



Competencies for Deacons 2017 (First Rev. 2018)



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ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

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The Book of Common Prayer

As your Son came not to be served but to serve, may this deacon share in Christ's service,
and come to the unending glory of him who, with you and the Holy Spirit,
lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.
The Ordination of a Deacon: The Consecration, p. 545.

Purpose

Our intent in developing this document is not that these competencies and examples become rigid standards across The Episcopal Church. These competencies are to guide formation, self-assessment, discernment and evaluation of those preparing to be deacons, and ordained deacons. As a guide, the competencies and examples should be adapted to the context and specific call of the individual. It is likely that no individual will master all of the competencies as stated nor demonstrate all of the examples. They are set forth to assist formation directors, bishops, archdeacons, nominees, postulants, candidates, ordained deacons and Commissions on Ministry, among others.

The work of creating competencies and examples is never complete. This work is published to be used throughout The Episcopal Church. We encourage your feedback and comments as we set about the task of updating and revising the competencies. Please send comments to the Rev. Deacon Geri Swanson at deakswan@aol.com.

Canonical Areas of Competence for Diaconal Candidates [CANON III.6.5 (f)]

The Canons of the Episcopal Church provide:

Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

- (1) Academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.
- (2) Diakonia and the diaconate.
- (3) Human awareness and understanding.
- (4) Spiritual development and discipline.
- (5) Practical training and experience.

Organization of this Document

Each section of the canonical areas includes Competencies and Examples. The competencies describe knowledge, skill, or an attitude that the person may attain as a result of formal education, experience, or working in community with peers and mentors. Examples offer ways in which the person may demonstrate that they have attained the competencies. Note that there is not a one-to-one relationship between competencies and the examples. Some examples may represent more than one competency and one competency may relate to one, none or more examples.

Note concerning 2018 Revision

We intend to post revisions to these competencies on a regular basis at www.episcopaldeacons.org. Check there for the latest revision, and for many other resources useful for diaconal formation.

This first revision of the competencies is nearly identical in content to the original 2017 Competencies which have been distributed heretofore by The Association for Episcopal Deacons. A few editing changes have been made for clarity. These changes are of the following nature:

- 1) We have added the canonical text of the required areas of diaconal competence themselves, for ease of reference.
- 2) We attempted some changes to verb tense (although perhaps not all desirable) to make the language of the competencies consistent.
- 3) We have harmonized the names of the competencies we used in the original 2017 document with the names used in the canons (*e.g.*, “Spirituality” became “Spiritual development and discipline”). We recognized that a slight difference in nomenclature might prove confusing for those for whom the canons are unfamiliar.
- 4) Finally, in the original version of these competencies, we had not followed the order in which the area of competence are found in the canons. In the Task Force’s initial thinking, this re-ordering was actually done *on purpose*, to convey the conviction of the writing team that academics (placed first in the canonical list, and last in our 2017 version) were one, but not necessarily the primary, area of focus for diaconal formation. Again, we recognized that the difference in order might prove confusing for those for whom the canons are unfamiliar.

Our goal for these competencies was that they be *used* by those forming deacon in The Episcopal Church and beyond, so identifying any characteristics that could impede that utility will be of great interest to our team. Again, please send comments to the Rev. Deacon Geri Swanson at deakswan@aol.com.

Note: All references to “TEC” pertain to The Episcopal Church.

As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them.

The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 543.

**1(A). Academic Studies:
The Holy Scriptures**

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p>Academic Studies: The Holy Scriptures</p>	<p>Demonstrate skills in exegesis.</p> <p>Tell the story of the sweep of scripture.</p> <p>Highlight Biblical themes foundational to diaconal ministry.</p> <p>Explain which biblical stories of hospitality inform or inspire you in ministry beyond the church walls.</p> <p>Describe what “poor” meant in the cultures of scripture.</p> <p>Compare and contrast that understanding with what “poor” means in your community and other contemporary cultures.</p>	<p>Explain what the Episcopal Church defines as the authority of scripture.</p> <p>Define God’s justice as conveyed in various Biblical writings.</p> <p>Compare and contrast mercy and justice as biblical concepts.</p> <p>Suggest some ways to bring new and hopeful meanings to the words "justice" and "mercy" in our time.</p> <p>Explain how you might use biblical examples and themes to address the inequity of resource distribution in our world today.</p> <p>Explore the uses of image and metaphor in scripture.</p>	<p>Describe the dream of God.</p> <p>Illustrate how scripture helps us align ourselves with the dream of God.</p> <p>Include but do not limit yourself to the teachings of Jesus.</p> <p>Appeal to the authority of Scripture in mission and ministry.</p> <p>Integrate scriptural references when preaching from a diaconal point of view.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Discuss scripture with peers, citing appropriate texts and themes.</p> <p>Create a story or stories that reflect the biblical value of hospitality.</p> <p>Practice using basic tools for Bible study, such as notes and cross references in an annotated bible, a Bible dictionary, a concordance, parallels, or simple commentaries.</p>	<p>Prepare and lead a Bible study.</p> <p>Articulate an understanding of the role and authority of scripture in the Episcopal Church.</p>	<p>Help others prepare to lead Bible study, by discussing the selected readings, using standard tools and resources, critiquing and coaching.</p> <p>Construct an understanding of what it means to be a scriptural people.</p>

1(B). Academic Studies:

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?
The Baptismal Covenant, p. 304.

Theology

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p>Academic Studies: Theology</p>	<p>Engage in theological reflection.</p> <p>Exhibit an understanding of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.</p> <p>Explain the sacramental nature of TEC.</p> <p>Describe the importance of the Sacraments, including the Baptismal Covenant, in personal terms.</p> <p>Explain the roles of Scripture, Reason and Tradition as applied to diaconal ministries.</p>	<p>Discuss how one's theology is influenced by diaconal ministries throughout the history of the church.</p> <p>Articulate the ways in which the history and stories of those who have gone before us influence a perception of God and God's action in the world.</p> <p>Be open to engaging in ethical reflection on their actions in life events.</p>	<p>Reflect on theology as experienced in ministry.</p> <p>Describe how one's understanding of God has changed during and because of experiences in ministry.</p> <p>Be willing to struggle with ethical dilemmas.</p> <p>Engage the community in conversations on ethics and other difficult issues.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Discuss the background of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, explicating similarities and differences.</p> <p>Describe a time where the candidate was challenged by a theology different from their own (<i>e.g.</i>, what was it, how those involved were affected, what was result/outcome of the situation.)</p>	<p>Design an adult education study based on the theology of major diaconal figures of the church (<i>e.g.</i>, Ormonde Plater's calendar of deacon saints (www.episcopaldeacons.org/resources)).</p>	<p>Oversee the design of adult education, based on the liturgical seasons and program year, through a diaconal lens.</p>

**1(C). Academic Studies:
Tradition of the Church**

Will you be loyal to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them?
The Ordination of a Deacon: The Presentation, p. 538.

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p>Academic Studies: Tradition of the Church</p>	<p>Understand the origins and organization of TEC.</p> <p>Trace the history of the Church from apostolic times to the present, including the Judaic roots of the church.</p>	<p>Describe the role of the Book of Common Prayer in TEC and the Anglican Communion.</p> <p>Describe the beliefs, worship and structure of TEC.</p>	<p>Develop and execute education opportunities on the life of TEC and the Anglican Communion.</p> <p>Develop a bibliography of church history resources.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Compile appropriate reading material.</p> <p>Explain the institutional development and significant moments of change in the history of the Christian church.</p>	<p>Explain, as though to a non-Episcopalian, the distinctive nature and history of TEC and the Anglican Communion.</p> <p>Outline major formative times that have affected where the church is today.</p> <p>Understand the legacy of these formative times in how TEC is developing today.</p>	<p>Articulate and explain to others, and be able to engage the church in the continuous assessment of its position in society as it enters new formative ages.</p> <p>Within that dialogue, be able to position the role of the diaconate.</p>

The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

The Catechism, p 855.

2. *Diakonia* and the Diaconate

God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.

The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 543.

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p><i>Diakonia</i> and the Diaconate</p>	<p>Define/describe the meaning of <i>diakonia</i>, diaconate, and the role of deacons.</p> <p>Understand the nature and office of deacon.</p> <p>Explain the evidence for the diaconate/order of deacons in The Book of Acts and the New Testament Epistles.</p>	<p>Describe the emergence of diaconate from the early Church to modern times.</p> <p>Articulate the “waves” of TEC diaconal theology as articulated by Ormonde Plater and Susanne Watson Epting.</p> <p>Articulate the development of the understanding of the diaconate articulated by John Collins.</p>	<p>Identify diaconal models from each period through today.</p> <p>Integrate social advocacy and advocacy with pastoral care engaging others in ministry.</p> <p>Explain the differences between TEC’s understanding and the role of deacons in other Christian expressions.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Live out one’s call to ministry as the offering of one’s gifts as affirmed by the Church, living under discipline.</p> <p>Articulate how one’s sense of call relates to a specific current focus of diaconal ministry (e.g., pastoral, educational, social justice).</p> <p>Develop and practices one’s prophetic voice in preaching.</p>	<p>Exhibit a clear sense of diaconal focus in interpreting current events.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the unique prophetic voice of the deacon.</p> <p>Preach a sermon or leads a workshop on a current issue.</p>	<p>Be familiar with denominational, regional, and international diaconal networks (e.g., The Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada; The Association for Episcopal Deacons; Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean; Diakonia World Federation.)</p> <p>Commit to learning from and collaborating with ecumenical diaconal networks.</p>

You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship.

The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 543.

3. Human Awareness and Understanding

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

The Baptismal Covenant, p. 305.

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
Human Awareness and Understanding	<p>Articulate one’s gifts and faith journey.</p> <p>Receive and gives feedback.</p> <p>Discern community need.</p> <p>Learn and uses active listening skills.</p> <p>Practice attentiveness to others.</p> <p>Exhibit interest in learning from those who are culturally, socially, or in other ways “other” from one’s own standpoint.</p> <p>Make the distinction between collaboration, consultation, and delegation.</p>	<p>Understand the impact of personal biases.</p> <p>Use listening skills appropriately.</p> <p>Encourage the talents of others.</p> <p>Engage others appropriately in various situations.</p> <p>Give evidence of learning from and about those who differ from oneself (<i>i.e.</i>, those of different cultures, economic and social situations, and who challenge one’s standpoint and experience).</p> <p>Describe ways of responding to conflict, including their preferred approach.</p> <p>Function in groups in ways that encourages the participation, contribution, and initiative of others.</p> <p>Accept supervision and appropriate authority of others.</p>	<p>Facilitate respectful listening in community gatherings</p> <p>Integrate leadership and service in self and others</p> <p>Function as part of a team to engage communities in group learning/teamwork</p> <p>Describe principles of responding to conflict, giving examples of how they can contribute to positive outcomes</p> <p>Bring conflict/dissent into the open to find solutions while maintaining positive relationships.</p> <p>Show an integration of leadership and service in oneself and encourage it in others.</p> <p>Practice working in areas of strength as well as outside of one’s comfort zone.</p>

		<p>Exercise in oneself authority appropriate to one's capacity and office.</p> <p>Reflect with insight on the use and abuse of power in a corporate setting.</p>	
<p>Examples:</p> <p>Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Describe and reflect on one's experience of collaboration within a ministry team.</p> <p>Identify one's preferred behavior in groups; with specific examples from a ministry setting, receive the guidance and supervision of others with authority and experience in ministry.</p> <p>Recognize situations of conflict and identifies potential for positive or negative outcomes.</p> <p>Conduct a needs assessment and develop plans with the community to address them.</p> <p>Conduct one-on-one interviews.</p>	<p>Practice and use processes that welcome people into community relationships (e.g., check-ins, ice breakers, etc.)</p> <p>Invite and prepare volunteers for participation in ministries.</p> <p>Possess an awareness of how one can be privileged in relationship with others (e.g., race, gender, education, professional status, ordained status).</p> <p>Lead as a deacon in relationship to priests, bishops, laity, and other deacons.</p> <p>Articulate the ministry of the deacon in positive and hopeful terms.</p>	<p>Reflect, share and learn from life crises and challenging issues that arise in the course of one's ministry.</p> <p>Use moments of being questioned, challenged, misunderstood, or taken for granted as teaching moments.</p> <p>Demonstrate learning from failure and crisis; know when to change direction and how to grow from failure.</p> <p>Use peer and professional support in both personal and ministerial life.</p>

Will you be faithful in prayer, and in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures?

The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 544.

4. Spiritual Development and Discipline

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p style="text-align: center;">Spiritual Development and Discipline</p>	<p>Explore different methods and practices of prayer.</p> <p>Deepen their own spiritual practices.</p>	<p>Create a Rule of Life suitable for a diaconal ministry.</p> <p>Understand the impact images of God have on faith perspectives.</p> <p>Develop an understanding of the impact that images and concepts of God have on one's own development, and identify implicit biases that may affect interaction with others.</p> <p>Use different practices of prayer according to the needs and gifts of the community.</p>	<p>Assist others with prayer life.</p> <p>Continue in Spiritual Direction.</p> <p>Design a prayer centered discipline to enhance personal spiritual life.</p> <p>Review one's Rule of Life regularly.</p> <p>Develop leadership in the community in the practice of prayer, especially in response to need and risk.</p> <p>Give expression to the prophetic voice through action and prayer that speaks powerfully to the present concerns and hopes of the world.</p> <p>Hold one's own understanding of God with gentleness and confidence within interfaith and multi-faith contexts and conversations.</p>

<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Maintain a prayer journal throughout the course.</p> <p>Design a prayer centered discipline to enhance the student's personal prayer and spiritual life.</p> <p>Create intercessory prayer, in the context of praise, thanksgiving, needs, and graces.</p> <p>Give examples of intercessory prayer as part of a Rule of Life.</p> <p>Seek spiritual direction.</p> <p>Form or join a prayer group.</p>	<p>Design an artistic display that speaks to the deacon's understanding and perspective of images of God and their own faith journey.</p> <p>Lead extemporaneous prayer</p> <p>Describe how one utilizes prayer, scripture and theological reflection to discern presence and signs of the Spirit in various situations.</p> <p>Adapt or write Prayers of the People appropriate to the context and community.</p> <p>Craft prayers of intercession that lift up issues of justice and mercy appropriate to the</p>	<p>Design a Spiritual Retreat for a faith community.</p> <p>Compose a bibliography of books and articles on noted and varied spiritual practices as well as those on the development of Christian Prayer.</p> <p>Discern the issues of justice and mercy and engage the community's life of prayer.</p> <p>Identify the deeper needs of the gathered community and express those needs in prayer.</p> <p>Know the needs, situations and concerns of people in one's prayer group so that prayer offerings acknowledge and honor those present.</p> <p>Utilize prayer, scripture and theological reflection to discern presence and signs of the Spirit in various situations.</p> <p>Based on understanding of the gifts and needs of others, use a variety of resources and depth of knowledge to support others in their spiritual journey.</p>
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5(A). Practical Training and Experience:

You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 543.

Advocacy Skills

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

The Baptismal Covenant, p. 305.

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p>Practical Training and Experience</p>	<p>Show growth in sensitivity to human suffering and injustice.</p> <p>Network with other agencies and churches.</p> <p>Identify transferable skills from other fields to ecclesial ministry</p> <p>Articulate principles of local mission, including: social analysis of power relationships; doing advocacy from different perspectives; leveraging limited financial resources for community development; and, describing different models of community ministry.</p>	<p>Practice flexibility and patience working in community.</p> <p>Build relationships with local leaders.</p> <p>Demonstrate how to engage a local community.</p> <p>Interpret the concerns, needs, and hopes of the wider community to the gathered church through effective prophetic preaching.</p>	<p>Be a model of ethical, professional and compassionate ministry.</p> <p>Foster collaborative leadership.</p> <p>Continue to analyze one’s practice of leadership and reflect critically on how it contributes to or undermines the development of collaborative ministry</p> <p>Leverage at-hand resources for community development.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Develop ability to articulate (verbally or with visual resources) the celebrations and sorrows, strengths and struggles, myths and traditions, of a community.</p> <p>Participate in local social service agency networks.</p>	<p>Give examples of having done pastoral care as ministry in the public square exhibiting healthy empathy and compassion.</p>	<p>Facilitate or participate in a visioning process (e.g., the role of the church within the local community, or the development of a new ministry.)</p>

	<p>Demonstrate how to engage in a local community, including evidence of understanding its story, and networking with other agencies, local authorities and churches.</p> <p>Serve as a consultant or resource person in planning community ministry.</p>	<p>Describe systemic power dynamics in a local community (<i>e.g.</i>, formal/informal power, influence, and authority; and community connectivity.)</p>	<p>Demonstrate effective use of church communication vehicles (<i>e.g.</i>, Sunday leaflet, parish newsletter, announcements, bulletin board, website, etc.).</p> <p>Make effective use of current media (<i>e.g.</i>, newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).</p>
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5(B) Practical Training and Experience: Liturgy

You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments.
The Ordination of a Deacon: The Examination, p. 543.

Area of Competence	During Formation (pre-ordination)	At Ordination	Throughout Lifelong Learning
<p>Practical Training and Experience: Liturgy</p>	<p>Develop an understanding of the role of the deacon in liturgy.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of rubrics relating to the role of deacons in the Book of Common Prayer, and other sources such as the Book of Occasional Services and sources from other churches.</p>	<p>Articulate and perform all diaconal liturgical functions: variations of liturgy suitable for congregations, placements, or events other than Sunday Eucharist in one's own congregation</p> <p>Demonstrate knowledge of the prophetic voice in preaching and proclamation.</p>	<p>Demonstrate familiarity with diaconal customs specific to one's diocese or parish</p> <p>Broaden one's understanding of liturgical practice beyond local practice, e.g. in different traditions and cultures</p> <p>Develop liturgies appropriate to diaconal ministry and mission.</p> <p>Continue to develop the prophetic voice of the deacon in preaching and proclamation.</p>
<p>Examples: Demonstration of competence</p>	<p>Serve as lector, eucharistic minister, server, and acolyte.</p> <p>Display willingness to adapt and learn different practices and customs reflecting different cultures and traditions.</p> <p>Begin development of the voice of the preacher through close listening to others and preparation and delivery of sermons.</p> <p>Reflect on exemplary sermons from other deacons.</p>	<p>Create and adapt special liturgies for specific needs and contexts.</p> <p>Prepare and deliver sermons using the prophetic voice of the deacon in the context of congregational life.</p> <p>Locate and use appropriate resources for liturgy and worship.</p>	<p>Demonstrate competence in serving as deacon in diocesan worship.</p> <p>Mentor postulants in preaching and liturgical service.</p> <p>Coordinate resources for worship.</p> <p>Continue to develop the prophetic voice in preaching, expanding the repertoire of styles and themes.</p>

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Task Force membership in 2017 included the following:

The Rev. Dcn. Tim Spannaus (Convener)

The Rev. Dcn. Phina Borgeson
The Rev. Dcn. Ellen Cook
Dr. Rod Dugliss
The Rev. Dcn. Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen
The Rev. Kate Harrigan
The Rev. Dcn. Maylanne Maybee
The Rev. Dcn. Lori Mills-Curran
The Rev. Dcn. Geri Swanson



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P.O. Box 1516
Westborough, Massachusetts
01581-1516

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