

THE ROLE OF DEACONS

The Book of Order describes the role of deacon as one of “sympathy, witness and service after the example of Jesus Christ.” The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word meaning “one who serves.” Clearly, it is an office of ministry of compassion, love, and prayer, reaching out to those in need and according to Matthew 25:40 includes tasks to qualify one to inherit eternal life: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” As we all know, this ministering to people’s problems, hurts, and needs requires more than perseverance, but often yields results we claim as our most treasured gifts. Of course, deacons are not the only Presbyterians to provide ministries of sympathy and caring, but they do have the unique opportunity of providing an organized way of bringing love of Jesus Christ to the congregation of Newnan Presbyterian Church.

Annual Events

Officers Retreat. NPC ministers begin the year with a retreat on Friday and Saturday the weekend before Ordination and Installation. Three meals are provided for attendees: Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch. Deacons are in charge of providing breakfast for attendees.

Fellowship & Faith. A congregational day of work and time to share faith and fellowship is planned by the Diaconate, usually in late January or February. It’s a day of visiting homebound members and working together on various church chores or projects that otherwise would be neglected. It’s a time to invite our neighborhoods to join in cleaning, painting, planting, polishing silver, and togetherness restoration.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is our Mardi Gras. A supper of pancakes created, prepared, cooked, and served by deacons. They really are yummy!

End of Summer BBQ. In August, the Diaconate may host a big BBQ for all church members on a Sunday after church. With baked beans, cole slaw, and brownies, everyone finds something to love about this fundraiser meal.

Stewardship Dinner. The Stewardship Committee makes the decision on this meal, but deacons usually serve. They may or may not assist in planning. It’s an appropriate end-of-year service event for the Diaconate.

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Neighborhoods

The first organized method of bringing care to all members of our church family is by assigning each deacon to a specific neighborhood in the community. The congregational addresses have been divided into 11 neighborhoods or zones with one deacon responsible for families in an assigned zone and the Chair responsible for families of deacons and church staff. Some deacons are assigned and reside in a heavily populated small neighborhood, while others live in a neighborhood far from the one assigned that covers a larger, sparsely populated area. Neighborhood deacons introduce themselves to their assigned neighborhood in January by sending a card or letter to each family in that neighborhood. This mailing is also a good way to become familiar with the names and addresses of members in the neighborhood being served. During the year, additions, deletions, or changes updating information are received from and/or are given to the Chair. The minister will notify you of anyone in your neighborhood with special needs.

New member. A few minutes before the church service on the Sunday of joining the church, the individual or family to join will appear before the session. The appropriate neighborhood deacon accompanies and introduces the new member to the session members. The pastor provides details about a week or two in advance.

Prospective member. The pastor sends letters to visitors and provides a copy to the neighborhood deacon. Please call the visitor and invite them back to church or offer to answer questions they might have about NPC programs.

Absent member. It's always a good idea to call or contact a neighborhood member after they've been absent a few times. Care and concern are vital to Christian support.

Celebration for member. Everyone loves a birthday card or a note recognizing an achievement, anniversary, new family member, or promotion. Any attempt to recognize important events in the lives of your assigned neighborhood families will be most appreciated.

Service for member. The pastor might pass on information during or after sickness, death, or other times in the life of a member. Consider the situation to provide whatever you feel is needed – a potted plant, an entire meal from your kitchen, carry out from Sprayberry's, soup, Chinese take-out, a yummy dessert, sandwiches for kids, or just a bowl or basket of fruit. Showing up with a smile of encouragement is the most important part of the gift!

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Deacon of the Month

Every deacon will have one month to be responsible for ushers, counting Sunday church service attendance, collecting pages from attendance records, attending the monthly Session meeting, giving the opening and closing prayer and devotional at the Diaconate meeting, and keeping pews supplied with pencils, attendance sheets, envelopes for offering, prayer requests, and Wednesday Night Supper reservations.

Ushering. Ushers are needed for each Sunday service and possibly for special services (funerals, Lenten services, Maundy Thursday). When in doubt, ask the pastor. About two weeks before the duty month begins, call or email the church secretary with the names of ushers so they can be listed in the church newsletter and bulletin. Two are needed for the early service; six for the regular service. At least two ushers should arrive 15 minutes before the service begins. Light the altar candles on the first Sunday of the month or for any service offering communion or when there are no acolytes. Greet and hand out bulletins at each inside entrance. As service begins, close the swinging doors. Just before the offertory, ushers gather in the back then proceed (three on each side) to the front to receive the offering plates. One or two will attend the balcony, others wait for their return even if the music begins. Offering plates can be taken to the front by just two and held until the prayer is ended. Place the offering plates on the altar and be seated. Close to the end of the service, open the doors.

Attendance. Count attendees before the children's hour and record the numbers on the form found with the bulletins or in the window sill and place the count in the offering plate. Collect registration sheets, front pew on top, from each pew at the end of church service. Fold each stack and indicate "left," "right," or "center." Give the count and attendance records to the minister of that service. The minister then or later will give you contact information for any first-time visitor for cookies.

Cookie Ministry. First-time visitors get cookies or bread from the Deacon of the Month as soon as possible. A short note for attending can be written on a card, note, or any piece of paper with your name and phone number. Something like "Glad you visited us today. Feel free to call me if you need any information regarding our programs." (Ask about bags and inserts). If the visitor can't be home when delivery is made, it's o.k. to leave the bag on the door knob. Add the recipient's name and address to the "Cookie Ministry Form." At the end of the month, give the form to the Chair or the upcoming Deacon of the Month.

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Officer Visitation

Each day of the month is assigned to a deacon or other officer of the church for Officer Visitation. The church secretary (770-253-4405) will be expecting a call each day to pass along a name from the pastor of anyone sick, in the hospital, or in need of a contact or visit. Please call the church before the assigned day if day falls on Saturday or Sunday.

Bereavement Plan

In 2009, the Diaconate voted to fund and help carry out some sort of Bereavement Plan. At that time, Maureen Martin chaired a Bereavement Committee made up of **unknown** members. With the support and guidance of Meg Jackson Clark, volunteer deacons Jo An Neil, Burva Stanley and Sue Reece became Maureen's committee. In 2010, the decision was made to have basic menus in place. Sample menu suggestions are below. Now, when a church member dies, there is a procedure that allows Harry to offer the family a hot meal, lunch, or a reception. With the family's decision and an approximate number of expected attendees, he contacts Maureen. If Maureen is unavailable, he gives the request to the Diaconate Chair, who knows the volunteer deacons. Although Maureen, the Chair, cannot attend weekday services, she and the committee can tweak menus for quantities and presentation. One or all the committee members serve as hostess, using other volunteers as needed to make calls, shop, make sandwiches, set up, serve, and clean. All plastic/paper products, as well as tea and other items should be purchased with available money from the Diaconate Fund, specifically for this purpose. After the loss of a loved one, it's difficult to identify ways to be helpful. **This service has been a gesture overwhelmingly appreciated by every family.**

Menu Suggestions

Reception

Cookies
Finger Sandwiches
Nuts/Mints
Cheese Straws or Cheese and Crackers
Fruit and/ or Veggies w or w/o Dip
Punch/Water/Decaf Coffee

Lunch

Sandwiches
Fruit
Potato Chips
Brownies or Dessert Bars
Tea/Water

Hot Meal (1)

NPC Chicken Casserole
Green or Fruit Salad
Roll
Pie or Cake Dessert
Tea/Water/Decaf Coffee

Hot Meal (2)

Sliced Ham or Chicken Fingers
Yellow and Green Veggie or Potatoes and Salad
Bread
Pie or Cake Dessert
Tea/Water/Decaf Coffee