

BIRCHMAN WIDOW MINISTRY OVERVIEW

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEACON AND HIS ASSIGNED WIDOW(S):

- Every pairing will be different, so remember there are no absolutes!!
- The deacon should seek to develop a Godly relationship in which he becomes the widow's encourager, supporter and friend.
- If the deacon is married, his wife is encouraged to participate in the ministry to the widow(s)
- Early in the relationship, the deacon should try to begin to learn about the widow's general "life situation" including:
 - ✓ her family relationships and locations of relatives, including their contact information
 - ✓ any health concerns she may have
 - ✓ her family's participation in the fulfillment of her daily physical needs
 - ✓ her housing situation (home, apartment, care-center, etc.) and any maintenance needs
 - ✓ her family's participation in the maintenance of her home and/or car
 - ✓ her meaningful friendships (distant and nearby)
 - ✓ her spiritual condition and needs
 - ✓ her transportation requirements
 - ✓ her birthday
 - ✓ at an appropriate time, talk to the widow about her late husband and make note of their wedding anniversary and the anniversary of his death
- The deacon is NOT expected to provide financially for the widow's needs; however he should try to be alert to those needs so that he can assist her in seeking help if needed.
- Even if a deacon is able and willing to provide a specific need of the widow, it might not be appropriate. He should first consider:
 - ✓ Would it undermine her dignity and sense of independence?
 - ✓ Is this something that her family could or should provide?
 - ✓ Would it set precedence that would be difficult to uphold?
 - ✓ Is she financially able to pay for the expense herself? If so, perhaps advice is all she needs.
- At times, it may be appropriate to communicate with and assist a distant family in caring for her.
- Other times, the widow may simply need the deacon to be a sounding board or to provide wise counsel as she makes decisions concerning such things as choosing a contractor or a service-provider.

SUGGESTED CONTACT WITH THE WIDOW (maximize in-person contact):

- Initially, upon assignment (it is suggested that this be done IN PERSON)
- Try to contact her once per month, but no less than once every two months
- On special occasions and holidays: her birthday, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, etc.
- Call or send a thoughtful card on those difficult dates: her wedding anniversary or husband's death
- An invitation and escort to the annual Birchman Deacon and Widow Banquet
- If she's a homeowner, prior to each Deacon-Led Workday to inquire of her home's needs
- During times of bereavement, sickness or hospitalization of the widow
- ASAP following an occasion of damage to her house or car (after a storm or accident, for instance)

ASSIGNMENT OF WIDOW(S) TO THE DEACON:

- Usually, each Birchman deacon will be assigned (by the deacon Widows Committee) 1 or 2 widows
- Assignments are made as quickly as possible after the widow joins the church (already a widow) or after she becomes a widow.
- Assignments are reviewed at least yearly.
- Assignments are considered "permanent" (not rotating), lasting until there is a request for change by either party.
- Prior to a deacon's rotation to the "Reserve" status, he will be contacted and given the option to continue his relationship with his widow(s) during this time. He is not required to continue the relationship, although many do.

CONSIDERATIONS IN PAIRING A DEACON WITH HIS WIDOW(S):

- The proximity of the residences of the deacon and the widow
- Commonalities between the deacon (or his wife) and the widow (past acquaintances, likes, dislikes, common past experiences, etc.)
- The age of each (for example, avoid assigning a young widow to a young deacon to avoid temptation)
- Special requests of the widow (ie., did the widow request a specific man to be her deacon?)
- Equal distribution of the widows among the deacons, although there may be some men who have more available time and may volunteer to serve more than the average number of widows