4. Practical Training and Experience

Guidelines for Practical Training and Experience

Ideally, the practical experience phase of formation should be mentored and led by an experienced and credible deacon.

The best practical training and experience begins by discerning each person's gifts and passions. It is also helpful if the context of the experience is close to what the learner will be experiencing/doing after ordination, rather than something wildly different or arbitrarily determined.

The learner will be encouraged to identify transferable skills from other fields of endeavour, hobbies, family and household life, and to practice adapting them to ecclesial ministry. (A structured portfolio will help in this process.)

Practical training and experience will focus on what deacons do in their ministries, taking into account the wide variety and many different contexts in which diaconal ministry is practiced.

The design of all practical or experiential learning should focus on engaging learners to become reflective practitioners, thus preparing to learn from experience, and become lifelong learners.

Areas of competency

Ability to:

1. Articulate and live a theology and spirituality of community ministry by
    - demonstrating sensitivity to human suffering
    - reflecting on experience personally, emotionally, spiritually, theologically

2. Articulate principles of local mission, including
    - social analysis of power relationships
    - doing advocacy from different perspectives
    - leveraging limited financial resources for community development
    - describing different models of community ministry

3. Demonstrate how to engage in a local community, including evidence of
    - understanding its story
    - relating to local politicians and authorities
    - networking with other agencies and churches
    - fostering collaborative leadership
    - serving as consultant or resource person in planning community ministry.

4. Show knowledge of contemporary issues that affect community ministry, including
    - familiarity with the positions of the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church of Canada on major social and environmental issues

- ability to research TEC/ACC's position on any given issue
- use of policy and advocacy resources from other denominations or faith groups.

5. Interpret the concerns, needs, and hopes of the wider community to the gathered church through
   - effective prophetic preaching
   - effective use of church communication vehicles (Sunday leaflet, parish newsletter, announcements, bulletin board, website)
   - effective use of current media (e-newsletter, facebook, twitter, etc.)

6. Develop patterns of ministry appropriate to local community, including
   - realistic expectations about church life in a particular context
   - handling the impact of multiple accountabilities in the church and the wider community
   - building and sustaining systems for your own (and family) support.

7. 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
   - awareness of rubrics relating to the role of deacons in the Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal), the Book of Common Prayer or the Book of Alternative Services (Anglican Church of Canada), and other sources such as the Book of Occasional Services
   - familiarity with diaconal customaries specific to one's diocese or parish

Structuring a Learning Experience

The learner takes responsibility for seeking out an experience of contextual or practical learning, and for developing learning goals that will help them develop their gifts and desired skills for ministry.

Example - Deacon-in-formation volunteers with an organization that delivers/provides a response to human need. Learning goals might include:

- How the organization assesses the nature and extent of the need and potential of those being served
- How its mission is articulated and shapes and guides the program
- Skills and tools employed to meet identified needs and enhance strengths
- How volunteers and other persons and organizations are recruited, trained or prepared and managed
- What skills and tools specific to the mission and ministry of this organization are transferable to other responses to other kinds of human need and potential.