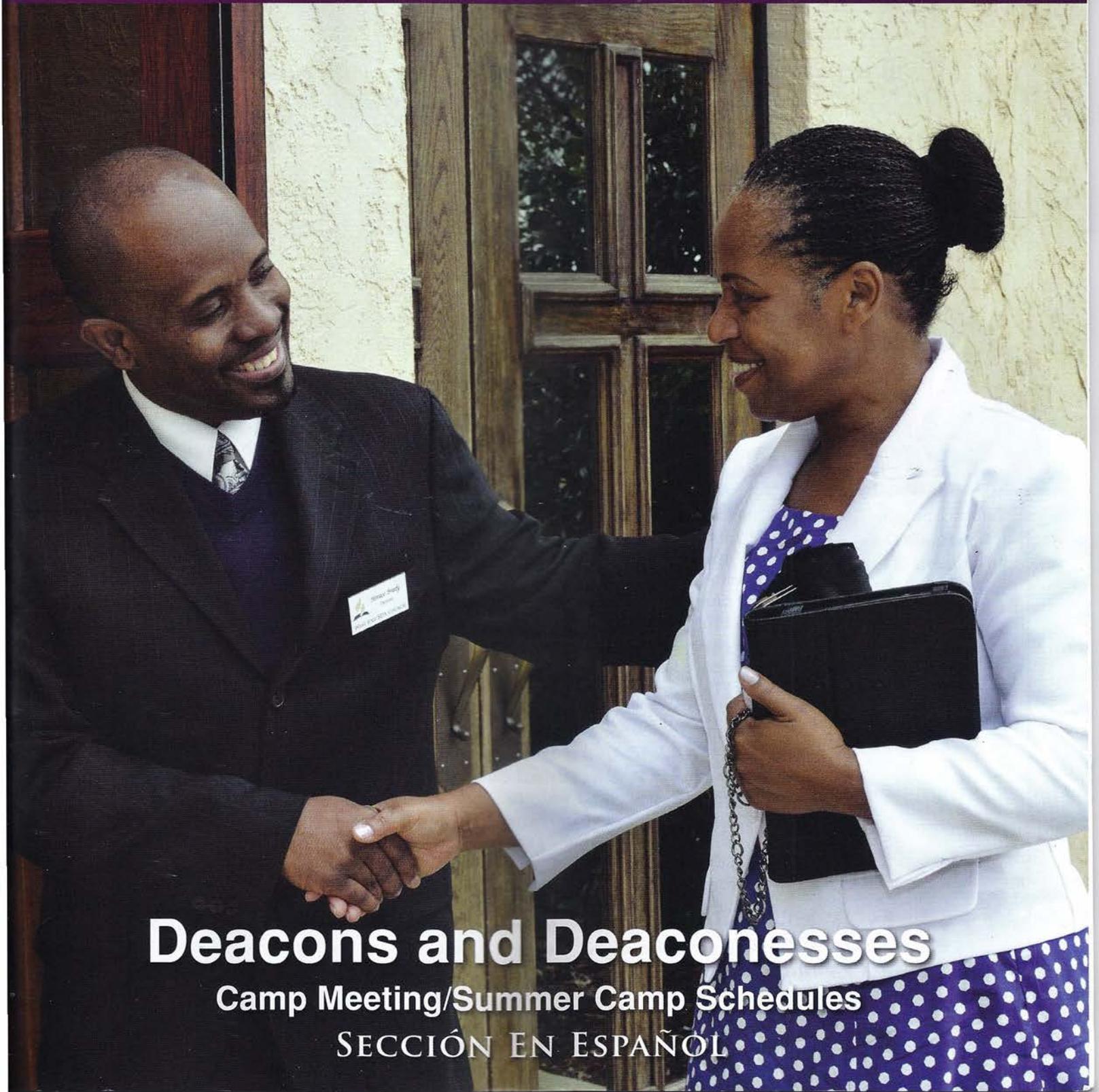


April 2014

TIDINGS

SOUTHERN



Deacons and Deaconesses

Camp Meeting/Summer Camp Schedules

SECCIÓN EN ESPAÑOL



Pastor Sean Day (left) of Shoals Church in Florence, Alabama, discusses the expanding role of deacons and deaconesses with Jacquelyn Valentine, head deaconess, and Farrell Sutton, head deacon.

The Varied Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses

BY VINCENT E. WHITE SR., D.MIN.

It's Friday. Jacquelyn (Jackie) Valentine, head deaconess at Shoals Church in Florence, Alabama, makes sure that all preparations are in place for a busy weekend. Scurrying about, she checks the restroom facilities, making sure that they are clean and have adequate supplies. Then she surveys the sanctuary to see if hymnals, Bibles, and tithe and offering envelopes are in the pew racks and pulpit area.

About 60 miles away, Claudette Moore, a deaconess of 30 years, oversees the same preparations at Harvest, Alabama, Church. But, in addition, she prepares to teach her



Deaconess Barbara Chapman of West End Church in Atlanta, Georgia, prays with several members during the church service.

R. STEVEN NORMAN III



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The deacons of West End Church present the tithes and offering to God for His blessing.

adult Sabbath School class. She also teaches a baptismal candidates' class.

Both Jackie and Claudette agree that the role of a deaconess is multifaceted. It includes greeting members and visitors as they come to worship; visiting the sick and shut-ins; contacting missing members through visits, cards, and telephone calls; networking with other church departments and community agencies to provide food, clothing, and shelter for those in need; assisting at funerals and repasts; preparing for and assisting at Holy Communion and baptisms; assisting deacons in maintaining reverence in the sanctuary; monitoring the nursing room; helping to mediate when differences arise between members; teaching God's Word; and involving and training the youth to serve God and humanity.

Since the inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the role of deaconess has been important. Ellen G. White spoke very

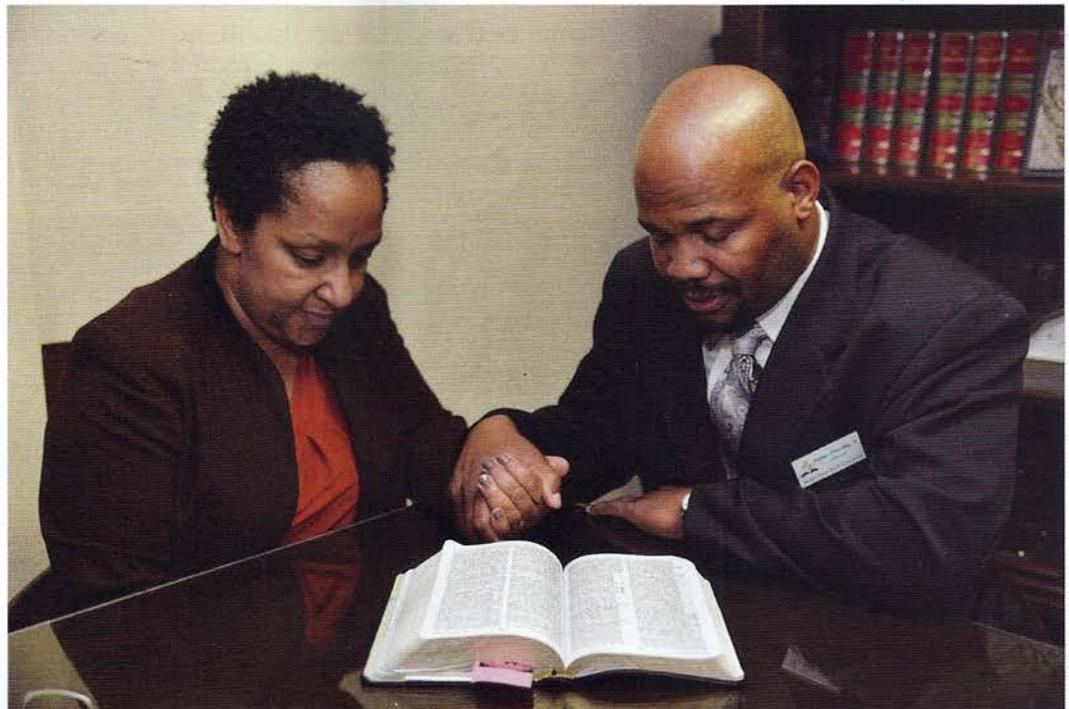
highly of those who serve in this capacity. She wrote this statement in the *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895:

"Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In

some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the ministers; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church."

Jackie feels very strongly about deaconesses meeting the biblical qualifications. She states, "I believe that a deaconess should be trustworthy, loving, hospitable, sensitive, spiritual, and teachers of God's Holy Word." Jackie's list is in harmony with the qualifications for deacons and deaconesses outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13. These qualifications are clearly seen as relating to deacons; but, they may also apply to deaconesses.

Terry is excited about the teaching role of a deacon. He can hardly wait for the divine worship service to end so he can partner with Haywood Ballard, local elder of Courtland Church, to give Bible studies in the community. Describing a typical Sabbath afternoon, Terry says, "After church, we would all get together for a while and fellowship at the church. Then we would go out into the community



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Deacon James Pressley Jr. of West End Church, Atlanta, Georgia, prays with Shirley Watson at the conclusion of a Bible study together.

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to give Bible studies. It was very rewarding for me, and it always seemed too short. There just wasn't enough time to see all of the people you wanted to see."

Terry served as a deacon for four years at the Courtland Church

dously as a result of the election of the deacons: "... The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly ...," Acts 6:7. Ellen White said, "This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater free-

and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success," *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 90.

Another important role in which deacons and deaconesses are to serve, according to Jackie, is mediation. She says, "I feel strongly as a deaconess that we are to help mediate when others cannot agree, and help them to resolve differences in a loving Christian manner."

It is only natural that deacons and deaconesses serve in this capacity, seeing that the office of deacon arose out of a conflict to address a serious problem that arose in the church. The problem was far greater than the distribution of food. It was unresolved differences that led to resentment, an unforgiving spirit, jealousy, discrimination, prejudice, and suspicion. Ellen White described the problem as following:

Satan launched a spiritual attack against the church in an attempt to hinder it from growing and, ultimately, to destroy it. But, through the intervening ministry of the seven deacons, God thwarted Satan's plan, and the church grew.

White stated, "It is necessary that the same order and system be



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Claudette Moore, head deaconess of Harvest Church in Harvest, Alabama, enjoys teaching Sabbath School as part of her deaconess ministry.

before relocating to Florida. He is an example of a modern-day Philip, one of the seven deacons of the first century Christian church noted for conducting public evangelistic meetings and giving a one-on-one Bible study to the Ethiopian eunuch.

The early church grew tremen-

dom secured by the apostles and the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth,

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT ADVENTSOURCE:

Deacon and Deaconess – Quick Start Guide focuses on expanding the roles of deacons and deaconesses to include the use of spiritual gifts.

Deacon and Deaconess Ministry Description lists the duties of these officers.

The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model unveils the sacred biblical model for the ministry of deacons and deaconesses with modern day implications.

The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook is a study guide containing the most important take-away points from each chapter of the textbook.

maintained in the church now as in the days of the apostles," *The Story of Redemption*, p. 260.

We can see how history repeats itself. In the first century Christian church when conflict arose, God used seven deacons to resolve it. As the church in the 21st century continues to face conflict and challenges, God has 700,000 deacons and deaconesses to resolve them. According to Jonas Arrais, associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, "There are fewer than 30,000 pastors to oversee the Adventist World Church's 140,000 congregations ..., 250,000 elders ..., and 700,000 deacons and deaconesses." Arrais presented these statistics on the final day of the 2013 Annual Council when he recommended that the deacons and deaconesses be placed under the auspices of the Ministerial Association, which was voted unanimously.

In an interview he stated, "We would like to appreciate, recognize, train, and equip this group of servant people in the Church. We would like to see the biblical and spiritual qualifications and skills exemplified in the lives of those selected today to serve this office — people in love for

Jesus and committed to the Church's mission. This is a ministerial teamwork. The Ministerial Association, in cooperation with the departments, will train and equip deacons and deaconesses. However, the support of the church pastor will be essential, because he/she has a primary responsibility for training them. Certainly, networking will make this vision a reality."

During an interview with Roger Hernandez, ministerial and evangelism director of the Southern Union Conference, he responded to the question: How do you plan to educate local pastors and church members on the importance of the ministry of deacons and deaconesses, so that the stereotypical perception of them is changed? Hernandez's answer: "Through ministry meetings and through LEAD conferences, the pastors are encouraged to come with their team of deaconesses and deacons so that they can grow together." He also stated that "participation is key. If people are willing, we will provide inspiration, instruction, and resources."

The following training initiatives have already begun in the Southern Union territory: LEAD conferences

(Leadership, Evangelism, Accountability, and Diversity) are weekend training and leadership events; and My City, God's City is a six-week curriculum that deals with preparing a church for evangelism. For more information about these programs, contact Roger Hernandez at rhernandez@southernunion.com.

The ministry of deacons and deaconesses is multifaceted. These officers are gifted and chosen by God. As the Church restores them to their biblical role as spiritual leaders, and trains, equips, and empowers them, the result will be as it was in the first century Christian church — "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," Acts 2:47. ❖

Vincent E. White Sr., D.Min., is a retired pastor and author of The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model; The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook; and Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses.

LEAD Conference April 25-26, 2014 Fayetteville, North Carolina

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE:

L.E.A.D. Conference is a city-wide event designed for Southern Union leaders who are intentional in discovering and developing their leadership abilities. Simply put, we aim to develop leaders.

CORE

The conference will deal with four core components, and seek to present them in the context of best practices, proven methods, and effective strategies for the 21st Century.

LEADERSHIP - where are you going? Emphasis on vision.

EVANGELISM - how do you effectively reach people? Emphasis on servant evangelism.

ACCOUNTABILITY - who are you, really? Emphasis on some specific habits and relationships that can make a difference in a person's growth.

DIVERSITY - Emphasis on not just racial, but generational diversity. Saving the next generation.

PROGRAM:

Friday night, 7-9 p.m.
Leadership

Sabbath, 9 a.m.
Evangelism

Sabbath, 11 a.m.
Accountability

Sabbath afternoon, 3-5 p.m.
Breakout sessions

Sabbath wrap-up, 5:15-6 p.m.
Diversity