

PARTNERS



A Resource for Church Leaders from Diaconal Ministries Canada

Diakonia in the life of your church

By Hans Kater

Greetings from Diaconal Ministries Canada! As you ramp up for your church's ministries this fall, take a moment to reflect with me on the word 'diakonia' in the life of your church.

You may be thinking that diaconal ministry (diakonia) applies only to deacons. Let me suggest to you a broader understanding.

Biblically, *diakonia* is defined as "care and service" for others. For this reason, *diakonia* is not limited to tasks within the church that are commonly associated with charity and its administration. Christians are to care and serve those around us – in the church and in the community. Since *diakonia* is relationship-building, it applies to all followers of Christ.

Jesus' ministry can best be described as *diakonia* – in fact, it is the epitome and the perfect example of *diakonia*. Jesus was able to care and serve others through the empowerment of His Spirit. When our church members walk by the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will be evident - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gala-

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tians 5:22). Fruit will be a visible and concrete testimony to the grace and love of our Lord!

I encourage you to read the story of the New Life church community in Guelph (on page 2). New Life takes *diakonia* seriously. Diaconal Ministries was

privileged in the past to walk along side New Life as they completed a Community Opportunity Scan and later applied to Operation Manna for support for their collective kitchens.

Diaconal Ministries Canada desires to support you and your church to understand *diakonia* in new ways. That support is available through our staff and our Diaconal Ministry Developers (see list on reverse). Encouragement, support and equipping are also available at upcoming Days of Encouragement (see dates on reverse). And, if you want some concrete tips on how to walk alongside the

marginalized in your community, visit DMC's website: www.diaconalministries.com/diaconalministry/justice.htm.

Serve with joy! Experience the empowerment of the Spirit as your church seeks to be the presence of Jesus in your community!

Hans Kater is the National Director of Diaconal Ministries Canada.

TAKE NOTE

1. If you are a new deacon, check out this website prepared for you: www.diaconalministries.com

2. Be encouraged and supported in ministry by your Diaconal Ministry Developer listed on page 2.

3. A mini-workshop accompanies this issue of *Partners* online, providing a venue for further learning on this topic with other deacons.

Bringing New Life to the diaconate

By Tammy Heidbuurt

Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like to have been a part of the early church that we read about in Acts.

The church was a group of believers seeking to faithfully live as a community that reflected the life and character of Jesus, with the reality that as a vessel for the gospel message, they were also a group of broken and sinful people.

As they bumbled and manoeuvred through a series of hurdles they began to create roles for members, clarify and contextualize the law (such as 'what foods were pure and impure' and the 'place of circumcision'), and had plenty of disagreements along the way. Yet, as they continued to form and serve as a community, their reasons for creating systems was so that together, as a community, the love of Christ would be proclaimed through the work of the church, through the various gifting of the people.

Like the early church, we also bumble and need to manoeuvre through the challenges of how to be the church in our context, faithful to the teachings of Jesus, through the vessels of selfish and broken people.

New Life Christian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario, has helped to shape the responsibilities and roles of their diaconate by staying focused on their shared vision. Eva is a deacon at New Life and says that for any church to have a strong diaconate, it is important for the church to vision together. "When there is a clear idea of how the deacons can serve to fulfill the vision of the church, the group can function cohesively."

New Life CRC has creatively structured their diaconate! They used resources such as a Gifts Bank to help identify those gifted for the role of a deacon, as well as ensuring that deacons are overseeing the various ministries that are happening not only within the church, but also programs happening within the community. For example, they have a deacon assigned to each of the following things: Garden Fresh Box, Youth Group, Clothing

Closet, Collective Kitchen, Brant Neighborhood Group, and Waverley Neighborhood Group. The partnerships developed by the deacons are a part of the visioning of New Life to be very present in their neighbourhood. Some of the initiatives began as a result of the Community Opportunity Scan which provided the deacons a clear picture of the needs of the people in their neighborhood and how they might be able to respond to those needs.

New Life deacons remain in close communication with other leadership through a body called the "Circle of Chairs" (Visionary and Pastoral elders, Worship, Board of Management, and the Ministry Coordinator) which meets quarterly. They intend to be very visible in their actions, to lead the membership by example, remain responsible administratively to the larger church body, while the larger body has the responsibility to support and follow their example of serving.

Be encouraged by churches like New Life and consider ways that you can bring *new life, energy and direction into your diaconate!*

Tammy Heidbuurt is Community Ministry Developer for Diaconal Ministries Canada.

DMDs: ready to serve you

Diaconal Ministry Developers are individuals with a passion for diaconal ministry who encourage, support and equip deacons and churches in their ministry.

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Days of Encouragement this fall

Ottawa DOE - September 19, Calvin CRC

Calgary DOE - September 26, Emmanuel CRC

Ancaster DOE - October 17, Redeemer University College

Edmonton DOE - November 7, The King's Univ. College

See our website for more details.

www.DiaconalMinistries.com

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