

A Quick Start Guide for Deacon and Deaconess

Cover Design by Ginger Calkins
Layout by Ornan Anthony

Available from:
AdventSource
5040 Prescott Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68506

1.800.328.0525
www.adventsource.org

© 2008 North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists

All rights reserved. This book may be used and reproduced without permission in local church printed matter. It may not, however, be used or reproduced in other books or publications without prior permission from the copyright holder. Reprinting the content as a whole for giveaway or resale is expressly prohibited.
Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: #1-57756-425-1

Welcome to one of the most varied and exciting ministries of your church!

Being chosen for the position of deacon and deaconess is an indication of your church's confidence in your character and abilities. The role of a deacon and deaconess covers a wide range of activities and involves important and sometimes challenging responsibilities.

Traditionally, deacons have been men and deaconesses have been women. In some Adventist churches today both men and women serve in both roles, as in many instances the work of the deacon and deaconess overlap. (*We derive both English titles from the same New Testament Greek word.*) Regardless of your title, the God who calls you to service will enable you as you cooperate with Him.

Overview

Traditionally, the work of a deacon and deaconess includes greeting and ushering, upkeep of church property, security, assisting with baptisms and communion, and generally caring for the physical needs of the congregation. Many churches are now expanding the roles of the deacon and deaconess to include using their spiritual gifts in a variety of innovative ways to minister to the emotional and social needs of new members, people in crises, families with small children, and the pastoral staff. Depending on the size of your congregation you may also be involved with bridal showers and weddings, greeting card ministries, fellowship dinners, baby showers, and caring for people who experience illness or the loss of a loved one.

Getting Started: First Things First

To be effective as caring Christians and leaders in the church we must have a personal relationship with God. Nothing can substitute for this. When we know God and stay connected with Him every day we can trust Him to meet our needs and lead us as we meet the needs of other people.

In order to reach our highest potential in serving others we need to be aware of our own strengths and weaknesses, as well as our spiritual gifts. If you haven't already done so, take a temperament test and a spiritual gifts inventory as soon as possible. This will give you a better understanding of your talents and hopefully lead to opportunities to develop them more fully.

Main Responsibilities

Greeting and Ushering

Especially in smaller congregations deacons and deaconesses often serve as greeters. This gives you the opportunity to make the first contact people have with "going to church" a positive one. By following Jesus' model of ministry, you can communicate caring concern for each person, from the youngest to the oldest. Smile and look people in the eyes. Offer a warm handshake and words of welcome. Be sensitive and tactful, paying extra attention to those with special needs. Sometimes people stop in the doorway while talking and block the entrance. **Gently** and **kindly** guide them past the entrance.

When guests arrive welcome them graciously and stay with them past the first hello. Introduce yourself and learn their names. Listen attentively to any information they offer, such as "recently moved" or "looking at churches." If they seem interested, give them a packet with information about your church and its ministries. Some guests like to sign the guest book; some don't. Again, be sensitive and take care not to make a guest uncomfortable. If possible, introduce them to other people. Invite them to the fellowship dinner or a home prepared for hosting visitors. Alternatively, your church may wish to serve beverages after the service as a means of mingling with guests. This can be especially nice if the weather is pleasant and you have a place outside to offer refreshments.

If your church has specific people designated as greeters, the deacons and deaconesses can back them up by connecting with guests as they move on from the entrance. If they have children, offer to walk them to the appropriate Sabbath school rooms. Invite adults to sit with you.

Some churches have deacons assigned to open doors for people who arrive with their hands full, especially on Sabbaths when a fellowship dinner is planned. Elderly individuals and parents with young children also appreciate having the door held. If it is raining or snowing deacons can meet people in the parking lot with an umbrella and walk them to the door. (*This is a great job for junior deacons!*) All these thoughtful little acts of kindness add up to create a warm and welcoming feeling.

Assisting people in finding seats and collecting or passing out things during meetings are other important ways of helping the pastor(s) and various leaders maintain smooth operation of church gatherings.

Upkeep of Church Property

The care we give to our church building and grounds tells a story to all who view it. It is a reflection of our devotion to God and our community. Generally, the deacons and deaconesses take responsibility for the care and upkeep of church property, including the oversight or actual doing of the janitorial work, general maintenance and repairs, and caring for the grounds and landscaping.

In some churches different families or Sabbath school classes will "adopt" a section of the church yard, caring for its plantings and upkeep. If your church is maintained this way, you may want to organize a church yard dedication service at a set time when each group has completed work in its assigned area. Special hymns can be sung (such as 640) and prayers offered. A responsive reading is a nice way for everyone to participate. Remember to take pictures for your church's scrapbook!

Sample Church Yard Dedication *(responsive reading)*

Bless this churchyard, oh Lord.

The soil has been turned over and carefully planted.

May these plantings grow and beautify your house.

Bless these hands and hearts, oh Lord.

As we have used our labors and our means

Endow us with heavenly longing for your re-creation.

As this soil has been weeded, planted and watered,

May our lives emulate how we have been changed by Your care.

Grow in us. Expand our minds with Your thoughts.

We give all glory to you, our King.

As these plants lift their heads to heaven

We lift our souls to You, the Holy Trinity.

Keep this churchyard, guard it, protect it as we dedicate it to You.

Help us to maintain it as You maintain us.

We dedicate ourselves to You.

Amen and Amen.

(by Peggy Harris, adapted)

Beautification of the church facility is another area where deacons and deaconesses can lend a special touch for enhancing the worship experience. God is a lover of beauty, and He is pleased when we create an attractive environment in which to meet Him. Some congregations post a sign-up sheet for members to bring flowers for the sanctuary in celebration of a special occasion or in honor or memory of a loved one. Members who have gardens can be asked to bring fresh arrangements in season, which contribute greatly to the beauty of the worship services.

For holiday décor, poinsettias or Easter lilies may be purchased by the deaconesses and arranged in the church. Then as the holiday approaches they can be given to members who have lost a loved one in the past year or who are unable to attend church. Another option is to take "orders" ahead of time for members who want to purchase the plants to take home on the last Sabbath before the holidays.

Depending on the arrangements at your church, deaconesses may be responsible for washing bedding in the nursery and cleaning and disinfecting as needed. They may also oversee the introduction and upkeep of Quiet Books to be used by young children during the church service.

A church's kitchen is often the center of its social life. In most churches many different groups use the facilities. However, regular maintenance of the kitchen is usually overseen by the deaconesses. This job can be made more manageable by posting in a prominent place a list of things to be done before those using the kitchen leave. Having an annual church cleaning bee also helps! *Tip:* Once the kitchen is thoroughly cleaned and organized, put labels on all the shelves and drawers for storing items. Also post specific directions for using and cleaning equipment, along with procedures for replacing supplies. Having one person who is willing to manage the kitchen is a huge blessing!

Security

Deacons and deaconesses care for the security of those in attendance at church activities, always being vigilant for the safety and comfort of all persons. This includes opening the church building(s) before meetings and locking the facility at the conclusion of activities. It also includes prompt removal of ice and snow from the parking lot and sidewalks. Be sure that lighting in the parking lot and around the building(s) is adequate. In today's world, it is important to have a plan for dealing with emergencies such as power outages, equipment failure, deranged individuals, bomb threats, etc. Decide ahead of time what supplies are needed and what actions will be taken. The location of your church and size of your congregation will be key factors in your planning.

Assisting With Baptismal Ceremonies

Baptisms are a great time for celebration! The deacons and deaconesses can help make this day very special for new members by their kindness and thoughtful attention to details.

The roles for baptisms traditionally are:

Deacons: prepare and fill the pool, other physical labor related to the service, assist male candidates as needed.

Deaconesses: prepare the robes for all participants (be sure they are opaque and weighted), launder and store robes and towels after the service, assist female candidates as needed. Wearing swim suits underneath their robes may help candidates feel more secure.

In some churches the deacons and deaconesses give cards or small gifts to candidates after their baptism as a means of welcoming them and encouraging them spiritually. Sometimes the families may wish to provide refreshments or even a complete meal for guests after a baptismal service and may need assistance with this celebration. Making a scrapbook for candidates including photos of the baptism and cards and notes from friends is another way to make the event special and remind each candidate of his or her connection with the church family. Junior deaconesses may be interested in this project.

After a baptism is the perfect time for the leaders of the church to surround the new member(s) and kneel in prayer together, placing their hands in blessing on those just baptized and asking specifically for the Holy Spirit to give them spiritual gifts of service and ministry. This can be a life-changing experience for those involved as they prepare to take their places in the family of God.

Assisting With Communion Services

Taking the time to carefully and beautifully prepare for this service will help make it the special celebration it is intended to be. Ideally, preparation for communion begins the Sabbath before by making members aware of the upcoming service and giving them the opportunity to make things right if needed. It also allows deacons and deaconesses to contact new members and offer to sit with them during the service, answer any questions they may have, and relieve them of the stress of finding a partner for foot washing. It is also a good idea on communion Sabbaths to assign deacons and deaconesses to watch for persons remaining in the sanctuary after dismissal for the ordinance of humility. They should introduce themselves (if needed), welcome the people, and ask if they would like to participate. If they respond positively, find them a partner. If not, see that they are comfortable and that they feel welcome to remain in the sanctuary.

Most churches provide a story time or other activity for children during the ordinance of humility. This could be something related to the communion service to help the children understand its meaning and look forward to its celebration.

Deacons usually oversee the physical arrangements, such as positioning the communion table and placing towels, basins and water in the appropriate rooms for the ordinance of humility. They dispense the water and basins for the men during the service, giving particular attention to visitors, new members and the aged.

Deaconesses traditionally prepare the bread and grape juice and arrange the emblems and covering on the table. They dispense water and basins to the women during the service, also giving particular attention to visitors, new members and the aged.

Low stools can be provided for those unable to kneel. Some members may prefer to remain seated and wash one another's hands. This is particularly suited to those in wheelchairs or, when serving in homes, to those who are bedridden. Offer assistance if needed so that everyone who desires to participate in this beautiful, cleansing experience may do so.

Many churches find that encouraging partners to pray with each other before leaving the room promotes a thoughtful and caring atmosphere. Sharing scripture verses or singing together as a group is also meaningful.

It is appropriate for either deacons or deaconesses who have been ordained to assist in distributing the emblems and uncovering and recovering the table during the service.

Ideas for Communion

- 1) Have a Friday evening communion service with an agape feast and time for special musical presentations and reflective readings. Candlelight helps to create an atmosphere conducive to meditation. If space allows, arrange the tables in the shape of a cross.
- 2) If the children's story or activity is not held in the sanctuary, consider providing music or an appropriate reading for those who choose to remain.
- 3) Music can also be provided in the rooms for the ordinance of humility. Always encourage prayer, sharing and hugs.
- 4) The deacons might join the elders in sitting around the communion table.
- 5) Invite the youth group to prepare a short drama about The Last Supper or some other relevant topic. If done thoughtfully and reverently, this can be a meaningful addition to the service.

- 6) Try holding a communion service outdoors, if possible. Much of Jesus' teaching and work was done outside. If your church is located in an urban area, a nearby park or campground might be a suitable place to meet.
- 7) A Christmas communion can be especially meaningful, as can a service held on New Year's Eve or Easter. Making communion a part of holiday celebrations can become a great tradition.
- 8) Make first communions special for newly baptized members by planning ahead. Make sure the new member is specifically invited to participate. Consider commemorating this event by giving a card, book or some other tangible reminder of this special occasion.
- 9) Occasionally invite the congregation to join hands while singing the closing hymn.
- 10) Many churches receive a love offering at the close of communion services to benefit members in need of financial support. The junior deacons and deaconesses could stand at the doors to collect this offering as people leave.

Communion Bread Recipe:

2 cups finely ground whole wheat flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
6 Tablespoons of pure vegetable oil
9 Tablespoons of ice water

Directions:

1. Add salt to oil and put into blender. Add water slowly while blending until thick and white. Blend until about the consistency of whipped cream.
2. Add blended oil and water all at once to flour in a bowl. Mix lightly.
3. Turn onto lightly floured board and knead, turning over or folding air into dough while pounding with a rolling pin or the edge of a wooden spoon. You may need to add a little more flour to handle the dough. Use flour sparingly, however.
4. Spray two cookie sheets (12" x 15") with non-stick cooking spray, or oil lightly. Wet a piece of paper towel and lay under cookie sheet so it won't slide. Form dough into two long rolls and lay one on each cookie sheet. Use a rolling pin to roll dough out to cover the entire sheet. It should be paper thin.

5. With a clean metal ruler mark dough into squares. Score lightly with a knife, if desired. $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " squares make about 720 pieces. Some people may prefer a little thicker or larger square.
6. Bake in moderate oven (325 to 350 degrees F). Watch carefully to prevent browning, except for a slight tinge. The darker the bread the stronger the flavor.
7. After baking, give the pan a slight twist to loosen. Carefully lift the bread off sheet with a pancake turner or spatula, being very careful not to break except on the marks. Save several unbroken pieces for the pastor and elders to break during the service.
8. Can be stored in airtight containers for a few days.

Caring for the Congregation

Deacons and deaconesses often join with the pastor and elders in visiting local church members or any person who has a need. Some churches assign a certain number of individuals or a geographic area to deacons and deaconesses to visit on a regular basis in teams of two or three. Some types of visitation include: when a new baby is born, when new members join the church, when a family loses a loved one or experiences other types of loss, when members are ill or hospitalized, and when members become discouraged or stop attending church. Bringing small gifts such as baked items, a book or flowers is a thoughtful gesture. It is also a visible symbol to remind the person of your care after you have gone.

To be truly effective in visiting people, however, we must ask God to give us genuine love for them and the ability to see and meet their needs. We also need to remember to follow Jesus' example of meeting people's physical needs first and then ministering to them spiritually.

Many people are familiar "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" which shows how people's physical needs (*food, water, clothing, shelter, etc.*) must be met before they can experience companionship and identification with a group. The deacons and deaconesses of local churches are in front-line positions to assist with providing for these needs, either in conjunction with a community services program or by other means.

When people experience dramatic life changes, such as a move or the birth of a child, they need extra assistance and empathy. A caring church can be that center of hospitality. Consider sending a welcome letter to people who move into your community, acknowledging the stress that can accompany a move and offering to ease the transition through your support and the development of new friendships. List meeting times and places of small groups, such as neighborhood Bible study or prayer groups, and invite

them to attend. Also give the address of your church and times of services. Including a map and phone number will be helpful to them. Also, send along a recent church bulletin with details of upcoming activities. If you follow up with a second invitation, people will be more likely to respond. Try hosting a Friend Day as a special time for inviting newcomers and people who live near the church to experience the warmth of your fellowship. In today's culture friendship evangelism is one of the best ways to grow our churches.

After new people have attended your church a few times, invite them to a Friendship Dinner hosted by a regular member. The host also invites the pastor(s) and an elder, and lets the newcomers know that they have the ear of the church leaders. To help guests feel more comfortable, invite more new people than established members. Ask guests for input on questions like: What drew you to this church? What brought you back again? What is important to you? What are your needs?

The birth of a new baby is not only an exciting time for many families but also a stressful one because of the many changes it may bring. Welcome Baby is a program specifically geared toward mentoring new parents and encouraging them as they raise their children to love and serve God. Additional information on the Welcome Baby program and ways of caring for new members can be found in the list of resources.

As the circle of life and death goes around, the church can be the supporting factor in a fragmented world. Usually, the pastor will be the first one notified when the death of a church family member occurs. The pastor then contacts the head deaconess or deaconess of the month to set in motion the appropriate actions for caring for the family's needs. If a particular deacon and deaconess is close to the family, that person can visit them right away and find out any specific needs, such as: Will out-of-town relatives or friends be coming? Do they need lodging or food? Does the family need help with arrangements? Do they wish to have someone house sit during the service? Is child care needed? Your church may wish to make forms for recording and communicating this information.

When possible, food taken to the home should be provided in disposable containers so the family does not have to worry about washing and returning dishes. If a meal is provided at the church or another location, the deaconesses can create a comforting feeling by arranging the furnishings tastefully and serving the family with a kind and gracious spirit.

The most critical time for the family, however, often comes after close friends and extended family members have left. This is when the church truly becomes family in supporting their needs during lonely and often traumatic times. Aftercare should not be haphazard. The deacons and deaconesses can arrange a schedule for providing visits, needed household repairs, dinner invitations, phone or email chats, etc. for the first year after bereavement. Remember that holidays are often painful times for people who are grieving. Special attention on birthdays and anniversaries adds frosting to the cake of friendship!

Tips for visiting those who are hospitalized or ill:

1. Be cheerful, but not boisterous.
2. Be sympathetic and caring, but don't ask private questions.
3. Come regularly (if needed), but don't stay too long.

In all congregations there will be different types of families - one parent, two parent, grandparent, couples, singles, etc. Each person can contribute something special to the church body, and each should be nurtured in their Christian growth. Sometimes single persons feel left out or overlooked in church activities and ministries. Remember to include and care for the singles in your congregation, especially if your church is not large enough to have a separate singles ministry.

Caring for your pastoral staff is an idea whose time has truly come! In today's society, the demands on your pastor's time and energy are huge. Like any person, your pastor will be encouraged by words and actions from the church that express appreciation. October is designated as **Pastoral Appreciation Month**. That is a good time to take a few minutes during the church service to thank your pastor(s) for all the effort and energy he or she invests in your congregation. Inviting the pastor's family to join you up front is a nice way to recognize their supporting roles. Giving tangible items such as flowers or a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant or bookstore is a great way to show appreciation. Remember to also celebrate the anniversary of your pastor's arrival. *Example:* "This month marks the beginning of your third year ministering to our congregation. We want to thank you for your dedication and service!"

Sending birthday cards to your pastor and family members is another way to support them. If your pastor is married, send an anniversary card with enough money inside for a meal out. Or, work as a team to bring a meal to the pastoral couple's home. Arrange for babysitting, if needed. If you can, occasionally help them plan a weekend away for resting and recharging their energy levels.

If You Are the Head Deacon or Deaconess

Being in charge can be both demanding and time consuming. The amazing thing is that when we give our best to God and His service all our efforts are blessed and multiplied. However, we must always remember that ministry without prayer becomes work in the power of the flesh. Becoming a serious prayer warrior, and enlisting the support of others who know how to pray is essential to the success of this ministry.

After the praying comes the planning. Compile a list of needs with ideas for meeting each need. Get together with your pastoral staff and develop a workable ministry plan which includes the following elements:

1. **A compelling mission statement.** Try to state your mission in one clear sentence. It will help the ministry to be focused and organized. It also affirms its value.
2. **Practical goals.** Goals provide some detail about the mission plan.
3. **Specific action plans.** Action plans further define the ministry by highlighting the steps needed to carry out the goals. Review them regularly to keep on track.
4. **Adequate job descriptions for key responsibilities.** Job descriptions let people know what is expected of them.
5. **Basic organizational chart (who is responsible to whom).** In most churches, deacons and deaconesses work closely with the elders and pastoral staff.
6. **A basic budget.** You may need a small or large budget, depending on the size of your church and how many areas fall under your umbrella.

Potential Barriers to Progress and Ways to Combat Them

Most of us have plenty of ideas about what should be done. Usually, the biggest challenge is finding people willing to help. Many church members are too busy, too burned out, or feel they lack the skills needed to serve as deacon and deaconess. Encourage all church members to take a temperament test and a spiritual gifts inventory. Then, offer training sessions on developing those spiritual gifts. For detailed information and resources pertaining to temperaments and spiritual gifts, contact *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org or 1.800.328.0525.

Sometimes people have a limited idea of what deacons and deaconesses do. Make your ministry visible by regularly reporting its positive results in an appealing way, both from the front of the church and by using the church's bulletin board, newsletter, website, etc. Show that being a deacon and deaconess is much more than just taking up the offering or cooking funeral dinners!

Another barrier may be the phrase "We've never done it that way before." A changing society requires new methods that may mean nudging some of us out of our comfort zones. Remember, principles do not change, but the application of them must if we are to be successful in reaching people in today's world.

One example of this is the wide-spread use of the internet. Communication is essential, and computers have made it easier in many ways. You can now use email to send the minutes of your deacon and deaconess meetings to those who weren't there. You can have

a page on the log-in section of your church's website and use it for informational and recruiting purposes. You can post service sign-up sheets and send out an e-newsletter to keep people informed.

Take a class to learn new skills, if you need to, or ask someone to help you. Enlisting assistance is a good way to recruit young adults as deacons and deaconesses. It's also a good way to involve new members.

If you are willing to try new methods but those around you aren't, be patient. Try to think of creative ways to inspire them, and pray for the Holy Spirit to lead their thoughts.

Organization

Doing things in a systematic way will help your work to be efficient. Divide the areas of service into categories and establish set procedures that fit your particular church. It's good to have this in writing for future reference.

Sample Communion Service Manual

1. Make bread _____
2. Purchase grape juice _____
3. Fill containers _____
4. Set up rooms _____
5. Place napkins on table for elders and near musicians _____
6. Stories for children _____
7. Music and/or devotional thought _____
8. Speak with guests or those remaining in the sanctuary _____
9. Serve the emblems *(any ordained deacon or deaconess may serve)* _____
10. Gather and wash towels and return to storage _____
11. Sanitize and dry basins _____
12. Wash, dry and store communion serving ware _____
13. Prepare home communion set, if requested _____
14. Dispose of unused items *(Bread that has been blessed is burned or buried. Juice is poured on the ground)* _____
15. Return chairs and tables to proper places _____

Talk about these items at your regularly scheduled meetings so you can answer any questions. Remember to include junior deacons and deaconesses in the communion service activities.

Keep an updated inventory of supplies belonging to the church, especially relating to communion and baptisms. This will make it much easier for you, and for the next head deacon and deaconess. If your church is large you should also list the location of the supplies.

Having a "deacon and deaconess of the month" is especially helpful in larger congregations. These people assist the head deacon and deaconess in his or her duties, and may be responsible for coordinating various activities during the month such as greeting and ushering, visitation, or building security.

Planning ordination services is also an important event for the head deacon and deaconess to organize, together with the pastor. Depending on the size of your congregation you may need to have ordinations regularly or only occasionally. Whatever the frequency, take care to plan a service that is meaningful for both the candidates and those supporting them. Having a prayer of dedication, giving certificates or cards, and hosting a reception are a few ways of welcoming new deacons and deaconesses. If your congregation is small the pastor may wish to include all new church officers in this dedication service, focusing attention on the ministries of the coming year.

Continue to analyze the deacon and deaconess ministry over time. Review the ministry mission statement and goals. Ask for input from the deacons and deaconesses with questions like:

1. Have you completed the temperament test and spiritual gifts inventory?
2. If so, how have you found them to be helpful?
3. In which areas of service have you been able to participate?
4. Do you feel that you are serving in areas where you can use and develop your spiritual gifts?
5. How could you become better equipped to reach your potential in using your spiritual gifts?
6. What comments or suggestions would you offer for improving the deacon and deaconess ministry?

Resource Materials

A New Frontier: Every Believer A Minister by Rex D. Edwards.
(1979, Pacific Press Publishing Association).

How to Make a Friendly Call by Willard D. Callender.
(1982, Judson Press)

Improving Your Serve by Charles Swindoll.
(1984, Word Books)

Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry by Lindgren and Shawchuck.
(1980, Abingdon Press)

The Deacon At Work by F.S. Agar.
(1987, Judson Press)

The Emerging Role of the Deacon by Charles Deweese.
(1979, Broadman Press)

The Work of the Deacon and Deaconess by Harold Nichols.
(1986, Judson Press)

Please visit *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can also place an order or request a catalog by calling 1.800.328.0525.

DEACON AND DEACONESS

A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction

As Jesus gives insight into the nature of His church using the symbol of the body in I Corinthians 12, so it is that when we join the Church we become “members” of the body of Christ and are equipped for specific functions by the Holy Spirit. God wills that the various “body parts” (members) function effectively toward the common goal of the church: making disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is an erroneous concept that the clergy have a “sacred calling” and the general membership only a “secular calling.” This concept impedes the progress of the church by leading some to believe their contributions are less important. In fact, the New Testament teaches that all members of the body of Christ are ministers of Jesus Christ. There are necessary differences in function, but the status of all leaders is the same.

You have been called to function as a deacon or deaconess in your congregation. The God who calls is able to sustain you as you cooperate with Him.

While in many instances the work of the deacon and deaconess overlap, distinctions will be described. Though deacons have traditionally been men and deaconesses have been women, in some Adventist churches today both men and women serve in both roles. We derive both English titles from the same New Testament Greek word.

Duties of the Deacon and Deaconess

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a deacon or deaconess includes the following duties:

1. *Greeting and ushering.* Especially in smaller congregations, the deacon and deaconess will serve as greeters and ushers for the services held in the church. They will also help the pastor and other event leaders maintain the smooth operation of church meetings.
2. *Upkeep of church property.* They will take responsibility for the care and upkeep of church property, including the oversight or actual doing of the janitorial work, repairs, grounds maintenance, interior decorating and small renovations.
3. *Security.* They will care for the security of those in attendance at church activities, always vigilant for the comfort and safety of all persons. This includes opening the church building(s) before meetings and locking the facility at the conclusion of activities.
4. *Visitation.* They will join with the pastor and elders in visiting church members. Some churches assign a geographic area or certain number of members for deacons and deaconesses in teams of two or three to visit.
5. *Assisting with the baptismal ceremony.* The traditional roles for this service are described below.

The deacons will

- Prepare and fill the pool.
- Assist male candidates.
- Do the physical labor related to the service.

The deaconesses will

- Prepare the robes for all who are participating.
- Assist female candidates.
- Launder and store robes, towels, etc., after the ceremony.

6. *Assisting with the communion service.* The traditional roles for this service are described below.

The deacons will

- Provide the physical arrangements, such as placing the communion table.

2002
Edition

Place the towels, basins and water in the appropriate rooms for use in the ordinance of humility.

Dispense water and basins for the men during the Ordinance of Humility, giving particular attention to visitors, new members, and the aged.

The deaconesses will

Prepare the bread and grape juice.

Arrange the emblems and covering on the table.

Dispense water and basins for the women during the ordinance of humility, giving attention and assistance to visitors, new members, and the aged.

Clean and store the linens and serving pieces used in communion.

It is appropriate for either deacons or deaconesses, who have been ordained, to assist in distributing the emblems and uncovering and recovering the table during the service.

7. *Caring for the congregation.* In many churches an unwritten tradition gives the women who serve as deaconesses or deacons the responsibility of organizing hot meals for any church family that experiences a death or other tragedy. This may mean simply taking food to the home or, in some cases, the serving of an entire meal to family and guests after a funeral. Often the planning of wedding and baby showers is also done by this group. This is an important aspect of a caring ministry in the congregation.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling AdventSource (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

A New Frontier: Every Believer A Minister, by Rex D. Edwards.

Blinded by the Light, by Phil Dunham with Maylan Schurch. The author presents seven steps to apostasy, 16 questions for evaluating independent ministries, 11 ways to deal with liberal teachers in the church, seven mistakes made by breakaway congregations, and 10 statements by “new light” teachers that should serve as early warning signals.

Expect Great Things: How to Be a Happy, Growing Christian, by Richard O’Ffill. A template for successful Christian living, with the goal of being like Jesus.

Follow Me: How to Walk With Jesus, by Miraslov Kis. With sensitive sketches of people whose lives were transformed when they met Jesus, the author gives us new eyes, and then explores the implications of following Jesus.

How to Make a Friendly Call, by Willard D. Callender. (1982, Judson Press).

Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry, by Lindgren and Shawchuck. (1980, Abingdon Press).

Lifestyles of the Remnant, by Keavin Hayden. The author takes another look at church standards, taking them out of the context of legalism or orthodoxy—presents much needed principles.

No More Broken Places, by Carolyn Rathbun Sutton. This book about Nehemiah and his wall is interwoven with stories from the author’s life and divorce, plus wise and wonderful advice on living the Christian life.

Problem Solvers and Soul Winners, by Vincent E. White.

The Deacon At Work, by F.A. Agar. (1987, Judson Press).

The Emerging Role of the Deacon, by Charles Deweese. (1979, Broadman Press).

The Work of the Deacon and Deaconess, by Harold Nichols. (1986, Judson Press).

Visit AdventSource On-Line at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.