

Ray's Story

Ray, a long-time deacon, had struggled with his fear of speaking in public. At a deacon meeting one month, to everyone's surprise, he volunteered to lead devotions for the next meeting. When the time came, Ray read from a devotional book that had special meaning for him. At the end of the devotion there was a written prayer. Ray read a couple of sentences from the prayer, but then he went on to add some sentences of his own—spontaneously, strictly “off the cuff.”



The tone for the whole evening was set, not just by the words that Ray read, but by the example that he gave the group—a message louder than what he read from the book. Since his wife had carried the devotional book into the meeting, everyone expected that he had persuaded her to do the devotion. But when it came time, he took the book, and he did something he had always previously declined!

Surmised his pastor, it was the Spirit leading and guiding Ray into a new territory. Everyone knew that this was a stretch for him. His “leap of faith” reminded them of how the Spirit is ready to help us with every task.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

Resources for further study

Another Way of Believing

by Dale W. Brown

An in-depth and thought-provoking study of the various ways Brethren “do theology” by their everyday living. See in particular the chapter “Living in the Spirit.”

Called to Caregiving: A Resource for Equipping Deacons in the Believers Church

by June Gibble

An Anabaptist perspective on the function of deacons as ministers embodying Christ's love for others in the midst of daily trials. Chapters focusing on the Holy Spirit include “Channels of God's Healing Spirit” and “Keeping the Spirit Alive.”

Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community

by Phillip D. Kenneson

A study and spiritual journey through the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, looking at their contextual meaning in the Bible and how we might cultivate these fruits in our lives today.

Understanding Pietism

by Dale W. Brown

An introduction to the history and theology of Pietism.



Caring Ministries
Church of the Brethren

1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120
(847) 742-5100 www.brethren-caregivers.org



Deacons and The Holy Spirit

“Deacons are to be...sensitive to the presence of God's Spirit in their lives and in the lives of others....”

from the Vision for Deacons,
Church of the Brethren

What is Spirituality?

"How can we grow spiritually?" is an oft asked question in deacon workshops. This is a growing feeling among many deacons in the Church of the Brethren. They would like to be "more spiritual."

To be more spiritual means to be closer to God in one's life. It means recognizing and exercising the gifts God has given us in order to help others know and experience the love and promise of Jesus.

Spirituality is having the spirit of Christ in all our living—our thoughts, our words, our actions, our hopes.

Spirituality for deacons is:

- Celebrating the anointing of the Spirit
- Modeling the fruit of the Spirit
- Calling forth the gifts of the Spirit



Celebrating the Anointing of the Spirit

Christian baptism often ends with a prayer for the Holy Spirit to anoint the applicant with divine presence and power. Jesus promised that he would send the Spirit to teach us and give us power and peace for the Christian life and mission. Deacons can rejoice in that power, which gives them assurance and help for their ministry of caregiving. The power of the Spirit is made known in prayer and in obedience to Christ's commandments.

Modeling the Fruit of the Spirit

The Apostle Paul lists the "fruit" of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These nine qualities of Christian behavior are the essential elements of Christian caregiving. Deacons should seek to model them in their lives and in their caring for others. Modeling is made easier through lives that are genuinely

committed to Christ and his way. No earthly human model of Jesus' way is going to be perfect; Jesus does not expect that from us. But deacons can strive to do their best in all they do, remembering the model of perfection, our Lord and Example, Jesus Christ.

Calling Forth the Gifts of the Spirit

Paul gives lists of "spiritual gifts" in Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30, and Ephesians 4:11. Many of these gifts are being shared in the Church today, such as preaching and teaching. But these lists are not exhaustive. There are many other gifts of God mentioned in the Bible. Any gift that comes from God and can be used for God's purpose is a spiritual gift, be it teaching or baking a pie for a neighbor. Deacons identify and call forth the spiritual gifts of each member of the congregation. Deacons keep an ear to the pulse of the congregation and match gifts to needs.