

Nomination of Deacons at Hope Church Toronto West

Dear Members of Hope Church Toronto West,

Since the beginning of our church, 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:

³⁵And 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. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore 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.

We believe that God designed the two distinct New Testament offices of Elder and Deacon (1 Tim 3:1-13) 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. ²And 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. ³Therefore, 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. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And 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. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷And 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 grew, we began to experience a similar tension as the early church. And as our church continues to grow, so do the needs of the congregation. With these growing demands to meet practical needs, we seek to regularly raise up more deacons to coordinate and administer the church's deed ministry to the practical needs of the church. The raising up of deacons happens in 3 phases (with tentative timelines in brackets):

PHASE I – Nomination (September – October)

PHASE II – Training (November – December)

PHASE III – Installation (February – 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 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.

With deepest love for you,

The Elders of Hope Church Toronto West