

## The Deacon Meeting at Covenant Ridge

*Time*—8:30 Tuesday evening (*Annual Meeting*).

*Place*—Covenant Ridge Church.

*Members present*—John Miller, president; Fred Brown, secretary; James White, treasurer; Earl Reed.

*Member absent*—Neill Ross.

*John Miller, Chairman*—Well, it's a half an hour past time. I suppose we had better not wait on Mr. Ross any longer.

*Reed*—No, let's have it over with. I want to get home.

*Miller*—Mr. White will open with prayer.

*White*—We thank Thee, Lord, for our spared lives. We thank you that we have had food to eat and clothes to wear. Feed our never dying souls with the Bread of Life. Help us to serve Thee here, and when Thou hast served Thy high and holy purpose with us on this earth receive us to abide with Thee in heaven for evermore.—Amen.

*Miller*—Is there any business to come before us tonight?

*White*—I don't know of any.

*Reed*—I don't know of any.

*Miller*—Do we have a motion to adjourn?

*Fred Brown, secretary*—I have here a letter from the Stewardship Committee containing

a new Every Member Canvass Card. How many had I better send for?

*Ross*—(*arriving fifty minutes late*)—We don't want any cards. I'm against that Every Member Canvass business. I don't intend to go around asking folks what they are going to give.

*Brown*—Gentlemen, I have a great burden on my heart. I didn't sleep much last night for thinking about it. I have been praying a great deal over it and I have decided to make a confession tonight. I have already made it to God and now I want to make it to you.

*Miller*—Why, what's the matter, Fred? (*Everybody interested*).

*Brown*—Well, when I was ordained a deacon I promised God to do certain things which I've never done. I've been a miserable failure as a deacon and as a servant of Christ.

*White*—Why, Fred, you've been the best deacon Covenant Ridge ever had. (*So thought they all.*)

*Brown*—Since I attended the Deacons' Conference of our Presbytery last week I decided that we as a board have simply been asleep on the job.

*Ross*—In what way?

*Brown*—In about every way. If you want me to be specific I'll take up the things a deacon board ought to do.

*Reed*—I thought we had been doing pretty well.

*Brown*—Our Budget doesn't show it—three fourths of the year gone and only one-fifth of it raised.

*Reed*—You don't expect the deacons to raise it, do you?

*Brown*—I am certain that we deacons ought to help the congregation to raise it.

*Reed*—I don't see what more we could do. Don't we pass the collection basket to them every Sabbath Day? You can't force people to give.

*White*—Go ahead, Fred, and tell us the things you think a deacon board ought to do.

*Brown*—Well, in the first place we ought to have regular meetings for prayer. We have never had regular meeting times for anything. We should meet at least once a month to pray for the work that Christ and this congregation has entrusted to us. What good will we ever do without prayer? Even when we do meet did you ever notice what little place we give to prayer and how little bearing it usually has on the work we have to do?

*Ross*—We have too many things going on now. I don't want to have to attend any more meetings.

*White*—Mr. Brown is right about prayer. If you men haven't been praying any more for our work than I have we're a dead lot of deacons. We might meet once a month just before the Wednesday night prayer meeting or before the preaching service on Sabbath evening.

*Brown*—That brings up another point. Every deacon ought to attend the regular weekly prayer meeting. How many of us were there last Wednesday night? Two! And the week before that? One. And all of us officers in the Church.

*(Silence for half a minute.)*

*Ross*—I move we adjourn.

*Miller*—Not yet. This is interesting, even if it does hurt. Go ahead, Mr. Brown.

*Brown*—The next thing a good deacon board will do is to set a right example in giving. I don't think any man ought to be a deacon who doesn't contribute at least a tithe to the Lord's work. Have we any right to ask the people to do what we are not willing to do ourselves?

*(Shuffling of feet.)*

*Ross*—That is all right for you men on salary. I'll admit you can't get around the Bible teaching on tithing, but a man on the farm simply can't figure it.

*Brown*—The Jews were farmers and they figured it. I am a farmer and I find I can figure it. If you rented your farm for the third, Mr. Ross, do you think you could figure it? All we need to do is to figure for the Lord as faithfully as we figure for ourselves.

*Miller*—Anything else a good deacon board ought to do?

*Brown*—Yes sir, a good board will prepare a budget to put before the congregation for adoption.

*Ross*—What's the sense in that?

*Brown*—Just the same sense there is in the Government having a budget of its expenses. It is important to set up a goal before us that we will try to reach.

*Reed*—I don't quite understand how you would go about it to make up a congregational budget.

*Brown*—Let us put it on the blackboard.

Pastor's salary	\$2,000
Janitor's salary	250
Fuel	180
Insurance	65
Envelopes	5
Repairs	200
Synod's Budget	1,800
Total	\$4,500

\$4,500, then, is the goal we should hold before the congregation to reach.

*Miller*—That looks like business to me. But I'm not so sure about Synod's Budget. What right has Synod to make up a budget and then ask the congregations to raise it? Why can't I give to what I please?

*Brown*—You can, but why not be fair to all departments? What if everybody pleased to give their money to Home Missions or to For-

eign Missions, where would the College or the Seminary or the Home for the Aged come in? What if we paid our taxes that way? The work is all one. The Church is the body of Christ and the Budget is a plan by which all the members are nourished together according to their need.

*Ross*—Do you mean to say that our congregation is expected to raise \$1,800 for the Budget of Synod?

*Brown*—Certainly! Have we been nine months in finding that out? The Stewardship Committee sent us a poster after last Synod with the apportionments printed in red. That poster has never been put up. About the same time we received leaflets containing the Budget facts. Those leaflets were never distributed. Furthermore, a Stewardship Thermometer for registering our contributions was sent to us three years ago and it is lying back there on top of the bookcase. Is it any wonder our people are not giving? The needs have never been kept before them.

*Ross*—This is all news to me. It is strange any man would get official publications for the congregation and not let the congregation have them!

*White*—But how are you going to get people to give this money?

*Brown*—That is the next point in a good board of deacons. We must present the budget to the congregation and then conduct the Every Member Canvass.

Ross—Just what do you mean by that?

Brown—I mean that we shall take a day and give every member in the congregation an opportunity to say, on one of these pledge cards, how much he or she will give to meet the congregation's budget. There is also a place on the card to pledge the tithe.

Ross—I, for one, haven't the day to give.

Brown—Would you have time if you were paid \$100.00 for your day's work?

Ross—I suppose I would.

Brown—Would you have time if it would bring \$100 or \$500 more into the Lord's treasury? Will we do for ourselves what we will not do for Christ and His Church?

Ross—Well, it isn't just that, it is the principle of the thing I object to. Folks ought to be allowed to give what they please without having to sign a pledge card.

Brown—I notice you have your name on the subscription list for pastor's salary! Why did you put it there?

Ross—Well; that is a different thing. The pastor has to be supported. We're obligated to raise that \$2,000.

Brown—All the church work has to be sustained in the same way. We are obligated to raise that \$4,500 if the Church is to continue to do her work. The principle is the same whether you ask people to pledge to pastor's salary or to the whole Budget of the Church.

Ross—I don't like so much publicity about

our giving. Doesn't Christ say, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret?"

Brown—Yes, that is in the sixth chapter of Matthew. But there is a difference between alms and the tithe. One is a gift of charity and the other is a righteous debt. When you slip your washerwoman a dollar to help pay her doctor bill, that is giving alms; when you pay her for the day's washing, that is meeting a debt. There is no alms giving in paying the tithe. I owe it as much as I do my grocery bill. I want folks to know that I pay my debts. Furthermore, my church privileges have to be paid for. Some one else will have to pay for them if I don't. I do not want other folks paying my way in the church.

Miller—I guess we can't get around that. Is there anything else a good deacon board will do?

Brown—Yes. It will arrange for a weekly envelope collection. We must furnish every member with a box of fifty-two envelopes—one for every Sabbath of the year. The treasurer will have a record of all the pledges and the envelopes and will know where every contribution comes from.

Miller—What else?

Brown—The treasurer will then keep an accurate record of every pledge, and every contribution on every Sabbath Day. Any member, at any time, can learn from the

treasurer just how much he has given and how much he needs to give to fulfill his pledge.

*White*—I see you are drumming up work for the treasurer. But I am willing if it will bring in the cash. I see they have special record books for such work. I'll get one of them.

*Miller*—Anything more, Fred?

*Brown*—Yes, the treasurer should make a report once a month to the congregation of its exact financial standing. On a blackboard or poster the congregation should see where its budget should stand on that particular day and how much is yet to be raised. The Stewardship Thermometer should be regulated each Sabbath in keeping with the contributions.

*White*—Couldn't you find something else for the treasurer to do?

*Brown*—Yes sir, he should send the Budget money on hands to Synod's treasurer once a month. The Lord's money should never be allowed to lie idle.

*Miller*—Gentlemen, I have been the president of this Board for three years. Tonight I feel a sense of shame because I have had so little interest in this whole work. If God will forgive me I will do all I can to push Fred's program through.

*Brown*—It isn't *my* program. If it isn't the Lord's I don't *want* it pushed through.

*Reed*—I am beginning to see that the deacon's office is a bigger thing than I thought it was. I thought anybody could be a deacon.

*White*—The thing that strikes me is that this congregation might have been giving \$1,500 or \$2,000 a year more to the Lord's work if we had done our duty. We've simply been robbing the Lord!

*Brown*—Gentlemen, I want to read a sentence in 2nd Chron. 31:18 in the Revised Version: "For in their office of trust they sanctified themselves in holiness." We've all been ordained to office in the Church. It is an office of trust. Have we been faithful to the trust? Are we sanctifying ourselves in holiness?

*Ross*—What are the Bible qualifications for deacons, anyway?

*Brown*—Acts 6:3 tells us the requirements that were laid down for the *first* deacons. It says, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Then the eighth verse says that Stephen was "full of faith and power."

*Ross*—I am afraid I never qualified.

*Brown*—A fuller passage is found in the third chapter of 1st Timothy, beginning with the eighth verse (*reads*):

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let those

also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless . . . . For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Gentlemen, these passages are describing a big office and it takes a real man of God to fill it.

Miller—I think what we need now is prayer. Let us get on our knees and confess our sins. (*All kneel and one after another sobs out a confession.*)

Miller (*after arising*)—Tonight marks a new epoch at Covenant Ridge. We have confessed the sins of the past and now we shall build for the future. Let us have Mr. Brown put the points he has suggested on the blackboard so we can see them.

Brown—All right. Here they are:

1. Meet monthly for prayer.
2. Attend the weekly prayer meeting.
3. Pay at least the tithe.
4. Prepare a congregational budget.
5. Conduct the Every Member Canvass.
6. Take a weekly collection by envelope.
7. Keep an accurate record of everything.
8. Make a monthly report to the congregation.
9. Make monthly remittance to Synod's Treasurer.

Purpose: In our office of trust we will sanctify ourselves in holiness.

White—I move we adopt this program and ask the secretary to send for one hundred and fifty Every Member Canvass cards and a package of envelopes for every member in the congregation.

Reed—I second the motion.

Miller—All in favor, say Aye.

Everybody—Aye!

Reed—I feel like singing. Why can't we all join in on the fourth and fifth verses of the eighty-fifth Psalm?

All (*singing*):

"Wilt Thou not quicken us once more,  
Thy people's joy in Thee restore?  
O Lord, to us Thy mercy show,  
And Thy salvation now bestow.

"I'll hear what God the Lord will speak;  
Ev'n peace to those His face that seek,  
And to His saints, if only they  
No more in folly's path will stray."  
(*Adjournment—Prayer by Mr. Brown.*)

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(News letter in the Church Paper, March 5):

"Covenant Ridge congregation has been experiencing a great revival. Our prayer meet-

ing attendance has doubled. The Board of Deacons is meeting once each month for prayer. The deacons have just completed the Every Member Canvass and the congregation has been stirred up on its financial obligations as never before. Two months ago there seemed to be no hope of raising our Budget. But we are almost certain now of "going over the top." Covenant Ridge is certainly blessed with a live Board of Deacons."—*Correspondent.*

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(From the Budget Report in the Church paper, April 15.)

<i>"Congregation</i>	<i>Apportionment</i>	<i>Paid In</i>
Covenant Ridge	\$1,800	\$1,956.23"

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