfinished world. May it be so!

**My thoughts about being Presbyterian:**

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## Your Membership, Ministry, and the Church

God calls us to be Christ in and for the world. This missional aspect of our call is both individual and communal. In other words, “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1) as an individual Christian. You also are called to join other Christians in doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God (see Micah 6:8) and going into the world to make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:19) as the one body of Christ.

In what ways do you answer God’s call to serve in your life? In and through your church?

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Complete the membership-as-ministry self-assessment below. How do you rate?

### The Ministry of Members (G-1.0304) Self-Assessment Chart

Responsibilities of membership	Ways I have done/do this	Gifts/skills I have for this
Proclaim the good news in word and deed		
Take part in the common life and worship of the congregation		
Lift others up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support		
Study Scripture and issues of faith and life		
Give my money, time, and talents		
Demonstrate a new quality of life within and through the church		
Live responsibly in personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships		
Work in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment		
Participate in the church’s government		
Review and evaluate my own membership and ways I participate in worship		

You've assessed your ministry as a member of Christ's church. What about your congregation: How does your congregation act as the body of Christ in service to and for the world?

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation. Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of the one who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ (*Book of Order*, G-2.0101).

**What is at stake in the church's ministry? As you read Cliff's article, open your heart to faithful ways your church lives out God's call to serve.**



## The Church: The Body of Christ

Clifton Kirkpatrick

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), at its best, has modeled its life and ministry on the biblical image of the body of Christ. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in our *Book of Order* captures this ethos when it states, “God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body” (*Book of Order*, F-1.0201). Everything about the church—its faith, its polity, its worship, and its mission in the world—seeks to be a faithful reflection of the body of Christ.

This image was central to the New Testament’s understanding of the church. The apostle Paul developed the image in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

One of the great realities of the New Testament church was that it was diverse beyond anyone’s wildest imagination. This diversity often led to deep conflicts in the life of the church, as was obviously true in Corinth. The old models of what it meant to be a religious community would no longer hold. That is why this image of the church as the body of Christ was such a breath of fresh air.

Paul viewed diversity, at its core, not as a problem but as a tremendous gift. Just like in a body—where it functions so much better because it has eyes and ears, nose and throat, arms and legs—so the church can be much stronger because each of the God-given gifts of diverse people can be shared together to build up the church and strengthen its ministry. Just like in a body, when it

is working well, these different parts do not exist to compete with one another, but to complement one another to make the body stronger and more effective.

The church’s body image—an organic, cooperative human community—also identifies the shape of the continuing ministry of Christ in the world. The head of this body is Jesus Christ. According to our *Book of Order*, “Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. . . . Christ gives to the Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its order and discipline” (*Book of Order*, F-1.0202-1.0203). Each member of the body of Christ is given a “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). All members of the body together work to incarnate the love of Christ for one another and for the world.

This understanding of the church as the body of Christ has led the Reformed tradition and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to develop some of its core values:

- *The lordship of Christ*: Everything that we do is centered on Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the head of the church.
- *Honoring diversity*: Just as the body celebrates its diversity, we celebrate, affirm, and welcome the rich diversity of all of God’s people in our common life.

- *Shared leadership*: There can be no authoritarian leadership in a Presbyterian church, because all parts of the body have gifts that must be honored in its leadership. That is the basis of the Reformed conviction that the spiritual leaders (deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders) are to be elected by the people of God.
- *Being one church*: Just as there is only one body of Christ, there is only one church. Each of our congregations is an organic part of the broader Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is just one part of the church ecumenical. To be Presbyterian is to be ecumenical!
- *A holistic ministry*: Our ministry in the world is the ministry of Christ. Just as Christ was called “to bring good news to the poor,” “to proclaim release to the captives,” and “to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18), so are we.
- *Discerning the mind of Christ*: The purpose of our governance is not to balance political interests in the church, but to enable elected spiritual leaders—together in prayer, dialogue, and reflection of God’s Word—to best discern the mind of Christ for the church and the world.

These are the implications that Presbyterian and Reformed people have gleaned from the biblical call of the church to be the body of Christ, and when they are lived out they are a real gift.

In many ways, our culture is pulling our churches away from those values. In a time when many have a consumer mentality about religion, when individual megachurches not organically connected to anyone are rising in popularity, and when interest groups are seeking to shape the church’s life, this vision of the church as the body of Christ can seem countercultural. That was also true for the New Testament church. However, that church, like our own, found that when the church centered itself on its understanding of being the body of Christ and of living in accord with the principles of such a body, God richly blessed the church—and through the ministry of the church, the world. Let us live with confidence that the same will be true in our time!

**My thoughts on the church, the body of Christ:**

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## You and the Church

God calls you into community. Call is not just about “me and my friend Jesus.” We live out our relationship with God in community, as the body of Christ—the church. The church is the community to which we belong and contribute as a part of the body. The Spirit forms us, ordains us, and sends us through the voice and will of the church. As a part of the body, we are both giver and receiver of God’s love and grace.

Read Paul’s description of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

What does the passage say about your relationship with other members of your congregation?

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How does this description of the body of Christ inform your understanding of call?

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Of the six core values of the Reformed tradition (pp. 17–18), which does your church do well? Which needs revitalization in your church?

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## Yes or No?

Which way are you leaning in answering the call? Not sure? Let's look to the *Book of Order*, which delineates the gifts and responsibilities that come with the call to serve in ordered ministry:

To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church (*Book of Order*, G-2.0104).

That paragraph is jam-packed with important and heavy words! Deacons are to be persons willing to accept positions of trust, leadership, responsibility, moral obligation, and legal obligation. The position requires time, energy, and commitment to the church's mission or goals.

List here aspects of G-2.0104 that you affirm in your life:

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Now list aspects that you wonder about:

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Schedule a conversation with a trusted friend to discuss both lists. What wisdom can you glean from talking with a friend?

## **Biblical Foundations for the Ordered Ministry of Deacon**

Complete the following activity to gain a sense of the importance of deacons in the life of God’s family.

*Diaconia* (Greek): “One giving service to others in Christian love, care, and compassion.”

Read Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–9, 14–21.

Discuss the meaning of Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–9 in light of Mark 8:14–21 and reflect on the meaning and purpose of serving and the determination of leadership as seen in verses 7 and 12.

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Now read these Bible passages:

- Matthew 25:31–40
- Luke 22:24–27
- Acts 6:1–6
- 1 Timothy 3:8–13

Describe the significance of serving and caring in the readings, and how deacons were key leaders in the New Testament church.

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In what ways are the deacons of today able to learn from the New Testament about their role and the responsibilities of leadership?

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The nominating committee awaits your response. Maybe you’re leaning toward “no.” There is nothing wrong with declining the call to serve. After all, the responsibilities require a reordering of your priorities and time for the next three years.

Are you ready to say “yes”? If not, what more do you need to consider? Do you need to speak with your pastor? Your family?

If you are ready to say yes, please contact the nominating committee. You are ready for election to ordered ministry and preparation for service.





## **Sessions for Group Study**



# Personal Faith

## Part 1: Sharing Faith Stories

### You Will Need

Copies of *Deacons: The Ministry of Compassion and Service*  
 Newsprint, markers  
 Sheets of paper, pencils

### Leading the Session

- Write the fifteen questions below on newsprint, and give these instructions to the participants: Take time to reminisce about one year in your life—age 6. With a partner, answer questions 1 through 7.
- After each pair has finished, ask pairs to choose two questions from 8 through 15 and report responses to the group.

At age 6 . . .

1. Where did you live?
  2. What was your house like?
  3. What was your bedroom like?
  4. What was your favorite hiding place?
  5. Where did you sit at the supper table?
  6. What was the conversation like at the table?
  7. Who was the “warm” person for you at the table?
  8. What were the happy times at this table?
  9. How did your family praise you? For what?
  10. Who did you look up to at this table?
  11. What was so special about this person?
  12. How did your family deal with problems at this table?
  13. If you could change one thing about this table, what would it be?
  14. How has your childhood table affected the person you are today?
  15. What would you like to keep from your childhood table for your children, if you have any?
- Complete the “Personal Faith Chart” (p. 26). Use the chart to discuss your personal faith.

## **Part 2: Confessions of Faith**

### **You Will Need**

Bibles

Copies of *Deacons: The Ministry of Compassion and Service*

Paper, pencils

### **Leading the Session**

- Explore some biblical confessions of faith. Read and discuss:

Genesis 12:1–19

Genesis 15:1–6

Genesis 22:1–14

Psalms 130

Matthew 14:22–33

Mark 8:27–30

- Write your own confession, using suggestions given in “How to Write a Faith Statement” (p. 27).
- See “Writing a Personal Statement of Faith” (p. 27) for suggestions on writing a personal statement of faith.
- Read aloud personal confessions for helpful comments from the group. Invite the participants to consider reviewing and/or revising their confessions before the examination.
- Pray a closing prayer.