



## Stories of Faith – The Bible Study Edition

### **Out of the Building and on the Margins: A Four Week Bible Study About Deacons**

*Written by Denise Maier Pawliuk, Sacred Storyteller*

Denise is a diaconal candidate within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. She recently finished her internship with the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, SK.

For the past 35 years Denise's vocation has been rooted in early childhood learning and care ranging from being a front-line early childhood educator; a manager of an on-reserve early childhood learning and care program in northern British Columbia; overseeing the credentialing body for early childhood educators and training institutions in British Columbia; and being a college instructor.

Deacons bring the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they acquired before pursuing their training, with them. This directly influences the direction and focus of their ministry.

Recent training in Christian education, and previous experience teaching adults, has enabled her to develop a pedagogical approach to faith formation. She believes adults learn best when they have an opportunity to build relationships and when there is a variety of ages and knowledge levels involved in a course.

#### **MAIN OBJECTIVE**

To support a deeper understanding of deacons and diakonia through a four-week bible study.

## Week One – What Is a Deacon?

*Bible Verse – 1 Timothy 3:8-13*

### Introductions

- Welcome to *Out of the Building and on the Margins: A Four Week Bible Study About Deacons*.
- Take a moment for everyone to introduce themselves.
- In this Bible Study we will explore the role of deacons through the reading and reflection on a variety of biblical texts.

### Land Acknowledgement

- Please take a moment to acknowledge the lands on which you are on, now.

### Opening prayer

*Gracious God: Be with us today as we read and consider the scriptures. Engage the Holy Spirit open our hearts to new learnings and understandings. Through this information may we come to understand the call and ministries of deacons more fully. Amen.*

### Biblical Reflection

This week we are engaging with the text using questions sometimes used during Godly Play.

- Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13
  - After reading ask this question: What surprised you in this reading?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what surprised them.
- Again read 1 Timothy 3:8-13
  - After reading ask this question: What do you think is the most important part in this reading?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what they thought was the most important part.
- A final time read 1 Timothy 3:8-13
  - After reading ask this question: Where do you see yourself in this reading?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share where they saw themselves.

### Thoughts/Debrief

- In 1 Timothy 3 the qualifications for bishops and then deacons are outlined, confirming that there were already established ecclesial offices.
- In verse 11 there is acknowledgement that women could be deacons but there is also ambiguity. The explanation within the Oxford Annotated Bible is that if women deacons were intended, the lack of clear acknowledgement maybe due to the author's anxiety about female leadership. This is further emphasized in 1 Timothy 2:9-12.
- Consider the historical context of the role and place of women both in society and in the family.
- How do we engage in this text today?

### Closing Prayer/Dismissal

*Loving God:*

*As people of God, we are called to demonstrate, in whatever vocation we are called to do, your love, acceptance, and care of others. Empower us to do the loving thing. We also recognize that there are those among us who are called into public ministry, as bishops, pastors, and deacons. Be with all those who are preparing for ministry and are engaged in ministry. Fill them with your confidence and with good humour. All this we ask you Creator, Rebel, and Breath. Amen.*

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## Week Two – Who Is a Deacon?

*Bible Verse – Acts 6:1-7 and Romans 16:1-2*

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### Land Acknowledgement

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### Opening prayer

- *Loving God: May the words that we read, and the thoughts that float through our mind, deepen our understanding of your Word and the ministry of deacons within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Amen.*

### Biblical Reflection

This week we are engaging with the text using questions that are sometimes used in Godly Play.

- Read Acts 6:1-7
  - After reading ask this question: What surprises you in this reading?
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what surprised them.
- Again, read Acts 6:1-7
  - After reading ask this question: Is there anything that could be left out in this reading and we would still have all that we need?
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share their thoughts.
- Read Romans 16:1-2
  - After reading ask this question: What surprises you in this reading?
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what they thought was the most important part.
- Read Romans 16:1-2
  - After reading ask this question: Is there anything that could be left out in this reading, and we would still have all that we need?
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share their thoughts.

### Thoughts/Debrief

- In Acts 6:1-7 tradition has it that the seven named are the first deacons, although they hold no ecclesiastical office. The Hellenists are Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, and the Hebrews are Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians. Waiting on tables refers to feeding the hungry. Laid hands refers to a ritual of consecration and appointment.
- How do we engage with this text today?
- "Deacon" is a Greek word for one who serves or ministers to. Phoebe had a leadership role in the church in Cenchreae which is a port of Corinth. Also, Phoebe was a patron, a woman who had enough wealth to be in a patron-client relationship with Paul and others.
- How do we engage with this text today?

### Closing Prayer/Dismissal

*Gracious God:*

*Open our hearts to the diversity of ministry within the walls of the church, in homes, and on the streets. Enable us to see the saints among us who live out your commandment to love our neighbour. Amen.*

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## Week Three – Biblical Examples of Diaconal Ministry

*Bible Verse – Luke 10:1-20*

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### Opening prayer

*Merciful God: We gather again to learn about the work of deacons. A ministry that is rooted in the love of neighbour and meeting people where they are at, which is often outside of church buildings. Help us to understand the ministry of deacons more deeply both at the time of Jesus, and today. Amen.*

### Biblical Reflection

This week we are using the *Practice of Lectio Divina* as outlined in the book "The Soul's Slow Ripening: 12 Celtic Practices for Seeking the Sacred."

- Luke 10:1-20
  - Before reading the passage say: Listen for a word or phrase that feels significant right now, capturing your attention even if you don't know why. Gently repeat this word to yourself in silence.
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what word or phrase caught their attention.
- Second time Luke 10:1-20
  - Before reading the passage say: As I read the text again allow the word or phrase which caught your attention in the first movement to spark your imagination. Savour the word or phrase with all of your senses.
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants if they have anything to share with the group.
- Third time Luke 10:1-20
  - Before reading this passage say: Listen for an invitation rising from your experience so far. This invitation may be a summons toward a new awareness or action.
  - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants if they have anything to share with the group.

### Fourth Movement – *Contemplatio: Slowing and Stilling*

Encourage the participants to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then say: "This is a time for simply resting in God and allowing your heart to fill with gratitude for God's presence. Slow your thoughts and reflections even further and sink into the experience of stillness. Rest in the presence of God and allow yourself to simply be. Rest here for a few moments. Return to your breath if you find yourself distracted."

### Closing Prayer/Dismissal

*Gentle God: As we take each breath you are with us. As we reflect on the sacred texts, you are with us. As we contemplate, you are with us. Remind us you are always near. Amen.*

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## Week Four – Jesus and Diaconal Ministry

*Bible Verse – Mark 6:30-44*

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### Opening prayer

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### Biblical Reflection

This week we are using the *Gospel Based Discipleship Model* found on the Anglican website:

[www.anglican.ca/im/introgbd/](http://www.anglican.ca/im/introgbd/)

- Mark 6:30-44
  - Before reading the passage say: What word(s), idea(s), or phrase(s) stand out for you?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what stood out for them.
- Second time Mark 6:30-44
  - Before reading the passage say: What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what they heard Jesus saying to them in the scripture.
- Third time Mark 6:30-44
  - Before reading this passage say: What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do?
    - Pause to allow time for reflection. Ask the participants to share what they hear Jesus calling them to do.

### Thoughts/Debrief

- This is the only miracle found in all four Gospels. How might that be important?
- The instructions Jesus gives the disciples seem to indicate that Jesus expects the disciples to feed the crowd.
- Sitting in groups is the sign of a formal celebration.
- Connection with the Old Testament story of God providing food in the wilderness.

### Closing Prayer/Dismissal

*Creator God:*

*Together we have read from the sacred text to better understand the ministry of deacons. Continue to instil within us a curiosity, excitement, and passion for the holy texts. Amen.*

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