

AED Archdeacon and Deacon Directors' Conference, 2016

Summary of retiring deacon conversation

Tracie Middleton

Led by Aaron Perkins (Dio Maine)

Avg age 70.6 in Maine many who are older, still active, bishop very supportive, will gladly re-appoint, no specific parameters about that - we're looking at figuring those out

How to support folks approaching 72

Resources for retirement

How to determine whether you should retire

What are expectations of "active" deacons (being sensitive to the model of the diaconate that each person was formed under)

If the model is 70s-80s person who helps at the altar, it could be complicating the task of raising the profile of diaconate as understood now

Charlie (Long Island)

Avg age a little younger. 4 deacons in 80s,

Issue - Bishop has decided that two of those, while they still want to go on visitations, he doesn't want them there, because it's distracting to people who are concerned about their health.

1 beginning to suffer dementia, 1 who recognizes her limitations and works just around her parish

Some find it distressing not to serve liturgically, although we try to emphasize diaconal service is more than just at the altar. Liturgical role is meaningless without an active diaconal ministry outside that.

No one at the dio who is tasked with supporting retired clergy specifically

Bp wants deacons to be able to function as long as they're physically capable

Need to start actively thinking about what happens when we retire

Toughest thing - letting the two elderly deacons know that they wouldn't be on the visitation rota anymore - very difficult to be the one to tell them that. Painful to do. Don't know of a way to make it easier. They don't want to join community gatherings now - I think they are pissed at me.

We need to do something to recognize their contributions.

Maybe also finding role for retired deacons as mentors or other ways for them to keep a hand in even when they're not - though it can cause a problem if the older deacons were formed in a very different model and may confuse/contaminate the newer deacons' understanding of diaconal service.

Elaine (Chicago)

Bishop also meets pastorally with each retiring deacon to discuss retirement changes, their questions, etc

Recognitions for years of service on anniversaries



Beth – (Dio Oregon)

An early request from the Bishop about resignation at age 72. If they wish to continue, in same letter of resignation, also indicate desire to continue, and that decision will be made on a case by case basis. Several had to be retired- while they were not happy about it.

It's not that we're picking on deacons - it's the canon - all clergy retire at 72.

Send a letter to folks who are approaching 72 - remind of canon and how to indicate desire to continue. Bishop usually contacts the rector to ask about the deacon's contribution - is it helping or not?

Had a number of deacons not functioning well - rather than define what active deacons do, we defined what a retired deacon looks like.

Retirement usually means retiring from liturgical service, not necessarily from outreach or other ministries.

Also talk with them about 'where will you attend church?' Because not back at the church where they served.

How to include retired deacons in life of deacons - annual lunch for all : retired and active.

Occasionally a deacon is asked to come out of retirement, but letter of agreement is very specific, with exit strategy.

Process was laid out with an initial letter to everyone "this is the canon, and we're going to begin following it"

Example letter

Jan – (Rhode Island)

Similar to Beth's but we also say that each year, they can submit another letter if their wishes change. Rector knows that if they choose to use the deacon liturgically on occasion, they can ask the retired deacon to do that without involving the diocese/bishop.

One example of a congregation handling a deacon's limitation - she can't walk - she sits in a spot in the center of the congregation, someone carries the gospel book to her, and she steps into the aisle and proclaims the gospel.

Young retired deacon serving as chaplain to the other retired deacons, contact them by phone at least once a week.

Various ways to care for retired deacons.

Monthly deacon community meetings (because that works for us in a small area), annual retreat - offering to coordinate rides for those who don't drive, meet in one building, first floor, ways to keep them included in community.

Collars - their choice, they can if they want.

Bruce Bower – (W. Missouri)

Big part of identity, being a deacon, being included in the community is important.

Patty (Rio Grande)

In spread-out dioceses, many deacons are the only one. They were in model of functioning liturgically and in the parish, not much social ministry.

How to retire them when they have such a long and vital role in their church community, especially when there is no one else in their community to take up that role

Sarah Getts (AZ)

Helping in rural areas - plan to go visit that church with priest, deacon, sit down together to create the letter of agreement - and look at their abilities to serve, etc.

If we keep our elderly deacons going, it could be a barrier to others coming in, or it could be a model. Talk with the priest about whether there are members in the parish that could be raised up as deacons.

Ed -

I'll be submitting a letter of resignation soon, myself. I will say this time that I want to continue, and I'll need to decide that every year. I can see that at some point in the future, I will probably decide that I don't want to do that anymore.

We're all in the process of initiating our letters of agreement, so beginning to start following canons. Plan to do that annually afterwards, so it's easier to make changes along the way as needed.

Concerned that some of our deacons who have retired have also removed themselves from everything.

Becky Scott

Remind those who were forced to retire - remind them they are an icon of service, and they're still involved; liturgical piece gets to be all about us very quickly. Importance of supporting the clergy leadership in place.

Jn (TX)

Reminding that being a deacon 'is not what we do but who we are'

Kristi Neale (WNC)

Things needed to be stated in 'Covenant' with parish (distinguish b/w active and retired. 'Letter of Agreement' for retired; "Covenant" for active)

State expectations more explicitly in covenant (ie. having a spiritual director, reminding about retirement canon).

Jamesetta (LA)

I'll be retiring. Is there a way we could have a workshop relating to CPG and pension plans - maybe a year before. Gathering with deacons to look at their plans as retirement is coming up - how to start drafting the letter.

CPG

CPG Wellness seminars - they will come out and do that for a diocese

CREDO also; needing to develop it for deacons

CPG - what they'll be willing to do for deacons across the board



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Lori is working on that with them

Communications difficulties - deacons don't know the tools we can participate in (IRA)

Congregation might contribute add'l amount toward retirement

Sarah - Toni Marie Sutliff came to AZ - noted that Cigna resources were available to all deacons and their families. Password is 'Episcopal' [Cignabehavioral.com](https://cignabehavioral.com). From CPG page -> resources

Examples of older deacons who need to retire from liturgical service

Person with Parkinsons, people who are frail and could fall going up/down stairs, congregation is distracted worrying about them

Dennis Taylor (Olympia)

Conflict/confusion - new deacon back in her home parish; retired deacon coming in clericals, so the congregation doesn't know who's doing what