

# **STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON AT CHAPELGATE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**(04/19/04)**

(Affirmed by Session 9/13/05)

## **Primary Focus:**

Meet the physical need(s) of people and thus, make a spiritual impact, motivated by the experience of God's grace. (Luke 6:33-36, Acts 4:33, Phil. 4:10-20).  
(BCO 7-2, 9-3)

Perform the responsibilities assigned by Session, thus, freeing the Elders to shepherd the congregation and community.

## **Core Roles (BCO 9-2)**

### **Mercy**

Meet the physical and economic needs of those inside and outside of the congregation who are:

- sick, poor, elderly and single parent families (widows)
- disabled and handicapped
- institutionalized (prisons, nursing homes, hospitals)

Meet the emergency needs of the church for food, shelter, and funds.  
Provide job and financial counseling.

### **Stewardship of Time, Treasure, and Talent**

Promote liberal giving through example, education and encouragement.  
Manage the collection and distribution of financial gifts. To include counting, depositing, and recording.

Develop and maintain congregational talent database. Use to encourage, promote, manage, and track congregation's service.

Execute fiduciary responsibility as defined by the church constitution and by-laws.

### **Property (land, buildings, equipment)**

Maintain property in good repair and manage its use.

Plan, purchase, and develop property to promote and support ministries.

Encourage congregation and staff to use property wisely.

### **Helps**

Manage the following:

- Ushering
- Prepare the Communion table
- Audio-visual
- Facility Set-up (tables, chairs, etc.)
- Transportation

- Kitchen
- Assist ministries and organizations that provide diaconal service.

### **Deacon Service (BCO 9-3)**

**A. Duties of Office** (individual deacons): Ordination to the office of Deacon is perpetual (see “Special Cases”) and therefore a Deacon is bound to perform the following diaconate functions.

1. Perform the “Core Roles” of the Deacon within the prescribed guidelines and under the supervision of the Deacon Board.
2. Be good examples of generosity (time and treasure)
3. Frequently respond to calls for service and/or mercy for those in need
4. Use spiritual gifts/talents/abilities administered by the Holy Spirit in specific areas of ministry (mercy, property, stewardship, helps, etc.) according to need.
5. Serve the Session and Diaconate of the church, as Providence provides and within the guidelines of the Bylaws of CPC.

### **B. Special Cases**

1. Temporary Suspension of Duties: In extraordinary circumstances, a Deacon may request permission from the Session to lay aside some or all of his duties for a period not to exceed 1 year.
2. Dissolution without censure:
  - a. Although perpetually ordained, a Deacon may request that the Session release him from the active duties of his office. If the Session approves his resignation, the Session dissolves the Deacon’s official relationship with the church and the requirements of the duties of office. (BCO 24-6)
  - b. If the Session determines that the duties of office have not been performed for a period of one year, it is obligated to dissolve the Deacon’s official relationship with the church. (BCO 24-8)
  - c. Though not charged with heresy or immorality, if the Deacon becomes unacceptable to the majority of the congregation, with due process and careful consideration, the Session may dissolve the official relationship between the Deacon and the church. (BCO 24-6)
  - d. Upon dissolution, the congregation is notified of the action. Excepting deposition, the ordination to the office of Deacon is perpetual (BCO 24-6). A Deacon in good standing remains eligible for election to office and installation at some later time. (BCO 24-7)
3. Deacon Emeritus Status: In accordance with BCO 24-9, a Deacon may, if either infirmed or 70 years of age, request that the Session designate him “Deacon Emeritus.” Upon Session approval he will be so designated. In this capacity he could voluntarily perform certain of his duties, attend Session or Diaconate meetings, and participate in any discussion, but could not vote.”

4. Divestiture without censure: In accordance with BCO 38-2, a Deacon in good standing, if he is "fully satisfied in his own conscience that God has not called him to the ministry, or if he has satisfactory evidence of his inability to serve the Church with acceptance," shall present his case to the Session. The Session, after deliberation, may divest (strip) him of his office without censure. The Deacon is no longer ordained, and may stand for election, ordination, and installation in the future.
5. Suspension and Deposition from Office: Definite suspension, Indefinite suspension, and Deposition from office are censures applied after judicial process and may or may not be accompanied with other censures. (BCO 30-1, 30-3, 30-5)
  - a. Suspension is the separation of the Deacon from his office for either a definite or indefinite period of time. In the case of definite suspension, the Deacon is restored to full exercise of the office by the court at the end of the term of his suspension. (BCO 37-1) In the case of Indefinite Suspension, the church court determines whether the official relationship between the church and the Deacon is dissolved. A Deacon who has been indefinitely suspended may be restored to office only after deep repentance, confession, and lengthy exemplary conduct manifesting fruits of repentance of such effect that heals the wounds of his scandal. (BCO 37-3)
  - b. Deposition is the degradation of a Deacon from his office, and the official relationship between the Deacon and the Church is dissolved. (BCO 37-6) A Deacon deposed from office may not ever be restored to office except under extraordinary circumstances, including the strong sentiment and demand of the church, the consent of the court inflicting censure, public confession, and the re-election of the congregation. (BCO 34-8, 37-5, 37-6)

[Note, a consequence of passing this proposal is that we remove the distinction of an inactive deacon. The BCO does not recognize such distinctions. We cannot escape the requirement to serve.]

- C. Board of Deacons:** A Board of Deacons shall be established as described in Article IV of the Chapelgate Constitution.
1. The Board members shall consist of the ordained Deacons who are annually elected to serve. The minimum and maximum number of deacons on the Board is defined by the congregation as described in the Constitution.
  2. The Deacon's term on the Board shall be for three years, unless as described in the Constitution.
  3. The Board of Deacons shall meet at least quarterly (typically monthly) to conduct the "business" brought before it.

4. The Board of Deacons is responsible for establishing methods, coordinating, and overseeing the Diaconal ministries and services defined by the “Core Roles of the Deacon.”
5. Diaconate officers, including the chairman of each Diaconate Committee shall be elected from the deacons serving on the Board of Deacons.

#### **D. Meetings (BCO 9-4)**

1. The Board of Deacons will typically meet every month to fulfill the charge of office. Meetings will be for fellowship, prayer, mutual support, edification, ministry discussions and business (i.e. committee reports and business brought before the body.)
2. Session and the Board of Deacons will meet in joint session at least once a quarter. All deacons are encouraged to attend these meetings. Following the joint meetings, the deacons will meet for fellowship, prayer, mutual support, edification and a brief summary of ministry events. Focus will be on prayer, encouragement, education, and mobilization. Diaconate business will not be brought forth or considered at this meeting.