*Neerlandia 19 Jan. 1939*

*Dear Members:*

*As in previous years, when the deacons were granted the privilege of briefly addressing the meeting, so we shall also do now:*

*Besides the prophetic and the royal office, which Jesus Christ instituted in His church, we may not forget the priestly, which comes to expression in the ministry of mercy.   And that is easily done.   Whenever we speak of the church and her labors we are inclined to mention the proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and maintaining discipline and tend to push the ministry of mercy to the background.  Yet this ministry is an integral part of the church’s calling and needs to come to full expression.   It appears that we are inclined to think that the diaconal ministry is of a lower order than the office of the elders.  In this matter of ecclesiastical ministry we are not sufficiently aware of the authority of the several offices.*

*And this is not in keeping with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.   He did not just appear on the scene in this world as a prophet who taught and a king who displayed his power, but also as a priest who stood with the suffering and showed mercy.  He instructed his apostles not just to preach the Gospel but also to heal the sick and cure ailments.   And he equipped them with special gifts of healing.  If you open your Bible to the New Testament you will find this in many places.   The Apostles, during the earliest period of the Christian Church, put this into practice and healed many.   The Church of Christ, later, with more normal means, continued this practice.   And in this way the diaconate continues, to this very day, the priestly service which is an exercise of priestly power; which is every bit as much an exercise of power as that of governing.  Whenever the church carries out this ministry of mercy through her deacons it is not engaged in a hobby, which it can just take or leave.  And it is also not the activity of a ladies society with benevolent aims or a society created for the alleviation of poverty, but both in the ingathering of the gifts and in the distribution of the same the diaconate displays her power and acts in the name and with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.  And in response to His command they summon the church to be merciful.  Then, in response to His will they respond to the needs of the poor and reveals in this manner the glory of Jesus Christ in His church which does not just proclaim the word but enriches it with deeds of love.*

*And on Sundays:  don’t allow the offering plate to pass you by while you give nothing.   They who have much:  give generously, not sparingly; they who have little:  give less.    But we must all do our part to build the living temple of the Lord, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, who governs us through His Word and Spirit.  And now we wish to thank our God, who through the diaconate equipped us to be engaged in this ministry of mercy.  And may it please Him, in the year we have just begun, to graciously endow each one of us with His blessing.*

*H. Schoonekamp*