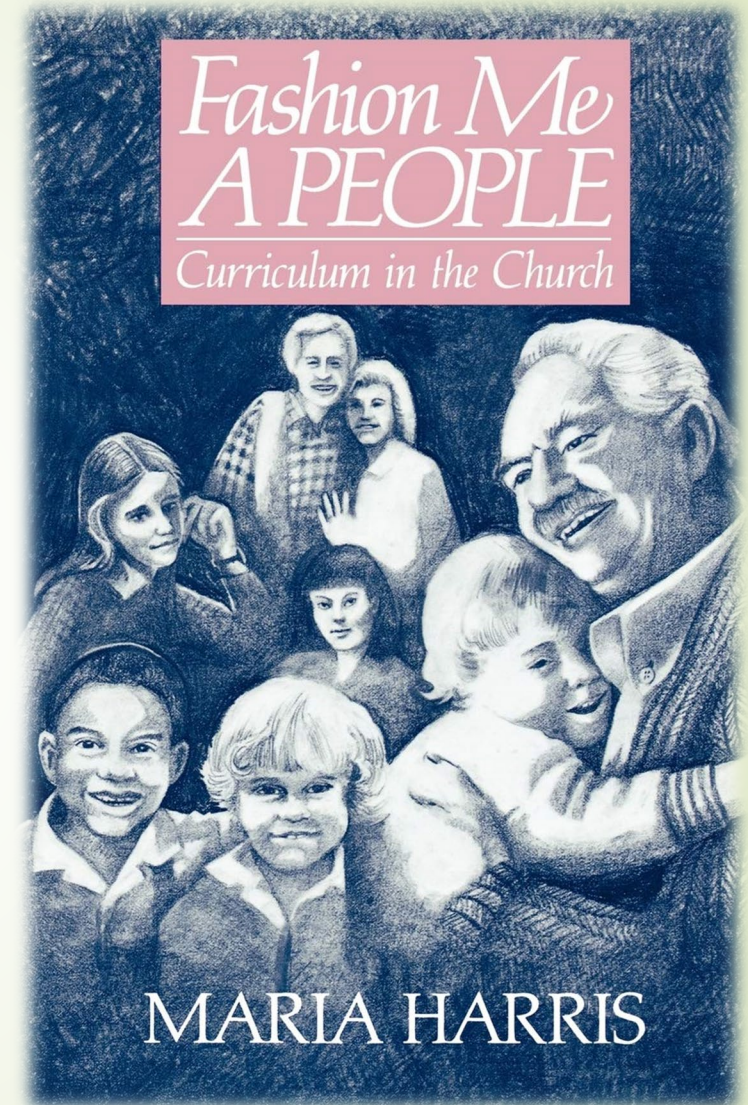


# CHRISTIAN VOCATION

## Diakonia: The Curriculum of Service





# Diakonia

- ▶ Used in two ways:
  - ▶ General
  - ▶ Serving at the table, hospitality
  
- ▶ May refer to:
  - ▶ A specific group
  - ▶ The entire body





# Characteristics of Diakonia

- ▶ Can become cold, “charity”
- ▶ *Service may make people think of servant, subservient*
- ▶ *Caring for others does not mean to stop loving, caring for self.*
- ▶ *Attitude toward service should be gratitude rather than guilt.*



# Capax Universi

- We have the capacity to receive all of the gifts in the universe
  - The gifts that so abound for some of us are not shared equally
  - Service is our attempt to redress that imbalance as a work of joy
- 




# Starting point = Compassion

- ▶ “Jesus’ strength was manifested in a gentleness and care that saw washing feet, healing the sick, and feeding the hungry as natural and necessary”. His power was a form of compassion , nurtured for centuries before him in his own Jewish tradition. Jesus was a fellow sufferer with others, aware as we all must be that it is a fundamentally religious stance to advocate compassion for the world’s poor and suffering. Compassion, meaning to suffer with , suggests not a pity directed at the weak but a sharing between those who *appear* to be weak and those who *appear* to be strong. The sharing of suffering reveals weakness in the strong and strength in the weak and, consequently, new meanings of both strong and weak. If we respond to the other as fellow sufferer, we can begin the process of channeling power in a human form. Whereas pity is the act of an individual that solidifies the inequitable distribution of power, compassion is a mutual action that protests systematic oppression. (p. 147)



# Forms of Diakonia: Social Care

- ▶ Care is a virtue and a strength, a way of being and doing. Care makes us receivers as well as givers.
  - ▶ Pastoral care – must concentrate on the core of the church itself as a social system which responds to human need through intervening to change pressures upon people.
  - ▶ All forms of caring have an impact on the larger society
- 




# Forms of Diakonia: Social Ritual

- ▶ Organized actions characterized by regular, patterned, artistic movements  
Involving groups of people banded together
- ▶ Must :
  - ▶ Be planned in a way that will address poverty, homelessness, and helplessness
  - ▶ Address systems and structures that perpetuate unjust conditions.
- ▶ Accountability is important



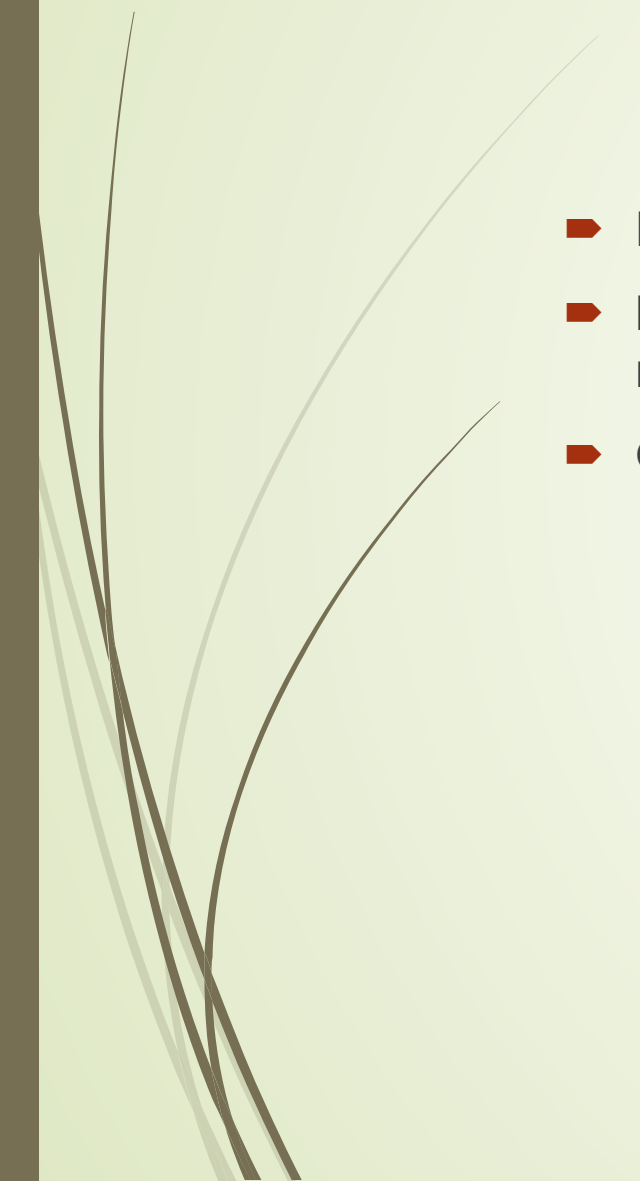
# Forms of Diakonia: Social Empowerment

- ▶ Help others to help themselves by claiming their own power
  - ▶ Emphasis is not on what the caregivers do but on conditions where the needy are able to take responsibility for themselves.,
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# Forms of Diakonia: Social Legislation

- ▶ For work to qualify as ministry, it must include doing something in public.
  - ▶ Includes involvement in civic life. Participating in citizens' lobbies, monitoring social legislation.
  - ▶ Changing laws that benefit only a few
- 



# Questions for Discussion



- ▶ What is a serious and pervasive condition in our society demanding social care, social ritual, social empowering, and/or social legislation?
- ▶ Does this condition demand Christian moral attention? If so, why? If not, why not?
- ▶ How urgent is attention to this problem for the poor and the vulnerable in our midst?
- ▶ Can this condition be addressed in ways that lead to empowering those affected by it?
- ▶ Will this condition elicit the resources of this church: talent, money, members' energy?
- ▶ How can community, prayer, teaching, the word, and outreach face this condition?