

18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2018

**SUBJECT: Nomination of Deacons at Harvest Bible Chapel Toronto West**

Dear Members of Harvest Bible Chapel Toronto West,

Since the beginning of our church in 2013, God has impressed upon our hearts a singular vision: to proclaim Christ, the only hope for our city. In fact, the very first sermon preached at our church was entitled "Hope for the City", where we examined the following passage:

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Matt 9:35-38

In this passage, Jesus Christ is incomparably great. He had deep compassion on a lost world, entered into its brokenness and ministered in both word and deed. Furthermore, Christ was calling us to be more than mere spectators; He beckoned us to see the plentiful harvest and answer the call to pray and be sent to the harvest. Furthermore, before his ascension, Christ commissioned all of his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:12). As such, our church was birthed with a vision to be sent into a lost and broken world with the hope of the gospel by ministering in both word and deed, just like Jesus Christ.

Since then, we have seen God do a great work in and through our church. Like the church in Acts 2, God has been adding to our numbers those who are being saved. This growth highlighted our need to actively expand our ministering capacity in both word and deed. The first milestone in this endeavor was the installation of our first local elders in 2016. With this, we had a biblical, New Testament office devoted to prayer and the ministering of God's word to feed and shepherd the church. This increased the ministry of the word in our church and God blessed with further growth, to the praise of His glory.

While thankful for what God has done, we have always been aware that God has instituted not just one, but two distinct New Testament offices: Elder and Deacon (1 Tim 3:1-13). Explicitly, we believe that God designed these two distinct New Testament offices to reflect the distinct priorities of word and deed ministry. This is most clearly distinguished in the following passage:

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to **serve** tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a

proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:1-7

In this passage, the early church was wrestling with the tension between two equally necessary, but distinct priorities: The ministry of the word via preaching and the ministry of deed via serving the practical needs of the believers. The Greek verb translated as “serve” in verse 3 is “diakoneo”, from which the English word “deacon” is derived. It is widely believed that the office of deacons had its origins in this passage. While we do not regard this passage as laying down a normative pattern to be rigidly followed, we see a baseline biblical pattern: *Just as the elders were instituted to coordinate and administer the church’s word ministry to the spiritual needs of the church, deacons were instituted to coordinate and administer the church’s deed ministry to the practical needs of the church.*

As our church has grown, we have begun to experience a similar tension as the early church. Until now, most of our church’s deed ministry has been undertaken by our staff. However, with growing demands to meet practical needs, the time has come to raise up deacons who coordinate and administer the church’s deed ministry to the practical needs of the church. The raising up of deacons will happen in 3 phases (with tentative timelines in brackets):

**PHASE I – Nomination (October 21 – November 4)**

**PHASE II – Training (November – February)**

**PHASE III – Installation (March)**

So how can you be involved? Here are 2 simple, preliminary steps for the Phase I:

1. **PRAYERFULLY DISCERN deacon-qualified men and women.** In Acts 6, it was the body of believers who “pick[ed] out from among [themselves]” (v3) the seven who would serve the practical needs of the church. In the same way, we invite you to prayerfully watch for deacon-qualified men and women among us by examining, meditating and praying through 1 Tim 3:8-13 and asking God to help you wisely identify those in our church who meet these qualifications.
2. **NOMINATE deacon-qualified men and women.** In Acts 6, it was the body of believers who set the seven before the apostles to be appointed and commissioned (v6). In the same way, we invite you to nominate deacon-qualified men and women to our elders by going to the deacon page at [harvesttorontowest.ca](http://harvesttorontowest.ca) to submit your nomination.

Like what the church witnessed in Acts 6:7, we pray that this milestone step of raising deacons in our church will lead to an increase in the word of God, a multiplication in the number of disciples and the salvation of even those most hostile to the gospel.

If you require any additional information, please feel free to contact us at 416-521-9292 or [deacons@harvesttorontowest.ca](mailto:deacons@harvesttorontowest.ca)

With deepest love for you,

The Elders of Harvest Bible Chapel Toronto West