

A Word About Deacons

Each week we will have a submission from a deacon that will explore topics like what a deacon is, what they do, their history, and other stories.

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Geri Nelson was ordained in Western North Carolina on December 18, 1999 and is currently serving at Calvary Episcopal Church in Americus, Ga. She recalls feeling God's hand in her life for years and throughout those years, hearing a call to be ordained. Feeling unworthy and unprepared, she prayed that God would do more than "whisper" in her prayers. Wanting to be obedient, she prayed for clarity. During coffee hour one Sunday at St. James, Hendersonville, three different parishioners asked her if she had ever considered being ordained to the diaconate. Perhaps their voices were an answer to her prayer for clarity? In a continuing conversation with her priest, Fr. Alex Viola, she decided that she was not sure that God's will was ordination, but that she would prayerfully continue in the process "until someone tells me No.". Three years later she was ordained by The Right Reverend Robert H Johnson at Trinity Episcopal Church, Asheville, NC.



Her initial diaconal ministry was as a chaplain to victims of Domestic Violence in the local battered women's shelter. During that time, she founded The Henderson County Coalition Against Family Violence, comprised of representatives from all the county and city agencies responding to domestic violence and rape victims. Now in Americus, she serves at the local food pantry, the Christian Services Ministry organization, the newly forming Americus-Sumter County Civil Rights Museum, and the church Thrift Store, which funds outreach ministries in the community.

As with many, ministries may change over time. But, Geri reminds us, the one constancy in all ministry addresses the belief that "Why we do what we do matters at least as much as what we do!" Whenever called to a particular outreach ministry it is helpful to ask, "In whose Name do I offer myself?" It's not about us. It's never about us. It's always about how God seeks to work through us to serve the needs of others. In whose Name we offer a cup of water is what matters, not the person holding the cup.

Servanthood is something every Christian is called to by virtue of their baptism (and confirmation). As a Deacon, our call is to servant ministry in the community in which we live AND to encourage others to join us in serving others according to the spiritual gifts God has already bestowed upon them. We ALL have particular gifts for ministry - every single one of us! Part of the work of a Deacon inside the church is to lift up the laity to recognize their individual gifts, and help them to use those gifts to serve Christ by reaching out to all God's people in the world.