

Joint Ministry by Elders and Deacons
A Statement of Matthews Orthodox Presbyterian Church

I. Principles:

1. Of the three kinds of diaconal assistance (relief, rehabilitation, and development), it is primarily development that is needed by those coming to our congregation for help.
2. Developmental assistance requires long term relationships in which the spiritual roots of material problems are biblically addressed through counsel and accountability.
3. To the extent that developmental assistance consists of evangelism and discipleship, it is the responsibility of both elders and deacons, and indeed, of the whole church.
4. Providing material assistance to those with primarily developmental needs can be counterproductive, unless it is done with a view to opening avenues for broader ministry by tangible expressions of love.
5. Material assistance to those with primarily developmental needs should not be continued past their willingness to submit to counsel and accountability.

II. Protocol

1. The deacons are the appropriate persons of first recourse for those seeking material help, both from within and without the congregation.
2. The priority of the deacons when approached for help should be to determine the nature of that need, whether of relief, rehabilitation, or development.
3. When a need is determined to be primarily developmental in nature, an elder's participation and oversight should be secured early in the process.
4. When the need for counsel and accountability is extensive, mentors/disciplers from the congregation should be enlisted (and even teams thereof), along with a designated elder and deacon.

III. Policy

1. Deacon reports to the Session should include assessments of those whose need requires developmental assistance.
2. Both the Session and the Diaconate should designate point persons from their respective numbers to be involved in the provision of developmental assistance, both to members and nonmembers.
3. A plan for developmental assistance should be devised and implemented primarily through conference between the designated elder and deacon.
4. The Session and Diaconate should meet together at least twice a year in order to review the progress and overall effectiveness of the mercy ministry of the church.