

SERVING THE LORD'S SUPPER AT BIRCHMAN

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR DEACONS

NOTE: This is a training guide and it is intended simply to document the practices in place at the time of its writing (September, 2010). It reflects the current preferences of our pastor and deacons and is not intended to be a static rule of law. Changes can be instituted by the pastor or the deacon leadership whenever improvements are desired.

A. SCHEDULING:

According to Birchman's Constitution and By-Laws, we are obligated to observe the Lord's Supper at least once each quarter (see Article VI, Section A, 1); however we usually observe it more often than that. A yearly schedule of the upcoming observances is released by the church staff at the beginning of the church calendar-year (September).

B. PREPARATION OF THE ELEMENTS, TRAYS AND TABLES:

The church's Lord's Supper Committee (not a deacon committee) is charged with preparing the essential elements: the bread and the juice are placed into an appropriate number of trays and then placed in the proper places, along with the special bread and juice items for the pastor. They are also responsible for removing the trays, cleaning them and replacing them back into the storage locations. A detailed description of that Committee's responsibilities, "Lord's Supper Committee Duties", originally created some years ago by Monty and Debbie Briley and updated by Debby Haynie, is attached. The pastor's secretary currently maintains that document, and, if the pastor or the deacons determine that changes in the Committee's duties seem necessary, they should be communicated to the secretary so that changes can be made in this document.

Even though the deacons are not normally required to prepare the elements of the Lord's Supper, it is highly-recommended that the deacons be familiar with the logistics of all the preparations, so that the two groups (Lord's Supper Committee and the Deacons) can work together in harmony. The format for each observance is basically the same, but the time of service (and the corresponding number of people attending) will dictate the number of trays needed and the number of deacons required to serve. Please see the corresponding chart, "Birchman Lord's Supper, Set-Up Options" which describes the quantity differences.

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C. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

Deacons, as well as other church members, are urged to examine themselves for worthiness to receive the Lord's Supper in accordance with scripture, most notably I Corinthians 11:27-29.

D. DEACONS' ATTIRE:

There is no particular level of recommended-dress for deacons participating in the Lord's Supper. The pastor has said that the deacons' attire should reflect the attire of the congregation for that service. The deacon should consider the seriousness of this ordinance of the church and should dress accordingly.

E. TRAINING:

The deacon leadership should organize at least one yearly "Lord's Supper Rehearsal", preferably at the beginning of the church-year: after the new deacons have begun serving on September 1, but before the first Lord's Supper observance of the new church-year.

NOTE: In order to allow the deacons the opportunity to properly train and prepare new and returning deacons, it is preferable that the church staff NOT plan a Lord's Supper observance too early in the church-year. Recommendation: plan no observance until at least late September.

F. SIGN-UPS:

Before each observance, an adequate number of deacons should be assigned to serve the specific areas of the auditorium. A chart has been prepared "Birchman Lord's Supper-- Auditorium Map" (attached) has been created to act as a sign-up sheet and to help the deacon visualize his route. In order to lead the church in this solemn remembrance of Christ, it is imperative that the each deacon know his specific responsibility. He should study not only his specific route, but should also make note of which deacons will be seated on either side of him, so that he can easily find his place on the front row.

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G. DURING THE ACTUAL SERVICE--AUDITORIUM, GROUND FLOOR:

Prior to the Lord's Supper, the deacon will typically sit in his normal place of worship within the auditorium. At the appropriate time, the pastor will ask the men to come forward, and at that time each deacon should walk to his specific position on the front pew, remain standing and watch the Chairman (or whoever is serving on the pastor's right) for the signal to be seated.

H SERVING THE BREAD (AUDITORIUM GROUND-FLOOR):

- 1) Once the deacons are seated, the pastor will usually speak to the congregation about the meaning of the bread, then he will ask the Chairman to pray (he should stand while praying). Following his prayer, the Chairman will signal all the deacons to stand together. The pastor usually removes the covers from each stack of bread plates and then the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman will carefully lift the stack of plates. If there are two stacks of plates, each officer should lift the same number of trays (the officers should agree beforehand on this quantity).
- 2) The officers will each carry this stack of plates to the most exterior deacon on his side of the church. This deacon should remove ONE PLATE and begin immediately to proceed to his place of service (he has the farthest to go, so it is important for him to begin moving).

NOTE: In order to give the service the dignity and order that it deserves and to show proper reverence, the goal should be for deacons on one side of the church to walk to their places of service at approximately the same speed as their mirror counterpart on the other side of the church. The deacon should remain silent throughout the serving of the Lord's Supper.

- 3) Next, the second deacon from the end will also remove ONE PLATE from the top of the stack and begin walking to his place of service.

- 4) In order, the third and remaining deacons will each remove ONE PLATE before they proceed to their places of service.

NOTE: To ensure that plates are not dropped, especially when there are only two plates left, it is helpful for the deacon to remember to grasp the plates with two hands at points opposite of the officer's hands. For example, if the officer is holding the plates at 3-o'clock and 9-o'clock, the deacon should grasp the plates at 12-o'clock and 6-o'clock.

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- 5) Once all the plates are handed out, each of the two deacon officers should return to his chair and should stand in front of it.
- 6) The goal is for the rear deacon on each row to serve the congregation in his section from the back of the auditorium toward the front. Likewise, the forward deacon in each aisle will begin serving at the front of his section and will work toward the back.
- 7) Recent organizational changes have been made, increasing the total number of deacons serving so that each deacon will serve a section on only one side of his aisle. He will work in pairs with another deacon on the opposite side of his section. That means that there may be two men in the same approximate area of an aisle, standing very nearly back-to-back, one of whom is serving the section on the right side of the aisle (with his partner) while the man “behind” him is serving the left side of the aisle (with his partner).
- 8) Each deacon will serve an area of his section by passing a plate toward his partner on the opposite side of his section. The outside deacon will begin by passing his plate toward the middle, while the deacon in the more interior row will move one row forward (or back) and will pass his plate toward the outside. In this manner, the two men will serve their area by passing two plates, moving in opposite directions on two adjacent rows, at all times. The deacon should notice on which row the plate is coming toward him, and he should then pass his plate back in the opposite direction, not on that same row, but on the adjacent row.
- 9) The deacon should take great care to make sure that every person in his section(s) is given the opportunity to receive each element. Make eye contact with the deacon on the other side of your section often to communicate non-verbally. Certain unusual circumstances may require unique treatments. If some sections are heavily seated and the plates are completely emptied, it may be necessary to calmly walk over and retrieve additional plates from other sections to finish. Alternately, some sections may be sparsely-occupied or may contain elderly or single individuals and it may be helpful for the deacon to walk the plate down the pew.
- 10) Each pair of deacons will continue to work their section forward or backward until they meet the nearest pair of deacons who are also working their section. Once the deacon is certain that each person in his section has been served, he should simply remain where he is, hold his plates, turn to face the pastor and make eye-contact with the pastor.

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11) While the deacons are serving, the pastor will have moved to the front of the Lord's Supper Table (between the standing chairman and the vice-chairman) and will monitor the progress of all the deacons. Once the final deacon has turned to signal that he is finished, the pastor will step to begin moving toward the rear of the table again. The pastor's first step is the cue for the deacons to walk back to the front.

12) The deacons should stay in their original order and walk to their original positions at the front of the church, but remain standing, waiting for the officer to relieve them of their trays.

13) The officer will then begin with the outer-most deacon and begin collecting the trays. After the officer has taken the deacon's tray, the deacon should reach in and get a piece of bread for himself. Once the deacon has served himself, he should remain standing. The officers should try to move at approximately the same speed as they collect the bread plates and return them to the table.

14) Once all trays are returned to the Lord's Supper Table, the officers will reverently assist the pastor in returning the trays to their original positions. The pastor will place the lids on the top of each stack of trays. Once this is accomplished, the officers will turn and the chairman will signal for all the deacons to be seated.

I. SERVING THE JUICE (AUDITORIUM GROUND-FLOOR):

The serving of the juice proceeds in the same manner as the bread, with a few minor exceptions:

1) The pastor will inform the congregation about the meaning and importance of the juice and then will ask the Vice-chairman to voice a prayer (he should stand while praying). Following the vice-chairman's prayer, the Chairman will signal all the deacons to stand together. The pastor usually removes the covers from each stack of juice trays and then the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman will carefully lift ONE stack of trays. If this is a large service and there are two stacks of juice trays, the officers should only carry one stack at a time. In other words, it will be necessary for the officer to make two trips to or from the Lord's Supper Table to keep from over-loading himself with trays. When collecting the juice trays, the officers should not try to stack and carry all of them at once; they should make two trips to the table. It will be helpful if they agree beforehand on a number of trays to carry on the first trip. Again, the goal is to move so as to mirror the movements of the other officer.

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2) Due to the additional weight of the juice tray and the possibility of spillage, when passing off the juice trays to each pew, make sure that the church member has a firm grip before letting go. It may be necessary to simply hold the tray still while a congregant lifts his cup from the tray.

J. SERVING THE BALCONY (if open):

A serving-table with a white tablecloth should be placed behind the A-V booth to hold the elements. 8 men are usually required to serve a full balcony, one for each row. They will typically be sitting in the balcony prior to the Lord's Supper and will stand and move to the balcony table at the same time that the men on the floor level go forward. They should each take one tray and each walk to an aisle and begin serving. They will each serve the section on each side of their aisle. . Once the deacon is certain that each person in his section(s) has been served, he should simply remain where he is, hold his plates, turn to face the pastor and make eye-contact with the pastor. Once the pastor begins to move to the rear of the main LS Table, that is the cue for the deacons in the balcony to return the trays back to the balcony LS Table.

K. PRIOR PLACEMENT OF THE ELEMENTS IN AREAS OUTSIDE OF THE AUDITORIUM:

At least one deacon, who is not serving the Lord's Supper elsewhere, should be assigned to retrieve the elements from the Welcome Center and distribute them prior to the service to:

- 1) the prayer room (usually 2 people); deliver prior to the service--a key or entry-code will be required,
- 2) the money-counters (usually 5 people) in the conference room; deliver prior to the service--a key or entry-code will be required, and
- 3) Since the instrumentalists are many times playing during the serving of the elements, it is necessary to assign one deacon to distribute the elements to each orchestra or praise-band member prior to the service. The trays should be found on the organ. This deacon could be one who is himself an instrumentalist.

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L. SERVING THE CHOIR-LOFT (if a choir is present):

One or two deacons, who are also in the choir, are assigned to serve the loft. They should find the element trays at the top of the steps leading to the baptistery.

M. SERVING THE ATRIUM:

One deacon should be assigned to serve those who may be standing or sitting in the atrium at the time of the televised service). The trays will be found at the Welcome Center.

NOTE: Nursery workers are not normally served the Lord's Supper.

Created by the Deacon Handbook Committee, Sept. 2010 (revised Oct. 2013)

Monty Briley's files: LS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE 2010sept20 REVISED oct 2013