

Deacons Outside of the Sunday Service

By the Ven. Laura Harbaugh, Archdeacon

One of the primary functions of a deacon, outside of Sunday services, is ministry to the sick and homebound. Deacons may take communion to those persons after a Sunday service or during the week, if necessary. Like Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Deacons may only offer communion using pre-sanctified elements. Deacons may also visit persons who are approaching the end of life and offer special prayers, anointing, and communion if so indicated.

Deacons may also serve in other Pastoral Liturgies. As an example, Deacons, where permitted by civil law, may perform marriages when a priest or bishop is not available by using the service which follows the marriage rite (page 422 BCP) omitting the nuptial blessing which follows the prayers. (Only bishops and priests may pronounce the blessing.) Deacons may officiate at funerals in the absence of, and approval of the priest. Additionally, deacons may “hear a confession” under certain circumstances using “The Reconciliation of a Penitent” rite beginning on page 447 in the BCP; however, a deacon must clearly state he or she will hear the confession and will declare forgiveness but will not pronounce absolution. (Only bishop and priests may absolve someone of sin.)

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