

# The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 47, NO. 10 - NOVEMBER, 1978

In This Issue:

The Deacon

Ministries  
of Mercy



# Letters

## The Worship Question

The article on "The Nursery Question" (September 1978) was challenging. Does our pragmatism concerning nurseries stem from impoverished or improper views of the "worship service"?

Interestingly, when we look into Scripture we do not find the "assembling" of the believers described as a worship service. Certainly we seek to do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31) and that is worship. But in I Corinthians, chapters 5, 11, 14 and 16 we see that believers were to assemble together for discipline, eating the Lord's Supper, psalms, hymns, teaching, revelation, tongues and their interpretation, and the collection for the saints. Scripture being complete, and tongues and revelations being unnecessary as attesting signs they have passed away; but the others still stand.

In many references the believers are gathered for prayer. The psalms and hymns were to be sung with thankfulness. In Hebrews 10 we are told not to forsake the assembling together but are to encourage each other by testifying . . . rehearsing of God's goodness, God's deeds, and by fellowship.

The term used in the context of the assembly of the believers is "teaching"—and that by two or three with critique and response by the others. This implies a degree of dialogue. Scripture is used for "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness". Paul instructs Timothy and Titus to read Scripture, teach, exhort. The term "preach" is used in the context of proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers, an activity which took place principally outside the assembly of the believers.

In looking at this—have we over-formalized, over-structured, and over-sophisticated our concept of the church gathering?—so that it is above the level of, and boring to the children (not to mention some of the adults)? Is a teaching nursery or junior church not an assembling together? Should our assembling together allow for several speakers (teachers) and a time of response and reaction? (That should make for better teaching and heightened inter-

est!) Should we provide teaching at various levels of Christian maturity to foster growth? In other words, should we re-evaluate our "worship service" in the light of scriptural teaching concerning the assembling of believers?

Frank Sloat  
Birdsboro, Pa.

## More from Kenya

In our September issue we printed a report of work among Ugandan refugees in Kenya. The following is a letter from Mr. Bill Viss of New Life Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, describing the situation as he found it:

God worked marvelously in supplying for our going. Between our decision on May 15, and our arrival, response to our letter seeking support was sufficient to carry all the expenses. Important practical blessings came also: complete family unity; a breaking-point in my work responsibilities; Jonathan's orthodontist moved to Nairobi; and others.

The work among the refugees covers three areas: simple relief; developing self-help projects; and ministering to their personal-spiritual needs.

Immediate relief needs are obvious. The day I wrote this, I visited a family of seven who live in one 6'x9' room. I then visited a young mother whose husband was imprisoned this week for "security" reasons, we hope for only a few days. She and about 25 others including children, occupy several rooms, often going without food for periods of time. A young man weeps as he begs for food for his mother and sister, living in a shack. Two men who live in one room cannot bring their wives and children to Kenya because they have no means of support. These are average conditions among our "flock".

Our attempt is to help where material needs are valid, and where we can check out requests. Real needs and real conniving are found together. Most of our recipients are seen in other contacts—Bible study, church, or visitation. A majority are

refused aid, simply because there isn't enough to go around. About \$2,000 a month has been available, and believe me, every dollar is translated into a living language of mercy.

The creation of self-help projects is our hoped-for answer to the above needs. A widow received \$40 to buy materials to bake bread, which she sells to supply her household of eight. Several are trying to make a restaurant productive. A truck-repair garage has been started which could employ up to 20 men, but it is floundering due to dishonesty and lack of management skills. A number of persons are making handcrafted items, and we are attempting to market them in the USA. Most of the refugees are educated and have professional background, but Kenya does not offer many jobs to non-citizens, having 50 per cent unemployment itself. But self-help projects often need a substantial initial investment, a real obstacle.

The third area of work is to minister to spiritual needs. We attempt to involve the refugees in the Reformed Presbyterian Church program here. We have seven area-Bible studies now, and these are high points of the week for many families and persons. It is a joy to see their desire to study the Bible and their love for singing God's praises. Many have been converted in the last year, and even give thanks for the exile which brought them to the Lord!

Visitation in the homes is very important, and in all my years as an elder I've never seen such eagerness! Boredom, mourning losses of family members, extreme poverty, and now fears of a new government in Kenya, all produce despair, but for Christ's comfort.

Yet Christ is calling his people here, too. We attempt to give solid, Reformed practical teaching; to disciple and pray in small groups, asking God to develop leaders from among the refugees; to grow together as a praying and witnessing and triumphant people of God, looking for ". . . an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." (2 Cor. 4:17)

William Viss  
Nairobi, Kenya

# From the Editor



*Tom McCormick with patient in Bair Nursing Home.  
by permission*

An elderly lady spending the last years of her life in a Philadelphia nursing home was asked to pray about the serious medical condition of a seminary student's father. Sometime later she was being visited by Dr. John Skilton, ordained evangelist of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and retired Professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary. Dr. Skilton noticed that she was trying to ask him something. "Her articulation wasn't very clear," he recalls, "but eventually I realized she was asking about Russell's [the student's] father." Happy to see the woman's concern, Dr. Skilton was glad to report a remarkable recovery. Then he gave her another prayer request. "I'd like you now to pray for Christians in Russia and China," he told her.

"You know," he said as he related this incident to me, "that woman has a secret weapon the Russian and Chinese governments know nothing about. Perhaps the Lord will use her to bring down these oppressive regimes and open the doors of these countries to the gospel."

It was in the early spring of 1976 that Dr. Skilton called a meeting in his home for those interested in ministry to the aged. Among those who attended was Tom McCormick, a seminary student who had recently moved to the area. Tom had been previously involved in such a ministry in Lafayette, Indiana. They talked, shared ideas and prayed.

Later that spring, a Saturday afternoon worship service was begun at the nearby Bair Nursing Home. Other homes in the area were contacted and more helpers began to join in the work. Dr. Skilton announced his intention as being to have every nursing home in the Philadelphia area covered with a biblical ministry. He began to compile a survey from all these homes. Latest figures indicate that out of some 110 homes in the area, over 35 are receptive to any form of gospel ministry.

of ministry. Prisons and hospitals are among other institutions to which they would like to see their ministry spread.

"There does seem to be a particular emphasis in Scripture on the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the widows," Tom observes. "It would seem that we have special responsibilities in this area." One passage of Scripture to which Tom draws attention is I Timothy 5:1-16. "There's been renewed interest among Reformed people in the biblical teaching on the family," he conceded, "but I don't think we've paid enough attention to the place of widows in the family. A lot more work needs to be done in this area."

What about those who won't get involved because they feel that nursing homes are usurping the place of the family in caring for the aged? Tom feels this keenly. "We certainly need to educate Christians as to their responsibility to care for the aged at home. The Bible is very clear on this point. Yet, the fact is that these homes are there. Old people in them are close to death. They desperately need the gospel. We should look on these homes as evangelistic opportunities.

"Not only that. There are in these homes men and women who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. These people need to be taught and encouraged in their faith. They are also fellow-soldiers in the army of Christ as they wield the weapon of prayer with and for us."

Yes, it may yet be that the doors of Russia and China will be opened to the gospel once more. When that day comes, the prayers of an elderly lady in a Philadelphia nursing home will have been abundantly answered.

*Anyone interested in more information concerning this work is encouraged to write to: Dr. John Skilton, Skilton House, 930 Olney Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19141.*

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# The Deacon

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## Some Seed Thoughts\*

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Donald J. MacNair

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Almost all discussions of the officer called "deacon" begin with I Timothy 3 and Acts 6 (regardless of one's application of Acts 6). The discussion really must start with Jesus Christ himself—The Deacon (minister) of all mercy.

Such a study will first lead us to another officer in the church before we ever get to the definitions of deacon derived from Acts 6. He is the pastor. He should be respected by his flock as their deacon—a pastor-teacher/elder/deacon, if you will.

As shepherd of the flock, he should never forget the words of Jesus and never fail to emulate them: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, *but to serve*, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). The pastor/elder/deacon must see people from the point of view that they have needs that must be met. He'll never properly proclaim the Word and shepherd the flock if he doesn't.

From his point of view, he must see all needs through the eyes of the pastor/elder/deacon. He therefore appreciates needs not simply as the physical (or financial) counterpart of spiritual needs—he sees that these needs and their spiritual causes are inseparably one.

A list of areas in which he—the pastor/elder/deacon—must be serving at least includes the following:

- responsibility to alleviate or help to

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endure physical needs;

- responsibility to disciple his sheep to serve the needs of others;
- responsibility to be used to rescue lost sheep themselves;
- responsibility to protect, counsel, and encourage the lambs and sheep of his flock;
- responsibility to pray for himself.

Note that each of these areas needs to be expanded in any lengthy discussion. However, they characterize the "minister" Christ Jesus, and therefore they must characterize his undershepherds.

Again, before coming to the specific officer called in the New Testament "the deacon," the spotlight should be turned on the ruling elder—who also is a shepherd (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1ff.). What has been said about the pastor/elder/deacon is equally true of the ruling elder/deacon. No church has good elders if its elders do not naturally—by virtue of their maturity in Christ—live a life of ministry—"deaconing," if you will.

Finally, the office of the New Testament "deacon" stands before us. His qualifications for office (I Timothy 3) are almost identical to those demanded for a candidate for eldership. In essence, they are the same.

However, many (if not most) of today's deacons are relegated to four jobs—ushering, counting the offering, maintaining the buildings and grounds, and occasionally collecting food to give to the poor

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\* Note: Many of these "seed thoughts" are a bit more developed by the author in his text *The Growing Local Church*, (Baker Book House, 1975).

or to the Salvation Army to give to the poor. Consequently, such gifted men are almost universally saying: "What good is my serving this way—I'll carry out a more meaningful personal ministry without being a deacon rather than being a frustrated servant of God."

In the Acts 6 passage, the seven men chosen were, in fact, called "almoners,"<sup>1</sup> a term that describes a specific act of mercy by the church. An examination of the cause for separating these men to exercise mercy highlights a flavor to the work that they did which is readily seen to be needed in any church. Their qualifications were so outstanding that they were indeed mature men of faith. Therefore, they could not possibly feel that their job was only to measure each loaf of bread on a ruler and give an exact half to the Aramaic speaking widows and the other exact half to the Greek speaking widows. They knew that sin was distorting the body of Christ and was merely evidenced by the complaints of unfair treatment. Their very beings as mature Christians consequently called on them to deal with the spiritual problems causing the physical grievance as well as to alleviate the physical problem.

In the light of the pastor/elder/deacon and the ruling elder/deacon constantly ministering to and within the body by virtue of their calling and maturity in Christ, the "almoners"—the deacons, if you will—seem called to serve in a special way within the framework of the oversight responsibilities of the elders. Possibly it should be thought of as an in-depth ministry in a restricted area of the body's life. First of all, of course, they are called to serve Christ in all facets of their lives as members of the body by virtue of their maturity in Christ. Then, they seem to be called to serve particularly in the areas of physical and financial need: to alleviate the need by dealing with the spiritual problems and the physical circumstances simultaneously.

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1. See *The Book of Acts (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*, by F. F. Bruce (Eerdmans, 1954), p. 130.



This is borne out historically<sup>2</sup> by the standard set of four responsibilities assigned to the deacons by the church:

- (a) determining financial needs;
- (b) receiving collections of money and real goods to distribute to those in need;
- (c) counseling from the Scripture with comfort and advice and, when necessary, dealing with the basic causes of the financial needs;
- (d) actively working to prevent poverty.

Unless the congregation or the session of the church assigns other specific duties, these seem to be an adequate delineation of the limits—boundaries—within which deacons should extensively work. And these boundaries include an almost limitless amount of work in any and every church!

Within these limits, it seems probable that all the *routine* visiting of the families of the church might well be done (or almost always so) by the deacons.

Certainly in the area of preventing poverty, the deacons should be part of the premarital counseling ministry given to young people. Further, they should be prepared to provide a quick and meaningful upholding of families in times of unexpected trauma or accident; with comforting those with chronic problems, especially the aged widows; with community needs; with community activities which would lead to depravity and sin and the consequent disintegration of the moral integrity of the community if allowed to develop.

The deacon dare not be a forgotten officer in the church, or the diaconate dare not be simply an organization of janitors or reward (by giving a title—"deacon") to a church member.

The office of deacon is an office which carries a high calling of God with it (I Timothy 3:13). Praise God for deacons.

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# The High Calling of Deacon

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*George C. Fuller*

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Just north of Hyde Park and overlooking the Hudson valley stands the palatial Vanderbilt mansion. During the winter months two people lived here, served by over twenty maids, butlers, chauffers, groundskeepers, cooks and servants. Vanderbilt money was plentiful and powerful. Measured against the standards of past and present societies, the Vanderbilts "had it made." Wealthy, powerful, they sat where others have longed to be.

Jesus told his disciples, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them."

The world has always measured greatness by the standard of service, not service a person gives, but that which he receives. In business a man or woman is often judged successful if many people "report to him." Happiness and success is then to be found at the top of the pyramid. At the bottom is misery and drudgery.

Plato said, "How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?" For the Greeks, menial "service" was not dignified, surely not to be sought as a way of life.

But Jesus changed all that, radically reversing the world's standards. He did not make subtle changes or adjustments in a well-entrenched system. He turned the whole thing upside down, making, as it were, the first last and the last first.

That kind of change does not allow for compromise. Choice is necessary, and only

between two options. Greatness in life, achievement is measured by the world's standard, "service received," or by the standard of Jesus: "service given."

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How does someone reverse a standard whose acceptance has been so nearly universal among all people and throughout all centuries, perhaps especially in our present world? First, know that we are not talking about "someone"; we're talking about Jesus. More than Jesus the man, he is Jesus the Creator, Jesus the Son, Jesus the Lord. This world owes its beginning and its continuance to him and his power. The One who seeks to overturn the standards of a world that exalts men of power is himself King of kings and Lord of lords. With God the Father and God the Holy Spirit he is alone at the top of the pyramid; in fact, he is above the entire pyramid. So the precise question is: How does the Lord of Glory set forth in a world of sin standards that utterly contradict its life-style, begun in Adam and continued to this day?

He does it by demonstration. He "decons." Place high value on that word; it rises from the heart of the gospel. The Greek word meant to "serve at tables," and by extension, "to render humble, menial service for the benefit of others."

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2. See *The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, by Peter Y. DeJong (Baker Book House, 1961) Chapter 8, page 129 ff.

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Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve." That's the word: "I came not to be 'deaconed', but to 'deacon'." For Jesus, "deaconing" meant giving sight to blind eyes, hearing to deaf ears, comfort to afflicted hearts, strength to weak legs, deliverance to tormented souls. He washed the disciples' feet. No wonder they were confused; their and the world's value system was being challenged. He endured capital punishment, emotional and spiritual agony beyond our comprehension, and not for any crime he had committed. He did it for others; he "deaconed."

If Jesus had not taken upon himself the "form of a servant," if the Lord of glory had not also "humbled himself and become obedient unto death, even death on a cross," the world's standard would be unchallenged. Not only would we be without his supreme example, as the one who though Lord of all became servant of all, we would also be deprived of his essential power. Having endured, suffered, died, Jesus was then raised, powerful, victorious, triumphant, now to live in and through his people. He is the "deacon," our ultimate example, and in his fulfilling of that charge from God is power for his people, his body on earth, to do his ministry.

The relationship between what Jesus did for us and what he does through us lies in the depths of his love. "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Jesus' love for us is love for sinners. A righteous, pure, holy God loves that which is unclean, impure, unholy. He loves us in spite of what we are. To say of such love that it is unusual is an understatement; it is absolutely unique. He loves the unlovely, the unlovable, who have rejected him and his mercy. He loves them anyway and brings them to himself.

"If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The same kind of love with which the Christian was loved becomes his, namely, love for the unlovely, the unlovable, the dirty, the unclean. The love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross accomplishes our salvation, but it also gives us power for ministry. As no other

person has ever done, he "deaconed" on the cross. "He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." In his diaconate, his ministry as deacon, there is the only hope for our diaconate, our ministry as deacons.

But Jesus does more than demonstrate the office of deacon and empower his people to fulfill that calling. He demands diaconal ministry from his people because they belong to him, whose life was marked by total self-giving and service. The New Testament calls his people "douloi" and "diakonoi", "slaves" and "waiters." As deacons, menial servants, they render service to God (II Corinthians 6:4), to Christ (John 12:26), to the new covenant (II Corinthians 3:6), to the gospel (Ephesians 3:7), to their fellow disciples (Mark 10:43). Those who have his yoke placed upon them are commanded, "love your neighbor" or "love your enemy." I do not need to remind you that the entire New Testament makes clear that love which stops short of practical help is "in word only" or simply "with the tongue," a denial of the Lord we serve. The Reformers reminded us that absence of obedience is a sign of "no faith," "no salvation."

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By example Jesus leads his people into diaconal ministry. In his death and resurrection he empowers them for this task. By command he calls them to obedient service. All that a deacon must do must be based on the diaconal ministry of his Lord and Savior. Our ministry of service is possible and is required, because Jesus came in the form of a servant.

The Reformation taught the priesthood of all believers; individual Christians have direct access to God through Christ. If we all share that privilege, if we are all priests, then we also all share responsibility for ministry. We are all deacons, min-

isters, servants, table-waiters to the benefit of each other, the world and to the glory of God. Such service is not optional. Empowered by the cross and resurrection of Jesus, it is commanded by Jesus. Cross-kind of love, cross-kind of service is characteristic of new life, the new view of greatness.

At the same time Scripture makes clear that certain people, properly chosen and elected, have special responsibility for diaconal ministry. Paul addressed his letter to the Philippians to "All the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." This greeting makes clear that the office was established early and that it stood in close relationship to the office of "bishop" or "elder."

In I Timothy 3:8-12, just after a challenge to "bishops," Paul sets forth qualifications for the high office of "deacon": "Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

I Timothy 3 reveals that elders and deacons must share many qualities. Significantly, the elder must be "apt to teach," a quality not required of the deacon. The deacon, on the other hand, is not to be "double-tongued, not greedy for gain," qualities appropriate for all Christians, including elders, but specifically mentioned with regard to deacons. Deacons must exercise special mastery over their tongues. Hear James: "And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell." Not extreme language in the light of damage done to us and by us, by words improperly spoken: lies, exaggerations, inuendo, gossip, be-

trayal. The deacon is not a teacher; basically that is elder's work. But the deacon is going to be involved in the lives of people, intimately involved; so he had better have his tongue under control.

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The deacon also is marked as one who is "not greedy for gain." He will handle money, perhaps in various capacities. He may even find himself in a position where as money-handler he might easily benefit dishonestly. Perhaps he alone will know donors' or recipients' names and amounts involved. Inclinations toward greed had better be well under control.

These special qualifications give us insight into the nature of deacons' work. If all there is to being a deacon revolves around flowers and fruit baskets and the quick drop-off and pick-up of sermon tapes, these characteristics do not have special importance. But if indeed the deacon is going to meet people at their deep levels of need, if he is going to know people who hunger, thirst, who long for a friend, who need help of all kinds, then he needs special control of his tongue (and his ear) and special sensitivity with regard to money.

The duties of deacons in Presbyterian and Reformed churches are often derived from Acts 6. During the earliest church development (Acts 1-5) the apostles had maintained direct oversight over all the church's life, and done so under authority from the Lord himself. At Chapter 6, however, some believers with Greek background felt that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food among the needy Christians. The apostles gathered the Christians and urged them to pick seven of their number, so that (1) this duty might be properly done and (2) the apostles might be free to devote

themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Deacons today should expect therefore that their task is (1) to help people with various kinds of needs and (2) to relieve elders of these and other tasks that detract from their concentration on "prayer and the ministry of the Word." If, as a matter of fact, deacons did the task well, many sessions might find themselves with short agendas. Perhaps sensing that "risk", elders, "teaching" and "ruling" may be reluctant to allow deacons to fulfill their own high calling.

After the deacons had been appointed, the apostles continued to have active interest in ministry to the poor, the widows and others with needs (Acts 11:30). No Christian, not even an apostle, can give away his or her responsibility for the poor and the needy, the deprived and the dispossessed. You can't give it to your denominational headquarters or to your local board of deacons. Deacons therefore have an important responsibility in today's accelerated world. They must organize the ministry of mercy. They must become God's channel for mobilizing the members of his church to minister in the lives of others. When deacons see their role as that of activating the ministry of mercy by all the people of God, by the whole church, they have taken the first step toward multiplication of blessing in the lives of extended multitudes of suffering people.

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***Today's deacon can trace his roots back to rich blood, some of which flowed in sacrificial service.***

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The deacons also had high interest in other aspects of the gospel ministry after their appointment. Appointed in Acts 6 as a deacon, Stephen dies in Acts 7, the first Christian martyr. Philip, also one of the original seven, was "Philip, the evangelist," engaging in personal and mass evangelism (Acts 8). Today's deacon can trace his roots back to rich blood, some

of which flowed in sacrificial service.

The office of deacon is a high calling under Jesus Christ. It is not a training ground for elders, although some deacons later become elders. It is not a secondary office; it is not unimportant. It is absolutely critical to the life of the church, in spite of often being ignored. The framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith discussed for months the duties of elders and the power of presbyteries, but concluded the subject of deacon in one day. Some presbyterian churches today have disbanded their boards of deacons or reduced them to roles of money-gathering and grounds-keeping. What a tragedy that in a world filled with desperate people the church has so often lacked alert, creative, devoted deacons to challenge it and drive it by example and vision to responsive love.

J. K. S. Ried has written an article entitled "Diakonis in the Thought of Calvin," in a book called *Service in Christ* (London: Epworth Press, 1966)<sup>1</sup> Reid affirmed: "It is difficult to imagine any single thing that would by itself do more to revive the church today than a recovered sense of this emphasis so typical of Calvin, that ministry means ministry. The legalism that formalizes ministry into a rank and neglects its essential character of service infects all churches." Reid makes clear that it was not the unimportance of the "care of widows" that caused it to be delegated; it was in fact its critical role in gospel ministry. The apostles simply did not have time or energy for two necessary and demanding ministries, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of mercy. To denigrate the high office of deacon is practical heresy.

The low estate of the office of deacon today is what we brought upon it, not what God intended. "When during World War II the Netherlands were occupied by Germans the deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church assumed the care for the politically persecuted, supplying food and providing secret refuge. Realizing what was happening, the Germans decreed that the elective office of deacon should be eliminated. The Reformed Synod on 17 July 1941 resolved: 'Whoever touches the

diaconate interferes with what Christ has ordained as the task of the church . . . Whoever lays hands on *diakonia* lays hands on worship! The Germans backed down." (Frederick Herzog, *Service in Christ*, page 147). And we relegate our Board of Deacons to the past or to trivial roles, hardly essential to the kingdom ministry! The time is always proper to challenge deacons to their high calling; no time is better than right now.

We have seen that (1) Jesus demonstrates diaconal ministry uniquely, and that he also requires Christians to express diaconal love and concern. We have found that (2) the New Testament refers to specific officers in the church, called deacons, with necessary qualifications for office and tasks to fulfill. And we have learned that (3) deacons ought not to define their duties too narrowly and certainly ought to have the highest regard for the significance and importance of their office in God's plan for service and ministry in a needy and dying world.

What, then, does the deacon do? He ministers in the name of Jesus among lonely, sick, elderly, orphaned, widowed, dying, poor and deprived people. Some Christians have maintained that the Board of Deacons only has responsibility under God to minister to needy people within the church. There is, of course, pharisaic danger in even raising this question. The lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?", which, being interpreted, is "To whom should I show love?" or "How big should my neighborhood be?" "What are the geographical, physical limits for love?" The lawyer asked a question that rabbis had difficulty answering. Were they to love only other pharisees, or pious Jews, or all Jews, surely not Samaritans, not gentiles, certainly not enemies. But Jesus made clear that the critical issue is whether or not his would-be disciple is himself a neighbor to any with whom he or she comes into contact.

Churches whose Board of Deacons is charged with ministry only among its own people should at least note the warning of W. A. Whitehouse, ". . . a self-contained expression of diaconal service within the fellowship of the church has no witnessing power and is spoiled in its very

character by a taint akin to incest." Perhaps the prevailing poverty among the early Christians demanded that special attention be directed to the pressing needs of brothers and sisters. Boards of Deacons who believe that their field of ministry is within the limitations of the church can have rich and useful ministry, as they identify intimately with the needs of their congregation and begin to learn from Christians in neighboring communities who may be able to teach them how to minister to racially oppressed or poverty-burdened members of God's family.

So what does the deacon do? The specific answer is determined by the nature of the neighborhood. As Christians emerge from the protective comfort of their churches, they may find lonely people in boarding houses; poor people without food; young people with absentee parents; nursing-homed people without visitors (one nurse estimated that eighty per cent of the people in Pittsburgh's nursing homes never receive a visit from anyone); confused people without hope.

The Board of Deacons ought to seek involvement of the entire congregation in the ministry of mercy. A Board of Deacons, functioning properly, will give creative attention to the neighborhood in which it is called of God to function, but it will bring the same kind of creativity to the devising of a plan to give every member of its congregation clear opportunity for ministry to others. The apostles, even after the appointment of the "seven," continued to minister to people in need. How tragic to withhold that privilege from many Christians who simply wait for direction.

In our complex society the church, or at least individual Christians, must give attention to the "large" problems. Poverty will not diminish until its causes are mollified. Food for a hungry person is a necessary ministry, but the grain fields that have become dust bowls need attention also. The Reformers sought to aid hungry beggars, symptoms of an ailing society, but they also took aim at the basic problem. "Calvin . . . took the initiative of suggesting the setting up of the silk industry at Geneva to absorb surplus labor and to make possible the ending of beg-

ging." (G. W. Bromiley, *Service in Christ*, page 111).

The problems of our cities need study, reflection, prayer. What Alan A. Brash (*Service in Christ*, pp. 206-207) wrote of Asian cities might be said of our cities also: "The churches have not really grappled seriously with the problems of the city. They have passed out their resources in sideline acts of organized mercy which, however commendable, have not touched the heart of the matter. Such charitable service has made little of no impact on the shape of the city itself, nor on its hectic rush to shame or glory. The dimensions of the problem have frozen the church into inaction." The disfavor that many of us have toward the pronouncements and postures of many church bodies on varied political matters ought not to prohibit us from seeking wisdom for positive contribution in world affairs when survival is at stake. (At the very least the Board of Deacons might ask for authority to sponsor the annual drive for funds for hunger, in an effort to bring that offering above the level of a collective pittance.)

And what happens when deacons fulfill their biblical mandate, when a church becomes a functioning community of service? For one thing, Christians become bound to one another as never before. John Calvin said, "The ministry of men . . . is a principle bond by which believers are kept together in one body" (IV,iii,2).

A second result of an active diaconal ministry will be that we will have given the proper response to Jesus' diaconal ministry on our behalf. He served: we serve. Really, he serves through his body, the church, us. Without the ministry of mercy, the body is so incomplete. As though without an arm, a leg, the church seeks to stand, walk, run, but falls in confusion and uncertainty. In diaconal ministry we work out the salvation of the Lord with fear and trembling, until we see how that great gift touches everything and everybody that we touch. At every point of contact with his body the world sees and senses the love of God in Christ Jesus, love which commends and commands a ministry of mercy, diaconal ministry.



A third result is that we shall remove hypocrisy from our intercessory prayer. We shall be delivered from praying for the needs of others, while ignoring opportunities to minister to those in need. Our deeds to men will be brought into conformity with our words to God. Perhaps it should also be said at this point that the deacons might be specialists in intercessory prayer, not only praying themselves, but sharing with the congregation situations calling for prayerful attention.

A result hardly mentioned so far is that people will be helped. The evidence that Jesus offered to John's disciples that he was in fact the Christ was that the blind

were seeing, the lame walking, lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing and the gospel being preached to the poor. People were "being ministered unto," which is what he came to do. People were being helped, physically and spiritually, which is what it's all about for him and for his body.

"Deaconing" is a great Christian vocation. Under Christ's Lordship we can serve as successors of those who had the high privilege of ministering to him. After Jesus' temptation, "the angels came and ministered (deaconed) to him." After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, "she rose and served (deaconed) him." High, holy privilege; to serve Jesus in person.

At the cross stood women watching, "There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering (deaconing) to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and mother of the sons of Zebedee." What blessed opportunity, to serve Jesus himself.

How tragic when the church does not heed the opportunity, respond to the call, to minister to Jesus in person, to serve the Lord himself. Christians, don't give up your birthright, your right by birth, the heritage of highest service. Deacons, don't retreat from God's high calling.

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# Ministries of Mercy

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## A Growing Concern Among NAPARC Churches

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*The following article is based on information contained in a committee report to the Sixth General Assembly (1978) of the Presbyterian Church in America. The article, written by committee chairman Fred Marsh, is a condensation of the full report contained in the Assembly minutes. Other committee members were PCA deacons John C. Love, Jr. (Kosciusko, Mississippi), Charles Summers (Roswell, Georgia), James Dickenson (Jacksonville, Florida), and ruling elders Joseph Hunt (Shreveport, Louisiana), and Mike Minkoff (Norcross, Georgia).*

Of growing concern to the member churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC, made up of the Christian Reformed

Church, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America) is the "diaconal ministry" of the people of God. Though specific definitions would vary, ministry and study coming under this label focus on the expression of the mercy of Jesus Christ in ways which can be identified tangibly and which meet specific human needs. Awareness, study, and activity in this area is growing rapidly among the churches of Presbyterian and Reformed persuasion. It may be examined and analyzed easily in terms of discussion and refinement of the various biblical directives and principles involved, and in terms of specific ministry activities. In this article, six basic issues under current study and discussion will be summarized, fol-

lowed by a brief survey of the diaconal structure and ministry of the NAPARC churches.

The first area of consideration is the scope of the diaconate. In other words, how wide is the circle of those who are the proper objects of diaconal concern? Definitions and limits range from a narrow scope of concern, namely, those within the church who need life's basic necessities, to the wide-ranging care of any who are afflicted, distressed, and defenseless. Some prefer to identify proper areas of concern by naming specific people in need by virtue of relationships and economic factors, such as orphans, widows, prisoners, strangers, and underprivileged believers. For others within the NAPARC fellowship, "the poor," defined primarily as those who are of minimal economic means (by international standards), are the ones who should receive the main focus of our attention. The range of the kinds of people who are deemed worthy of help is rather wide. The overall effect of the resulting diversity in both stated purpose and actual ministry is not generally one of conflict, but rather a composite expression of intent and activity which touches at least in a representative way on a wide variety of peoples and types of need.

A second area of concern in the practical expression of Christ's love and concern is that of the relationship between the individual Christian's works of mercy

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and the official diaconate of either the local church or the denomination. In discussing this topic, there appears to be a clear consensus among NAPARC churches, to the effect that all Christians are called not only to minister the Word and proclaim the gospel verbally, but also to express love to one another and to others in need in specific practical ways. The diaconate is not a replacement for individual responsibility; rather, deacons are appointed and set apart in order to lead, equip, and motivate the people of God to increasingly greater expressions of Christ's love, accompanying their ministry of teaching and proclamation. As the people of God grow in their expressions of compassion, the role of the deacon becomes increasingly necessary in giving direction and providing the appropriate structure for the expression of that activity. At the same time, as deacons grow in their understanding of the direction given by the Scriptures, they are able to educate and encourage the Lord's people to a more active expression of the communion of the saints.

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### *Are unbelievers the proper objects of diaconal concern as well as believers?*

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Closely related to the first question discussed above is what may be identified as a third area of particular concern, namely, the question as to what extent the diaconal ministry proper is to be applied outside the church. Are unbelievers the proper objects of diaconal concern as well as believers, or should this ministry of the church be confined to believers only, leaving any tangible demonstrations of mercy to unbelievers in the category of accessory or assistance to evangelism in some way? This question may well be the least resolved of issues in the overall discussion, at least from a theoretical standpoint. On the one hand, it is argued that the term *diakonia*, when indicating specific help to those in need, is not applied to ministry outside the church in the New Testament. On the other hand, it is argued that passages such as Luke 10:30-37 ("The Good Samaritan") call all Christians to minister to the closest one in need. A further ques-

tion is the extent to which such ministry, even to believers, should take into account disciplinary and even punitive aspects, as in the instruction of II Thessalonians 3:10 to withhold food from the brother who does not work. Again, one may counter that the Christian is to feed even his enemy, after the example of his heavenly Father, Matthew 5:38-48. What makes the question a compelling one is the wide gap between the resources of the Christian community and the extent of evident need in the world. Generally speaking, NAPARC churches and individual members within their communions have reached a practical resolution in making the needs of believers their first priority, while responding to needs of unbelievers in more limited ways, as, in the Lord's providence, various needs have been encountered.

The specific relationship between works of mercy and evangelism is a fourth area of discussion inevitably arising out of the questions raised above. Here again, there is no clear consensus in discussion, and there is also less agreement in practice. Positions range from that of using works of mercy almost exclusively as a means of "pre-evangelism" or direct accompaniment of verbal proclamation only, to responses of aid in situations with only minimal accompanying proclamation. There is no belief, in the midst of this discussion, that works of mercy in any way replace evangelism or that the two are in any sense to be equated, but there is, nevertheless, debate in both theory and practice as to the extent to which the Christian is obedient to his Lord if he exercises kindness and mercy in a given situation without necessarily including specific gospel proclamation. Since one's actions either contradict or verify one's words, and since we are clearly called to proclaim the gospel and to build up fellow believers in the faith, the number and kind of circumstances in which verbal proclamation and works of mercy legitimately could be separated would seem to be rare indeed. Still, the debate continues and does have significant practical implications.

Brought into sharp focus by the debate over the question of the ordination of women to the office of deacon is the subject of a fifth area of discussion among NAPARC churches: the authority level of

the diaconate. The question is a significant one quite apart from its implications for the role of women. A wide range of viewpoints is represented, from those who regard deacons only as assistants to the session, or members of the session, to those who argue that the session and diaconate are to function at almost the same level of authority with a distinction primarily in sphere of service only. The debate is based on varying viewpoints as to the Old Testament roots of the office, on varying interpretations of the role assumed by "the seven" of Acts 6, and on divergent viewpoints as to the significance of "ordination" and of the concept of "office." The range of viewpoints on this issue appears to be represented in both theory and practice within each of the denominations that are members of NAPARC. Generally, the diversity of viewpoints does not seem to produce an unhealthy situation. Negative effects are felt, however, when the issues remain unresolved within a local church, creating tensions or open conflict between session and diaconate. In this, along with some of the other areas here discussed, there is no clear indication as to whether or not further study will result in a stronger consensus, or whether individuals and churches will have to choose a particular viewpoint for their teaching and practice which may be different from others.

The sixth and final area of discussion is that of the proper relationship between rich and poor individuals and congregations. Questions here include the extent to which the sharing of one's possessions with a brother who has less is to be considered "optional" or a matter only of individual conviction and decision. It is agreed that sharing with the needy must be voluntary, and that the rich are not to be rich through taking advantage of the poor, but there is debate as to the extent to which the equal sharing of possessions among believers is an aspect of Christian living to be taught and encouraged universally. An evident need in this area from a practical standpoint is that of more communication and fellowship between the people of varying economic levels among the Lord's people. Often, individuals or congregations do not respond to those in greater need simply because of the relative isolation of one from the other, with its inevitable resulting igno-

rance of the particular circumstances of need.

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***Often, individuals or congregations do not respond to those in greater need simply because of the relative isolation of one from the other, with its inevitable resulting ignorance of the particular circumstances of need.***

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The very formulation of questions in these areas, along with the accompanying quality and volume of both published and verbal discussion, is an indication of a healthy desire to understand both in theory and practice proper biblical ways to show the Lord's mercy in action, as well as to speak about it and proclaim it in words. The discussion and practice appears to be a growing one, and, with it, increasing zeal for the activity of proclamation of the gospel.

Certain local churches within the membership of NAPARC have made works of mercy a major thrust of their ministry. Having within the scope of its membership and personal contacts a number of people in serious financial need, the New Life Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, has made it a regular practice to minister to financial needs of individuals and families, both in terms of meeting crises and in terms of a ministry of long-range financial guidance and rehabilitation. An illustration of the way in which a local church's ministry may be extended is also provided in the case of this congregation. Contact with Ugandan refugees located in the Philadelphia area resulted in the church's sending a couple to East Africa for a more direct and substantial ministry among the people fleeing persecution in Uganda.

A very different kind of ministry grew out of the work of an RPC,ES church in St. Louis, Missouri, Grace and Peace Fellowship. Located in an older suburb of the city proper, the church found itself in a community in which rental property

was either inadequately maintained, or was renovated and subsequently rented at rates too high for poorer people forced to seek housing because of displacement through "urban renewal." Cornerstone Corporation was organized in 1975 as a response to this situation. Composed of individual Christians, the non-profit corporation purchases buildings, renovates them through volunteer or low cost labor, and rents them at reasonable rates to lower-income people needing housing in the area. Hence, good quality housing is provided at reasonable cost.

Certain Christian organizations independent of specific denominational ties or local church control have also received substantial support from people within the NAPARC fellowship. Typical of these, and indicative of the concerns of many Presbyterian and Reformed people, would be Bethany Christian Services, an adoption agency in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Palmer Home for Children, an orphanage in Columbus, Mississippi; the Voice of Calvary Ministries, working in economic development among the poor in Mendenhall and Jackson, Mississippi. An extensive list of inter-denominational or independent Christian agencies working overseas in combined diaconal and evangelistic ministries would also be included among organizations in which NAPARC members have an active part. In the ministries outside of the United States, the coordination of proclamation and works of mercy takes place more naturally and effectively. A ministry of Bible translation, for example, automatically necessitates the education of the people for whom the translation is done.

Moving from the local to the regional level, two of the NAPARC denominations have established presbytery or classis diaconates. The Christian Reformed Church has a fairly sophisticated system, with each classis having a diaconal board composed of deacons from the member churches. Classis representatives, in turn, compose a Diaconal Conference. Purposes of the classis boards, and the larger Diaconal Conferences, are education, communication, fellowship, advice and direction, and cooperative efforts for major projects. The conferences also work jointly with the Synod-level committee in some projects, and assist in raising funds for the Synod committee's ministry.

Educational meetings arranged by the classes include workshops on such topics as spiritual care of the elderly, ministry to prisoners, dealing with drug addicts, and stewardship. Communication in some cases is assisted by newsletters published by the conferences. Other more extensive projects include family counseling services, drug rehabilitation programs, prison ministries, programs for emergency help to the poor, and provision of residences for delinquent teenagers.

Some of the presbyteries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have diaconal committees composed of elders and deacons from the member churches. The purpose is two-fold: education, and response to emergency needs. As does the Assembly-level Committee on Diaconal Ministries, the presbytery committees serve primarily as a means of response to emergencies within local churches. The committees also serve as channels for communication of needs to local churches from the Assembly Committee on Diaconal Ministries.

Three of the NAPARC denominations have Assembly-level diaconal boards or committees, each reflecting various attitudes and taking varying approaches to the need for works of mercy within or around their constituencies. The Christian Reformed Church has the most extensively developed system. The Christian Reformed Church World Relief Committee (CRWRC) describes itself as a "denominational diaconate," whose purpose is to deal with needs beyond the scope of, or too far distant from, the classis or conference boards. The CRWRC was established in 1962, primarily as a response to the need for relief work in Korea, where CRC missionaries were working, and with aspects of work with Cuban refugees. Since that time, the CRWRC has developed programs for both crisis relief and long-range development, with an emphasis on development of permanent indigenous leadership and self-reliance. Making as its first priority the "household of faith," the CRWRC moves from there to ministries associated with the classes and with the foreign missionaries primarily. Disaster relief and some other ministries are also carried on overseas in some areas where Christian Reformed Foreign Mission Board workers are not

present. Though there is a heavy emphasis on work in the United States, well over half of the annual budget is spent in overseas work. The work of the CRWRC is done in 13 countries, and includes placement of children for adoption, agricultural development, rehabilitation of the handicapped and community leadership development.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Committee on Diaconal Ministries also defines itself as an extension of the ministry of the local church and presbytery, in works whose scope is too large or too distant to be handled locally. As a general rule, its work is further defined as being either within the household of the faith or an accompaniment to the proclamation of the gospel. Consequently, the committee operates primarily in response to emergency needs within the church and particular physical needs encountered by the missionaries.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, carries on its domestic diaconal ministries through the Board of Home Ministries. Working in coordination with the efforts of the presbyteries, and involving itself in ministries of evangelism which will not likely develop into self-supporting churches, as well as specific works of mercy, the board oversees a mission to the Cherokee Indians in Stillwell, Oklahoma; a ministry of leadership training and education of mentally handicapped children, in addition to evangelism on Grand Cayman Island in the British West Indies; economic development and assistance within the poor black community in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Bible teaching and assistance to the poor among Spanish people in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and a ministry of evangelism in an older section of the city of St. Louis, Missouri. In addition, the board is available for assistance in domestic emergency needs, working with the CRWRC where possible and helpful. An additional ministry is being established in St. Louis through Bethany Christian Services of Grand Rapids, consisting of services in the area of alternatives to abortion: counseling and assistance for unwed mothers, adoption services, and foster home care. Specific diaconal ministries overseas in the RPC,ES are carried on through the for-

eign mission board, World Presbyterian Missions, rather than through a separate diaconal board. Works include those which have traditionally accompanied evangelism and church planting overseas, including disaster relief, community development, teaching, and medical work.

The particular form for leadership in diaconal ministries by the Presbyterian Church in America at the Assembly level is under study at this time. Survey information indicates room for, and a desire for, further development and growth in the area of works of mercy. The Committee on Mission to the World is engaged in disaster relief work through the World Relief Commission, and Committee missionaries are engaged in occupations such as agricultural development, education, and medicine, in addition to evangelism and church planting as such. At the Sixth General Assembly (1978), the PCA approved the appointment of a sub-committee of the Committee on Mission to the United States to oversee the development of domestic ministries among the urban peoples, the poor, and the ethnic minorities. The Committee on Christian Education is preparing educational materials on works of mercy and is charged with further study of the overall needs of the denomination in development of ministries of mercy. Instruction in stewardship is carried on by the Administration's Subcommittee on Stewardship Ministries. Hence, there is emerging through several of the various Assembly committees an emphasis on diaconal ministries.

Unique to the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition is an understanding of the importance of works of mercy as a necessary expression of the love of brothers in the Lord, as well as an accompaniment to the proclamation of the gospel. The one does not displace the other, and neither is complete without the other. The concern to develop the proper expressions of the Lord's mercy along with a strong emphasis on Gospel proclamation is a hallmark of the member churches of NAPARC. The future of the discussion and further development of these ministries is a positive one. It is encouraging to find a concern to grow in the Lord in this vital area on the part of these particular denominations.

## Redemptive Analogies

When Don Richardson first published his best-selling book *Peace Child* (Glendale, Ca: Regal Books 1974), it was chosen as a *Reader's Digest* selection.

The book recounts the fascinating story of how Richardson and his wife first brought the gospel to the Sawi tribe of the former New Guinea, now known as West Irian or Irian Jaya. They found in the Sawi a people who literally idealized treachery. Their whole outlook on life was foreign to the gospel of redeeming love. Yet, the Richardsons were able to communicate that very gospel in a remarkable way. They discovered the Sawi to have a custom whereby they made peace with others. Often at great personal cost a father would give over one of his sons as a "peace child" to those with whom he would make peace. Richardson was able to use this practice to teach the Sawi about the heavenly Father who gave his Son as a sacrifice to appease his own wrath against sinful men.

This experience was the means of causing Richardson to reflect upon what he has called "redemptive analogies". As he wrote in the Introduction to his book, "The principle we discerned was that God had already provided for the evangelization of these people by means of redemptive analogies in their own culture. These analogies were our stepping-stones, the secret entryway by which the gospel came into the Sawi culture and started both a spiritual and a social revolution from within." (*Peace Child*, page 10).

Don Richardson is now Minister at Large of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union with headquarters in Philadelphia. He is also conducting research in the use of redemptive analogies as a means of proclaiming the gospel to unevangelized peoples. By means of his research and through conversations with other missionaries, he has discovered many remarkable instances of the way in which God has used this method to introduce whole tribes to the gospel. For example, one

Latin American tribe believed that their god would rise out of the ground to make his appearance to them. This belief has been used to teach these people the doctrine of the resurrection and of the true God.

Richardson recounted several of these striking anecdotes in a lecture given at Westminster Theological Seminary on Tuesday, October 10, 1978. Under the title, "God's Keys to Man's Cultures", he discussed his theory of redemptive analogies before a large and responsive audience.

Don Richardson has also written *Lord of the Earth* (Glendale, Ca: Regal Books, 1978). It is the biography of a fellow missionary, Stan Dale, who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Yali tribe of Irian Jaya. The book also provides further illustrations of the principle of redemptive analogies.

## Francis Shaeffer in Mayo Clinic

Dr. Francis Shaeffer, well-known for his ministry at L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland is currently in the Mayo Clinic suffering from cancer of the bone marrow. The Lord's people are asked to pray that the treatment Dr. Shaeffer is undergoing will be effective and that he will be restored to further ministry. Dr. Shaeffer is an ordained minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

## New Training Center for Urban Church Leaders

The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has undertaken sponsorship of a Center for Urban Theological Studies in Philadelphia.

This center has arisen out of a ministry begun seven years ago on the campus of Westminster Seminary. Under the direction of the Rev. Bill Krispin, the Westminster Ministerial Institute was formed

to provide theological education for pastors from the inner city. However, it became apparent that a location more directly accessible to the urban church community was desirable. Accordingly, the Center for Urban Theological Studies was formed this year with headquarters in a busy section of north Philadelphia.

Bill Krispin and Carl Ellis (a Westminster student with seven years of campus ministry experience with Tom Skinner Associates) have been appointed to serve on the initial ministry team. Bill Krispin is also serving as Director of Urban Pastoral Studies at Westminster, advising students preparing for urban ministry.

Arrangements have been made with Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, whereby students at the center may receive academic credit towards the Bachelor of Arts degree at Geneva.

## Denunciation of Terrorists in Rhodesia

WHEATON, Ill.—The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has called upon President Carter to publicly denounce the terrorist activities of the Patriotic Front in Rhodesia.

In an October 13th letter addressed to the President, NAE President Dr. Carl H. Lundquist warned that the United States' official policy toward Rhodesia is apparently being misunderstood sufficiently so that it is actually encouraging the guerrillas in their wanton destruction of life and property.

"This letter is in no way intended to influence the political outcome of the situation there," Dr. Lundquist wrote, "but we are deeply concerned with the human rights aspect as it impacts upon the native Christians who are members of the church groups which we serve and our missionaries who are involved.

"We hope new ways and means will be considered by which you (the President) could assist in halting this reign of terrorism and promote a peaceful transition to a black majority rule in Rhodesia."



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# Van Til on Wall Street

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*Frank Speyers*

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The air is fresh. A brisk rain has swept away all semblances of smog. Clear mellow shafts of October sunlight penetrate the concrete canyons. And on the narrow glistening streets below, a million commuters cram lunch-hour bars, restaurants and shops. Their cheap after-shave, jaded perfumes and expensive gray flannel fill the air . . . only to be dissipated by the pungent exhaust of hissing busses, honking taxis and howling fire-engines. Snarling. Growling. Squeezing. Grabbing. All dodging ubiquitous pretzel vendors and prolific pedestrians, who care little for red lights and their own lives. Some are somber; some are gay. Some tend to rush along. Others seem to wander . . . neckties loose, shirts open. Laughing. Joking. Cursing. Boisterous and loud. Attracting

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*Mr. Frank Speyers is a freelance writer, living in Jenkintown, Pa.*

furtive glances from frowning businessmen . . . whose very faces cry out in quiet desperation . . . for meaning and purpose. For peace of mind. And hope. This is Wall Street. The financial epicenter of the world.

Yet suddenly there is this man. Sunlight sparkles on his silvery-white hair. He wears a non-descript three-piece grey suit and a pair of wire-rimmed glasses. Undoubtedly, he is well over eighty. Yet there he is. His voice is loud and clear. Booming as it echoes between the towering skyscrapers. His long, bony fingers jab the air with great empathy. His face is serious yet sincere. And he speaks of God. The God of the Bible. The God of the universe. He speaks of belief and unbelief. Of hell and condemnation. Of sin and forgiveness. His voice is filled with urgency and compassion. . . .

The man is Dr. Cornelius Van Til, one

of the founding fathers of Westminster Theological Seminary. He was joined by more than twenty people from the seminary and from New Life Presbyterian Church in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania who went to New York City simply to proclaim the gospel on Wall Street.

"Street preaching isn't exactly the avant-garde method of getting the gospel out today," shared Dan Macha, a deacon at New Life Church, "Yet we stand in a great tradition. Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, all were men who took their sermons to the streets to reach the people."

"The main thrust of the street ministry is worship. And out of worship comes the proclamation of the Word," commented Dr. John C. Miller, lecturer of evangelism at Westminster and pastor at New Life. "We'll go to a street corner with part of our congregation and there begin worshipping the Lord. This alone will often draw a number of curious passers-by. Then as a small crowd starts to form, we begin to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ came 'not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.'"

So effective is this strategy that many members of the New Life congregation are finding a renewed joy and boldness sharing the gospel in this manner. In fact, 34 members of the congregation went to Ireland for three weeks this past summer utilizing this same strategy on the streets of Dublin.

"To preach on Wall Street," continued Dr. Miller, "was simply a natural extension of our street ministry in Philadelphia and Dublin. New York again confirms to me that people really are not apathetic about Jesus Christ. We were able to preach in New York for about an hour in a free and unhindered manner. Yet, the more we talked about Jesus, the more we were convinced that he is still the most controversial person in history. For when the heckling began, it came with great ferocity!"

Four letter epithets and other profanities were hurled from a growing crowd. "You're liars! You're liars! Jesus was only a man!!!" someone shouted. Another raised his fists and yelled over and over again, "No mediator! No mediator! No mediator!!!" "Underneath it all," Dr. Miller observed, "one could almost hear a two-thousand year-old-echo, 'Away with

him, away with him. Crucify him!! Crucify him!!' The sheer intensity of the heckling was in itself very intimidating." One heckler interrupted Miller's preaching several times by shouting in his face, "No one here believes in Jesus." And then turning to the crowd he yelled, "I bet that not more than three people here in this crowd believe in Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus, raise your hand . . ." His face flushed as more than two dozen hands went up.

A powerful statement had been made. It stirred many Christian businessmen to come forward and identify themselves, which in turn caused much rejoicing among the students and members of New Life. They had seen the power of the gospel stir the lives of many. Jesus Christ was still the same stumbling block for those who did not believe and the same cornerstone for those who did.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (ACT OF AUG. 12, 1970; SEC. 3685; TITLE 39USC)

1. Title of publication:  
*The Presbyterian Guardian*
2. Date of filing: Sept. 29, 1976
3. Frequency of issue: monthly, eleven times per year, at \$4.25 per year
4. Location of known office of pub.:  
7401 Old York Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19126
5. Location of hdqtrs.: same
6. & 7. Publisher and owner: The Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corp.; J. Cameron Fraser, man. editor
8. Known bondholders, etc.: none
9. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.
10. Extent and Nature of Circulation:  
Av. no. copies each issue (x); Actual no. copies issue nearest filing date (y).  
A. Net Press Run: (x) 4809; (y) 4700.  
B. Paid Circ., Counter (x) 226; (y) 226;  
Main Subscr., (x) 3635; (y) 3504  
C. Tot. Paid Circ.: (x) 3861; (y) 3730  
D. Free Distrib.: (x) 778; (y) 808.  
E. Total Distrib.: (x) 4639; (y) 4538.  
F. Office, left-over: (x) 170; (y) 162.  
G. Total: (x) 4809; (y) 4700.
11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.  
J. Cameron Fraser, man. editor

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# Crisis in Jamaica

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*Jerry B. Pryce*

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The Jamaican church is presently experiencing one of the most crucial moments in its history. It has tended to take a one-sided approach towards the Christian experience, which has resulted in a neglect of the socio-economic aspect of the church community. The consequences of such an attitude have now begun to be evidenced in the loss of confidence being expressed by the populace. Among the very church community there is a general attitude of restiveness and disenchantment which certainly does not speak well for the church.

What seems to be overlooked is the fact that Christ has not only given the Holy Spirit to the church as an abiding Helper, nor has he simply given the church prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service and the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11, 12). He has also given gifts varying according to the measure of grace given each member. These gifts include service, giving, and showing mercy (Rom. 12:6-8). Among these latter offices one finds the role of the diaconate. This office has been sadly neglected in the Jamaican church with disastrous consequences.

A careful appraisal of this attitude of the church reveals that it is an integral aspect of the missionary package which was a part of the colonial era in Jamaica. The indignities and inhuman treatments meted out to the Jamaican people during this period cried out for explanation. In response, the missionaries tended to emphasize the future bliss of the Christian, while diverting attention from the realities of present existence. The believer

who displayed an attitude of obedience, contentment and optimism was hailed as a "devoted saint", for the Christian should not set his mind on things on the earth, but on things above. The disheartening reality of this is that while there was an advocacy for contentment and optimism of the laity, some ministers were constantly increasing in "things on the earth" while awaiting the "things above". Even now it is not infrequent to see pastors of very poor people in very socially and economically depressed areas living in luxurious conditions, driving expensive cars and enjoying the bliss of affluence. The tragedy of such behavior is that it, is given theological support.

The true concern for the Jamaican church arises from the fact that sooner or later the Marxist government of Jamaica will restrict the church in its fiscal and preaching policies. The consequent cry will be that the church has been silenced by a totalitarian government. It shall then be imperative that the behavior of the ministers of the church be carefully scrutinized and the blame be rightfully placed.

If the Jamaican church is to regain its credibility, dignity and purity, then there must be an immediate rethinking of its policies and practices and an urgent attempt to activate the diaconal functions in the church. Each believer must be seen as a "total" person who needs total care of body and soul. The church must feel the pains of each member, and share the concerns of each of its members. This does not have to be the sole responsibility of a pastor, but surely it is his responsibility to mobilize the diaconate into a positive response towards the social and physical needs of the people. It is also the responsibility of the pastor to allow his behavior to be above reproach amidst the suffering of his flock.

The church must project itself as that life-giving, humanizing center which seeks the interest of the kingdom of God and the welfare of its subjects. It must hear Jesus say, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; naked and you clothed me; I was in prison and you came to me . . . in as much as you do to one of my brothers you do to me" (Matt. 25: 35-40).

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Feb.

## Warp & Woof

Leonard Verduin

There is a man in the Bible (we meet him in Luke 18) whom I dislike; he is being cruel to a widow, and I don't like people who are cruel to widows. I find it hard not to detest this fellow; for even when he behaves halfway decently he does so for the wrong reason, for he does it for the sake of his own conscience.

How can you like a man who is heard saying: "Though I fear not God and regard not man . . . I will avenge her, lest by her constant coming she cracks my cranium." Bah, what a miserable character this is—a judge, mind you, who doesn't even care to be just!

However, there is one thing we can learn from him; it is that if and when people don't care about people it is because they don't fear God. This heartless hombre is orthodox enough (for he sizes himself up exactly as Jesus does, see verse 2) to acknowledge that it is because he doesn't fear God that he doesn't care a toot about people in trouble, not even about a poor widow in distress. At this point the man is on the right track.

For these two attitudes *always* go to-

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gether; the absence of the fear of God *always* goes hand in hand with an absence of concern for man. The two are correlatives. They are as the warp is to the woof, which together make cloth to be cloth. (The word "woof" is related to our "weave.") Anyway, the soliloquist of Luke 18 has a good insight into human behavior, one we do well to ponder, the more so because it agrees with Jesus' insights in the matter.

### *the absence of the fear of God always goes hand in hand with an absence of concern for man.*

I wish we could get people in our times to have as good an insight into human behavior as has this poor excuse of a judge. I wish we could get contemporary man to see that if men are to treat each other decently they must first learn to fear God—for the fear of God is not only the beginning of wisdom but is also the beginning of justice.

The Lord does know, and you and I know, that in the area of human relationships things are sagging; men are becoming more cruel to each other by the day, so much so that I, for one, have stopped picking up hitchhikers (a thing I used to do often), and we no longer camp alone in the woods (which used to be our chief joy). As a people we fuss around, spending fabulous sums of money, in a pell-mell attempt to slow down man's cascading cruelty to man (we have given up even the thought of *stopping* this trend or *reversing* it). But we are getting nowhere with it.

Why not? Why is every report worse than the one that went before? Is it perhaps because we have been telling ourselves, and each other, that man can nicely be made to behave himself, quite irrespective of any such thing as the fear of God? Our whole national system of education is geared to the notion that a society doesn't need religion, doesn't need the fear of God, to be respectable and just. Maybe the soliloquist of that despicable rascal in Luke 18 has something to say to us as a people.

And our churches? What about them, the one institution on earth that is in a position to lead the way? Many of them, perhaps most of them, taking their cue from what is being said on the street (rather than from the Sourcebook) fall all over themselves at their major assemblies in their hurry to be "with it," to be "where the action is," primarily in the area of horizontal relationships, the area of "human rights" and "social justice." Many a church is so out of breath from running after social programs that it has only a hoarse *whisper* in regard to the vertical relationship, that of man to his Maker. They wonder what is wrong, why their mountain is in labor and is bringing forth a ridiculous mouse.

Has it not dawned on men, not even in our churches, that in countries (Russia is a classic example) where the fear of God has become a *jest*, the rights of man have become a *joke*?

Are we trying to weave cloth made of nothing but warp? If so, we have no right to be surprised if the product is neither pretty nor useful.

Yes, we can learn a lot from the unjust judge who said, as he was talking to himself: "Since I fear not God and regard not man . . ."