

AED Archdeacon and Deacon Directors' Conference, 2016

Young Deacons session notes

Tracie Middleton, Lori Mills-Curran

Lori:

I was ordained at 32, had 2 young children and was pregnant. Susan Watson Epting had awareness that many Bps concerned that deacons mostly old

AED did a capital campaign for 100k and did make it. ID'd issues with appeal to demographic - young deacons was a major reason people gave to that campaign, so we're aware it's a concern to our donors

Kyle Pederson was ordained at 33, maybe 45 now. Decided with Susan's collaboration to apply for a grant thru Episcopal Church Foundation to perform groundbreaking practical research. He applied and received a fellowship grant to initiate 'The Seven' Pre-discernment opportunity.

Lot of young people had no perception of diaconate. Two groups who applied: young people who were Episcopalian and were in churches growing up that had deacons, so they had seen the diaconate in action; the others were not Episcopalian but liked what the Episcopal Church was doing in social justice.

Millenials have delayed maturity cycle; choices re: family, work, et.c about 10 yrs after prior generations

1st Group of 'The Seven' -

Major challenges

ability to have meaningful collaboration in cohort. Technologies proved less effective in creating cohort identity than hoped. They never had an in-person meeting. The ones who met together in person had more success (in Olympia, for example)

Confusion b/w the 7 and Episcopal Service Corps (ESC). (For ex. ESC assigns young folks to mentors. 7 requires you to find your own young person

2nd cohort didn't do as well. Google groups. Had been meeting through Moodle (CALL). Mentors might be good with mentoring but might not be familiar with the technology.

3rd cadre

Kyle wanted to call together the alums to gather some learning

2 cohorts that were small groups each surfaced a person into 'real' discernment - and they all three burned out. Reasons were different for different ones. Some had very poor experience of 'The Seven' Dissatisfaction among mentors also

Seemed that they had couple of things in common



Absorbed image of 'deacon as prophet'

Ran afoul of 'deacon as servant'

Hard time with idea of being obedient (felt 'you're now telling me not to be a prophet and before that's what you said I was')

Not being skimmed off into priesthood track (as happened to earlier prospects)

Millennials tend to see hierarchy as bad / toxic; benefits of hierarchy (accountability, etc.) not seen as benefits necessarily.

One person wanted to train as an Episcopal deacon through Roman Catholic deacon school that was right near him. He felt that was oppressive and didn't make sense. For instance, he didn't understand why his wife wasn't included.

EC wasn't able to articulate hierarchy clearly

Deacon as prophet- one really identified with that; she didn't want paid employment, she asked 'what does it mean when a denomination's conscience is unfunded?' The fact that there was no funding, health benefits, etc. You think this is a viable lifestyle for someone who is 28?

Lot of them know they won't have solid medical insurance now through retirement. Idea of planning for future with an institution that didn't provide her with any resources for doing the work was baffling.

Still \$11K in coffers. ½ for facilitator cost; ½ for AED's expenses.

We were planning a gathering to get some learnings from those participants. The fruit of those cohorts went down in flames themselves, and so we've stopped.

So, we're not sure what to do with the grant money remaining.

Either give it back, or do something else with relation to young deacons' formation, etc.

Kyle was the one who applied for the grant, so he has a lot of say in the direction

Hope a year ago was that 2 of the participants would be hosting a track at triennial, but that seems unlikely now. I'm still talking like young deacons are coming to triennial, but not sure.

About 50 deacons under age of 45 in USA;

Two groups of young prospective deacons:

People who grew up Episcopalians and were aware of deacons

People who are attracted to the Episcopal church b/c of social justice work

So what do they want from AED?

Not so much concern with issues that AED had advocated for before (Deacon voting, being registered with recorder of ordinations, ...)

AED may need to reinvent itself to serve younger deacons

2 things before Michael was Archdeacon - took bishop aside and asked him to watch out for him and another, to help them prosper

Problems

Candidates diverted into priesthood

Barriers to succeeding as deacons

Format is often difficult for families - ie moving every 2years

Social service of any kind in Portuguese is called 'diakonia' and this is wonderful. When diakonia is constitutive of living out baptismal vows. 'Priesthood of all believers' is not as unintelligible

Dio Youth minister is a deacon, so more visible.

Please invite any young deacons to triennial.