

AED Archdeacon and Deacon Directors' Conference, 2016

Deacons in Parishes without Priests

Open Space 2-27-16

Participating:

Ed Richard, Diocese of Central Gulf Coast, Facilitator

Priscilla Maumus, Diocese of Louisiana, Note taker

Elaine Bellis, Diocese of Chicago

Rose Bogal-Allbritten, Diocese of Kentucky

Patricia Soukup, Diocese of the Rio Grand

John Gaskill, Diocese of East Carolina

Bruce Bower, Diocese of West Missouri

Jo Weber, Diocese of El Camino Real

Gary Brown, Diocese of Northern California

Katherine Mitchell, Diocese of East Carolina

Bette J. Kauffman, Diocese of West Louisiana

Situations

Small Parishes with long-serving supply priests who function in that role only

- Deacon does all the pastoral care and keeps office hours and preaches as well as doing diaconal work. Ed introduced this at the beginning of the session as his situations and some other archdeacons agreed that they had some similar situations in their dioceses.)

Associated problems:

- Role-confusion for congregation
 - Congregation doesn't have motivation to change
 - Canons are fuzzy -- deacons can serve as administrators—what does that entail?
 - Are we facilitating a poor model for the Church when, in the early Church, communities were formed to serve and to spread the Gospel rather than simply to be served?
 - Distorts the role of the deacon
 - Ethnic communities may be left out and may have no priests available who are sensitive to the needs of the congregation. Deacons who are culturally sensitive to step in until a suitable priest is found or raised up.
- Some dioceses depend on deacons to do Deacons' Masses, but most dioceses only allow this in emergencies.
 - In rural communities, it takes time for a new pastoral leader to have credibility in congregation, argues against Deacon serving several parishes.

Solutions?

- Use transitional deacons to temporarily fill vacancies
- Allow parish to fail
- Merge with another parish
- Let laity live into baptismal covenants with guidance by Deacon
- Total ministry team trained by a priest – parishioners take responsibility for different functions – worship, administration, Christian formation. May raise up their own priest. Idea: priest is worship leader, but not in charge. (Northern CA)
- Diocese of West Missouri: Ministry teams of retired priests, some deacons and trained lay leaders and lay preachers Northeast Ministry Team. Clergy rotate among parishes. Lay leaders lead MP and preach when clergy is not there.
- Nebraska has curacy program. Newly ordained priests serve first 18 months in large church under the supervision of an experienced priest. 2nd 18 months in small church without a priest.
- Ordain a Deacon a priest who is already functioning as a pastoral leader
- Let a Deacon be an administrative vicar and do Deacons' Masses 3x a week (Jo) and priest 1x a month. (Not a popular or frequent option.)
- Promote the ministry of the baptized.
- Don't assign deacons just to one parish, rotate them around, ex. 3 Sundays each at a different church, one Sunday a month off. (That way, parish does not think of the deacon as their own and is more apt to look within to address it's development issues.)
- Help laity understand that they are the Church. How can they realize and claim their own power – to grow, to proclaim, to invite others into membership and leadership?
- Put parishes that need prayers for clergy leadership or congregational leadership on an Archdeacon listserv prayer list.