

How do I know if I am called ?

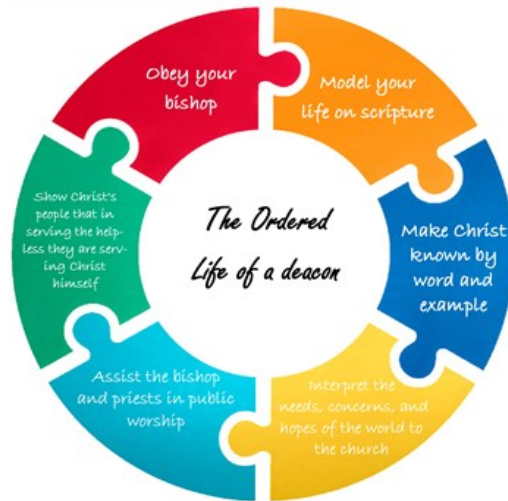
A call to ordination often begins with self-examination, but it is affirmed by the faith community. Review the vows deacons make at ordination (p. 543-4 of the Book of Common Prayer) and the description of deacons (p. 856) in The Outline of the Faith. Compare them to the Baptismal Covenant and the vows of a priest.

It is essential to speak with deacons. Your diocesan offices may locate one for you or contact AED. There is also a recommended reading list on the AED website for those exploring a call. Have a conversation with your priest and ask about the discernment process. Most dioceses have a step-by-step guide of what the ordination process entails, including education and training requirements. Be aware that financial support for these costs may be available. Ask. **You may be the deacon your diocese is waiting for.**



“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

John 12:26.



Called to Servant Leadership: The Episcopal Deacon



Interpreting to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS
ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

episcopaldeacons.org

The Deacon's Identity

Deacons are ordained to lead the servanthood of the church.

In 1970, the Episcopal Church empowered a renewed order to lead the people of God out of the building into service in the world. Every Christian is marked on the brow at baptism with a call to service in the name of God, a call to *diakonia*. Our Church so values this call that it ordains and gives formal leadership authority to deacons, charging them to make sure this work is done.

Deacons generally have paid employment outside of the church, many in social services organizations. But because they are the bridge that connects the church and the world, they devote significant time focusing on how their community's gifts can be shared or put into action. Deacons most often lead efforts to proclaim the gospel's peace and justice in word and deed outside the parish doors. Deacons are clerics of a congregation, but are generally freed from the daily responsibilities of running a parish. (They may assist in a variety of ways, especially after retirement from other employment.)

Thus, deacons do for the church whatever reflects this external focus. They frequently work with marginalized people, do community organizing, or work as chaplains, but in every setting their call is to shift the focus of the people of God out into the suffering world.

The church is not the church without *diakonia*.



The Deacon's Liturgical Role

Deacons have **specific liturgical prerogatives** in worship which teach what they are called to do.

Deacons always read the Gospel, coming down from the altar to stand among the people of God, so the people can hear the stories of how Christ has commissioned them all as servants of the world. Deacons have a special responsibility in intercession, to make sure it reflects the needs of the world, not just the parish sick list. Deacons always set the eucharistic table, to prepare the food that the people of God need for action in Christ's name. And we always deploy the congregation to the world, standing nearest the door, reminding them to go out to love and serve. We observe these diaconal prerogatives because praying shapes believing. Deacons are ordained to remind the people of God that a call to *diakonia* – Christian service - is indelibly marked on your brow when you are baptized, along with the royal priesthood of all believers. Our liturgical prerogatives are symbolic speech, which communicate, if we let them, that we are a people which so values the missional task of God that we have set aside a whole order just to remind the people of God to go do it. Failure to honor these prerogatives silences the symbol which the church has ordained the deacon to be.

Why be a Deacon?

Deacons are often asked why they would want to do this work. Since deacons are generally not paid by their parish (although they may be), the challenges of being a deacon are often significant. Traditionally, the need to balance paid work, family life, and lively liturgical and ministry demands often required those called to servant leadership to postpone ordination, and in many dioceses the average age of deacons is older.

Why does anyone give their life away?

They do it for passion. A passion to make real in the world the healing power of Christ, a passion for the justice that Jesus demanded, and a passion to deploy the church to do this work, is a significant marker of a possible diaconal call.

Every diocese tailors its diaconate to serve local needs. Are you the deacon your diocese needs? Explore the Association for Episcopal Deacons website, which has many profiles of how deacons live out their call. One of them may be yours.

