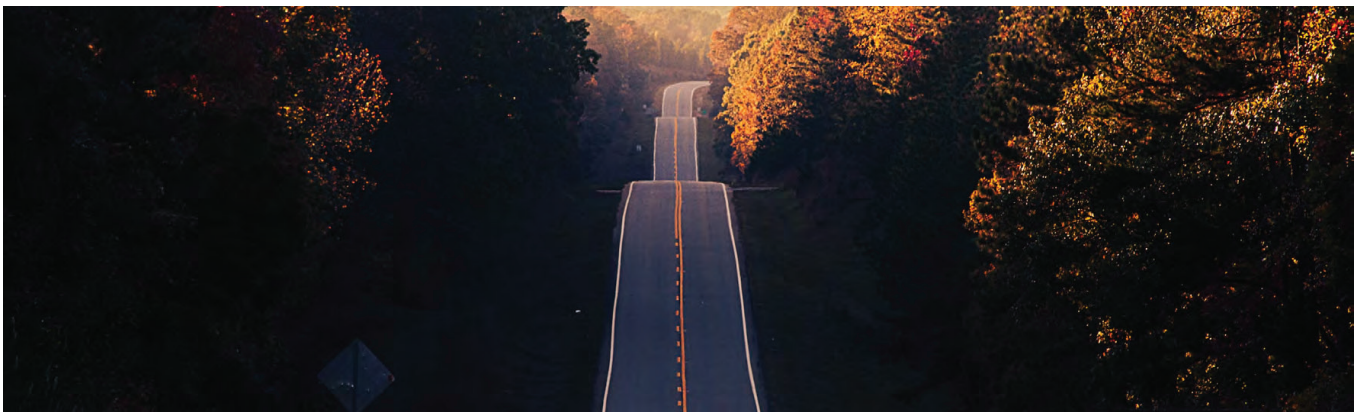




A PEEK INTO THE ROLE OF CHAIRMAN (COUNCIL OF ELDERS)

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Dear beloved of the Lord, greetings in His Holy Name.

I write this short article to share about my role as an elder and the current Chairman of the Council of Elders.

As Chairman, I chair the monthly combined meeting with the elders and deacons on the first Friday, the monthly Elders' Prayer Meeting on the third Friday, meetings with commended workers and ad-hoc meetings to discuss specific matters. These include the review of speakers' list, building committee recommendations, ministry matters, pastoral matters, pre-reception interviews, pre-wedding interviews, etc. As the elder-advisor for Young

People, Assembly Youth Camp, Children's Corner, Young Working Adults, Audio-visual Upgrade Committee, Bethesda Website Upgrade Committee and Assembly Bible Camp 2023, I also divide my time attending these different committee meetings. Together with the support of the elders, deacons, ministry and committee leaders, we steer the assembly work to fulfil its purpose in accordance with the Lord's will to evangelise the lost, edify the saints and exalt His Name.

The work comes with challenges. Having to attend many meetings that require preparation and follow-up, it is normal to want efficiency in timekeeping, so as to accomplish more within the limited time. Sometimes as Chairman, I

would request the respective committees to take time to engage quieter members/leaders, to hear their ideas and understand their thoughts and aspirations for the assembly. This is after all, a work involving people, and time spent engaging younger members/leaders will pay forward when they in turn lead the assembly. This requires patience on the part of the committees and is an opportunity to show grace and love to those participating.

Another challenge is to keep our focus on the assembly's mission and align our various ministry efforts around the yearly assembly theme (this year: Encouragement) to build unity among the members. Many members are concerned with many things; some, with strong convictions. With limited resources and after prayerful consideration, members should not be pulled into various new initiatives, especially those deemed unsustainable. This requires openness to discuss, and patience to hear one another out so that differences may surface rather than be buried and grow into hurt. By dealing openly and looking to the Lord, we should try to resolve any differences in love and respect for one another, thus preserving unity even in our diversity, as a witness of the Spirit's leading.

WE SHOULD TRY TO RESOLVE ANY DIFFERENCES IN LOVE AND RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER, THUS PRESERVING UNITY EVEN IN OUR DIVERSITY, AS A WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

Additionally, on keeping focus, pray that all of us remain rooted in the scripture and in our prayer life, so that we may all be keen to discern and respond to the Lord's call to serve and grow, both individually and corporately; look out for each other's interest; and see ourselves as disciples called to help disciple others, especially those younger in their faith. Pray that we will all be hospitable to newcomers, especially those different from ourselves. Your prayers for the elders, deacons and leaders of the assembly and your partnership in the assembly gospel work give us much encouragement, welling up in thanksgiving to God who is good and does good, to the glory and praise of God.

PRAY THAT ALL OF US REMAIN ROOTED IN THE SCRIPTURE AND IN OUR PRAYER LIFE, SO THAT WE MAY ALL BE KEEN TO DISCERN AND RESPOND TO THE LORD'S CALL TO SERVE AND GROW





A PEEK INTO THE ROLE OF CHAIRMAN (DIACONATE)

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Deacons support the elders and assembly through 'serving tables', which means taking on administrative tasks such as managing finances and practical needs during assembly activities and events. With these tasks come responsibilities in reviewing and establishing key financial and administrative policies such as human resource, financial manuals (which consists of policies related to our various funds), as well as keeping in contact with the locally commended and overseas workers that we support.

The deacons meet with the elders every first Friday of the month. In the first part of the meeting, we discuss issues and matters pertaining to the assembly. Here, deacons also raise issues to the elders for discussion. Subsequently, the deacons will meet to discuss issues specific to the diaconate.

WE MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON UNANIMITY WITHIN THE DIACONATE. IF WE CAN'T GET EVERYONE TO AGREE...WE WOULD HEAR BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY AND TRY TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH MUCH PRAYER.

As chairman of the diaconate, I find myself acting as a facilitator, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. One of the challenges is ensuring that we don't let the discussion overrun (which happens quite often, leading to some meetings going into the wee hours of the morning). Unlike the corporate world, the chairman doesn't get veto powers. In essence, we make decisions based on unanimity within the diaconate. If we can't get everyone to agree in our initial discussion, we would hear both sides of the story and try to come to an agreement with much prayer. Over Zoom, the challenge would be to ensure that those who wish to say something are heard. Sometimes, it's difficult to determine people's thoughts online, as compared to face to face where we can look at body language or expressions.

WE CONTINUE TO PRAY AND HOPE THAT OUR MEMBERS WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE WISELY AND JUDICIOUSLY AS THE LORD LEADS.

Thankfully, by God's grace, the diaconate has grown, and we've seen newer deacons who are vocal and share their opinions and thoughts, which create opportunities to bring about change—our commendation policy paper is one such change. With the increase in the number of commended workers, we are glad to hear and see that God's people continue to give generously. We continue to pray and hope that our members would continue to give wisely and judiciously as the Lord leads.

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Personally, as chairman of the diaconate, I feel that the challenges are a-plenty. My biggest challenge is keeping up with everything, ensuring that nothing is missed out. Thankfully, the secretary and treasurers, alongside the rest of the diaconate have been extremely helpful in carrying out their roles and tasks.





A PEEK INTO THE ROLE OF TREASURER

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Needless to say, to hold office as Assembly Treasurer in the Diaconate, one has to be first serving as a deacon.

Let us consider the deacon's role, requirements, and reward.

THE ROLE OF A DEACON

The word translated as 'deacon' literally means servant, which is exactly what deacons are. They serve the elders and congregation by attending to the practical and logistical needs of the church. (see Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim. 3:8–13).

Deacons do not lead or oversee the church. This is the role God has given to the elders (see Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1–2). Instead, they humbly serve the congregation by ensuring practical matters are met. By doing so, the elders can devote themselves to teaching, praying, and leading.

Of course, some overlaps may occur, but by and large, deacons handle physical and logistical needs while elders tend to spiritual matters.

It is believed that Acts chapter 6 verses 1 to 7 mark the beginning of the office of the deacon. Seven men were set apart to ensure that all widows within the Jerusalem church received

enough food. They served in this way so that the apostles were free to fulfil their primary responsibilities—prayer and the ministry of the Word.

The office bearers of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer in the Diaconate are appointed by the elders for a 2-year term according to the constitution of Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio).

THE REQUIREMENTS OF A DEACON

While every church member should serve within the church, not everyone can serve as a deacon. The office of deacon—like the office of elder, is a calling as stated in 1 Timothy chapter 3 verses 8 to 13.

Scripture spends significantly more time describing what a deacon must be rather than what a deacon must do. That is because God cares more about our character than our abilities. Deacons are typically more visible than other members and often deal with finances. For this reason, they must be trustworthy.

THE REWARD OF A DEACON

Acts chapter 6 verse 7 states, 'So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.' Because those deacons served the physical needs of the body, the unity of the church was preserved, the apostles could continue to preach the Word, and the Great Commission advanced.

By the world's standards, being a deacon may seem boring and unattractive, but according to Scripture, there are great rewards for faithfully fulfilling this office. So if you know a deacon, let me encourage you to go out of your way to thank or encourage that 'servant' either in word or deed.