

a. Questions

- 1) Church Order Article 35 assigns “tasks which belong to the common administration of the church” to the council (pastors, elders, and deacons). What biblical and confessional basis exists for those tasks, which on the congregational level belong distinctively to the office of elder and to the office of deacon (Church Order Art. 35), to be assigned collectively to elder and deacon delegates on the classical and synodical levels?
- 2) What is the unity that the offices share, and how are the “dignity and honor” of the offices distinguished from how they differ in “mandate and task” (Church Order Article 2)? What does it mean to have parity of office?
- 3) How do the distinctiveness of each office, the unique giftedness, the parity of offices, and yet the differences in “mandate and task” influence and shape the agendas of major assemblies that would have both elders and deacons seated?
- 4) In what ways can the agendas of the major assemblies be shaped for meaningful inclusion and participation by deacons, without tying the hands of the individual classes and their local expression (minimal regulation for maximum engagement)?
- 5) What changes, highlights, or broadening of the mandate of synod would help make the seating of all officebearers at synod meaningful and beneficial?

- b. Development of a plan for resourcing and revitalizing both elders and deacons, including plans for its implementation.
- c. Recommendations for appropriate changes to the Church Order, including review of the proposed changes within the report of the 2013 Office of Deacon Task Force, considering further changes relating to the other offices, and clarifying a missional vision, all with a view to integrating such recommended changes.

*Grounds:*

- a. Persistent concerns have been raised about perceived blurring of the lines distinguishing the offices while at the same time highlighting the need for acknowledging the unique giftedness of each office.
- b. There is a perceived difference in how the report of the Office of Deacon Task Force addresses parity of office and how Church Order Article 2 addresses it.
- c. Addressing these questions and concerns will help the church integrate the seating of deacons with the intended agenda of the major assembly.
- d. A plan for resourcing and revitalizing the offices will help ensure that we do not end up simply making changes in the composition of current structures, but make these changes for the purpose of revitalized offices.