



October 28, 2015

Dear Stated Clerks:

During the past synod, the office and roles of deacons and elders were impacted by a number of changes to Church Order. In Canada, our deacons have had strong roles in their communities and also in classical governance in some classes. We are thankful for this history.

The Director of Diaconal Ministries Canada (Hans Kater) and myself (Darren Roorda) got together and formulated specific questions we thought would be of help for either a church or classis to have healthy conversations about what steps to take next in light of these Church Order changes. By having these discussions at a local level, we are trusting that there will be increased collaboration between elders and deacons over time.

Please find the conversation starter questions on the following page. As well, please be aware that resources for the roles of elder and deacon can be found in several easy places. They are:

- The Diaconal Ministries Canada [website](http://diaconalministries.com/) (<http://diaconalministries.com/>)
- In the local church section of the Canadian CRC website (under [servant leadership](http://www.crcna.org/Canada/local-church/servant-leadership)) (<http://www.crcna.org/Canada/local-church/servant-leadership>)
- In printed form of the Agenda for Synod, 2015 (p. 401 ff)

It is our hope that the people planning classis meetings might use the questions as conversation starters and make them available to the delegates. It is our hope that councils will do similarly with their elders and deacons.

For the sake of local churches and the communities they serve, thank you for your time spent in considering this.

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For Councils to use with local church leaders:

1. Article 25(c) now says that “deacons shall create and encourage participation in structures and ministries of mercy, justice, and reconciliation, both locally and globally”.
What local & global ministries are the deacons of your congregation currently engaged in?
2. Article 64 says that each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers, and to equip them to fulfil their calling in the church and in the world.” On a scale of 1-10, how well does your congregation “equip” its members for its calling in the church and using the same scale, in the world?
3. Article 74(b) now states that the “council shall be responsible to develop a vision and provide training and leadership to equip the church to fulfill its unique evangelistic and diaconal calling.” What denominational resources might be needed to “equip” your congregation?

For Stated Clerks to provide as suggestions for the organizers of Classis meetings (ie. CIC):

1. Article 75(b) now reads as follows – “Each classes shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.” How does your classis understand the roles of elder and deacon to be complementary?
2. With these complementary roles, what are some of the activities that you are already doing or could do to ensure that Classis meetings are increasingly productive and which address this mandate?
3. Also using Article 75(b), what are the roles and functions of elders in their current function within Classis meetings that may be minimized or shared in order to promote the work of diaconal ministry?