



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

2017 Archdeacon & Deacon Directors Conference Open Space Report: Bishop and Archdeacon Transitions

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ISSUES RAISED

- A new bishop in a diocese may request that the existing archdeacon step down, thereby creating a lack of continuity and confusion for the deacons (as well as for the new bishop). Conversely, a new bishop may request that the existing archdeacon remain in that role, but this leads to a lack of clarity, both for the archdeacon and the bishop, as to what the archdeacon's role actually is; expectations may not be clear for either party. In either case, deacons in the diocese will be impacted as they try to determine how their ministries and positions may be affected by the change.
- Deacons that are in a formation program during the time when there is a change in the episcopacy may be negatively impacted. A new bishop may want to make changes to the formation program structure or may want to suspend the program altogether for a period of time, thereby catching postulants and candidates in the middle.
- A diocese may have a strong diaconal community and diaconal presence, but the incoming bishop may not have experience in working with deacons. In this case, the archdeacon may have to educate the new bishop and guide him/her as to the ministry that deacons have within the diocese.
- If a new bishop enters the episcopacy with no transition period, and if an archdeacon is moved out with no transition period, this can create a gap with serious consequences. Deacons may be left on their own to do what they want to do without a letter of agreement and without accountability. This can lead to a generation of free agents, and it can be very difficult to regain control once this occurs.

WAYS TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION

- Implement a co-archdeacon model during the transition so that there is an overlap between the outgoing archdeacon and the incoming archdeacon.
- If the existing archdeacon will resign when the new bishop is consecrated, the archdeacon should make a recommendation to the new bishop as to who his or her replacement should be.
- If the new bishop appoints a new archdeacon, the two may decide together what the role of the archdeacon should be so that there is a common understanding between them.



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- As the Transition Team plans the walk-about in the diocese prior to the election, request that the community of deacons be granted either a separate walk-about session or another holy time alone with the nominees to discuss issues pertinent to the diaconal community.
- Consider appointing more than one archdeacon, each with a specific function (e.g., discernment, formation, deployment). This division of duties can be helpful to a new bishop in terms of understanding the various roles of the archdeacon.
- Prepare a written job description for each of the archdeacon positions in the diocese.
- Create a book or binder for the new bishop that includes photos and bios of all of the deacons in the diocese as well as written descriptions of their ministries.
- Prepare a video highlighting diaconal ministry in action in the diocese.
- Always have a succession plan in place! This will alleviate a great deal of potential anxiety and confusion when a bishop and/or an archdeacon transition occurs.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Anxiety and apprehension about a transition are actually opportunities for growth, development, and positive change. The transition may be an opportunity for new practices to be put into place that could not have been implemented under the prior bishop.
- Keep a positive attitude, and look forward, not backward!