

News & Notes

Sunday, April 9, 2006

Remember in Prayer: M. B. Anthony; Sandra Albertson; Michelle Bennett; Carrol Cherry; Diane Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Lawrence Dawson; Tommy Dawson; Flora Estes; Marilyn Hubbard; Carolyn Jordan; Christine Judge; Dot Ketchum; James Luna; Deliah Mann; Linda Matheny; Diane Mize; Howard Moody; Janet Rooker; Freddie Shaw; Lillie Mae Shelby; Jayme and Trucilla Spence; Calvin and Ollie Ursery; Alvie Williford;

Sympathy is extended to the family of Marshall Estes.

Pantry item for the month of April is cleaning supplies.

The **youth devotional** is tonight after evening services in the dining hall.

Ladies Bible class will be meeting Tuesday night April 11th at 6:30 P.M. in the dining hall.

Sermon In Preview: Pressing Toward the Upward Call of God:

AM: "When the Person Who Really Matters Says, 'I Got Nothing Out of Worship Today'" (Amos 5:21-24) (Stan Mitchell)

PM: Lessons presented by Ashland Men

For the Record (April 2, 2005):

Attendance: 78 Contribution: \$1191.00 Budget: \$1352.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Carrol Street



ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)

Deacons in the Church

Jeremy Northrop

The word 'deacon' is defined by Vine as a "servant" or "anyone who serves." Consequently, the word has a wide usage in the New Testament. In Matthew 20:26, John 2:5, 9, and Romans 16:1, the Greek word *diakonos* (from which the English language gets the word deacon), is translated 'servant.' It is used in reference to the servitude required in humility, the helpers at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, and even a good sister in the church by the name of Phoebe. Also in Colossians 1:23, the Bible says, "...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." Paul uses the same Greek word in reference to himself and translates it 'minister' in this passage. Because of this broad usage and because Paul even uses the word to refer to a sister in Christ, then one can reasonably conclude that in a certain sense, all Christians are deacons in that all Christians are servants.

There are two places in the New Testament in which the Greek word *diakonos* is used where it seems to indicate more than just Christians or servants. Those places are Philippians 1:1 where it is used only once and 1Timothy 3:8-13 where it is used four times. Philippians 1:1 says, "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons..." Paul narrows the scope of the recipients of this letter in that he first makes it clear that it is for "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi..." and then calls out two groups of people within that group — the bishops (elders, shepherds) and the deacons. The text indicates that the deacons

were a group within the saints at Philippi not all the saints at Philippi. Since this is all that is said in reference to these people in this text, then no conclusions can be drawn concerning their work and membership in this group.

Thus, looking at the other text concerning this group of people is necessary. Paul said in 1Timothy 3:8-13,

Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

In this text, one can reasonably conclude that Paul wanted Timothy to appoint elders and deacons in the church in Ephesus. While the text does not say such directly, he spends the bulk of chapter two giving qualifications for elders and deacons. Yet, again one sees the special office for deacons but nothing is said of their work.

Several conclusions can be drawn and should be noticed: first, because of the wide usage of the word *diakonos* one sees that it is much more a work to be done than an office to be held. Phoebe was a servant, thus a deacon but she obviously did not hold the office of a deacon in the first century church because one of the qualifications is that deacons are to be the husbands of one wife (1Timothy 3:12). Paul was a deacon in the sense that he was a servant and did a work but did not hold any office because he was not married at all. In one sense, a deacon in the church holds an office but above all else a deacon is doing a particular work. In fact, no general authority over the congregation is placed upon deacons. Such authority is given to elders (1Peter 5:1-5; Acts 20:28). Again, these two texts (Philippians 1:1 and 1Timothy 3:8-13) show the sense in which a deacon is an office for male Christians with certain marks of maturity but neither really tell what the work is they are to be doing.

There is one other place in the New Testament which may speak of deacons: Acts 6:1-7, where the Bible says,

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

This text does not directly say that these men appointed to this task are deacons. However, there are some good reasons to conclude that they are deacons in the first-century church. First, while the noun form of *diakonos* is not used, the verb form is used. An abbreviated list of qualifications is given in verse three which is consistent with the more specific qualifications in 1Timothy 3:8-13. Next, a specific work is given to these men. Finally, a purpose for them doing this work is given — that the apostles can devote themselves to prayer and ministry of the word.

A deacon's work should not be limited to serving tables as the word usage in the New Testament would allow for a service of any kind. Nor should the deacon's work exclude anything spiritual as two of these men went on to do very spiritual things: Stephen and Philip preached (Acts 7 and 8). The church today needs deacons. First, the church needs men and women who will be willing to serve and allow their talents to be used. Second the church needs men with certain marks of maturity who will step up and do the work and the office which the Lord has for them.