

Board of Deacons Annual Report for 2009

Submitted January 2010

Deacon

The office of deacon in the church today has its roots in the office of deacon in the early church. The word deacon comes from the Greek word *diakonos* which means **servant**. Deacons give leadership to the church's ministry of serving the physical and spiritual needs of members and people beyond the church.

History and Background

The beginning of the office of deacon is ambiguous. The book of Acts (6:2-4) describes the twelve apostles asking the body of disciples to pick out seven men "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to serve tables. The twelve did not want to give up preaching the word of God in order to serve tables. However, the word for deacon is not used in this passage. Paul does use it in his letter to the Philippians where he thanks them for the offerings they have sent him. Whether or not women were Deacons in the early church is debated. In the NRSV translation, Phoebe is called a Deacon not a Deaconess, Romans 16:1.

From the initial assignment of serving tables, the role of deacon has grown to designate people responsible for the servant function in the church. Most typically these are people selected by the church to help the pastors in meeting members' needs. Deacons call on sick and shut-in members, counsel, collect food and clothing for the needy.

In the early history of the United Church of Christ deacons were older men well respected in the church for their uprightness and faithfulness. Women of equal stature were usually deaconesses whose responsibilities were related to the preparation of the communion elements and care of the communion ware. In addition the Evangelical Church established an order of Deaconesses who dedicated themselves to lifelong service within hospitals of the church.

Common Practices

In some denominations deacons are clergy. In the United Church of Christ deacons are laypeople elected to the office of deacon in their local church. Some churches elect people to a term on the board of deacons. Others elect a governing board and then appoint some members to be deacons, others to be elders or trustees. In some churches deacons are set apart by the congregation and hold the title for life. Thus deacons have varied roles in the United Church of Christ.

Our Church

At Kirkland Congregational Church, the Board of Deacons is made up of a cross-section of our congregation. In the past year, we have been blessed with several new members: Donna Conover, Judy Hjorth, and Amy Florence. They join Marjie Kichline, Barbara Lynch, & April Johnson on our fun little team, where everyone contributes what they are most comfortable with towards our mission. Ben von Ullrich has chaired this committee since 2008.

In 2009, we made some changes in serving communion, putting more emphasis on Deacons during the pastoral transition period. Deacons now not only serve the bread and cup, but a vote

was taken in August 2009 to begin having Deacons officiate at the Consecration Liturgy that presents the elements to God & the congregation prior to serving. This is in keeping with the New England UCC tradition of Deacons voting to take this role, something not done at all UCC churches. Both changes have been widely praised by our church and have given all of us a greater closeness to our role in our Church.

The Deacon's primary job in our church is to keep a finger on the spiritual pulse of the congregation. In addition to preparation, production, and cleanup for Sunday worship services, and providing & serving communion, Deacons sponsor numerous events throughout the year. These include the Pet Blessing in the Fall, Spaghetti Dinner in late winter, quarterly Fellowship Sunday services downstairs, and a Spring Tea in May as well as other stewardship or recognition motivated events. We are expanding our service to include more personal outreach, such as calling on those in need and bringing people to church when they need transportation. Welcoming new people at all levels of interaction with KCC is of primary focus.

Members and visitors of Kirkland Congregational Church are invited to join our group of dedicated individuals that are demonstrating service to our church through their commitments and actions. Feel free to attend our meetings, enjoy our sponsored events, join in our efforts, share a concern or opinion, or enlighten us with your observations of another person's achievements.

All are welcome!

Submitted by Ben von Ullrich