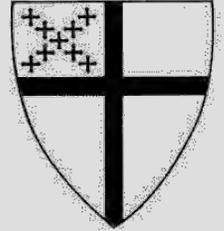
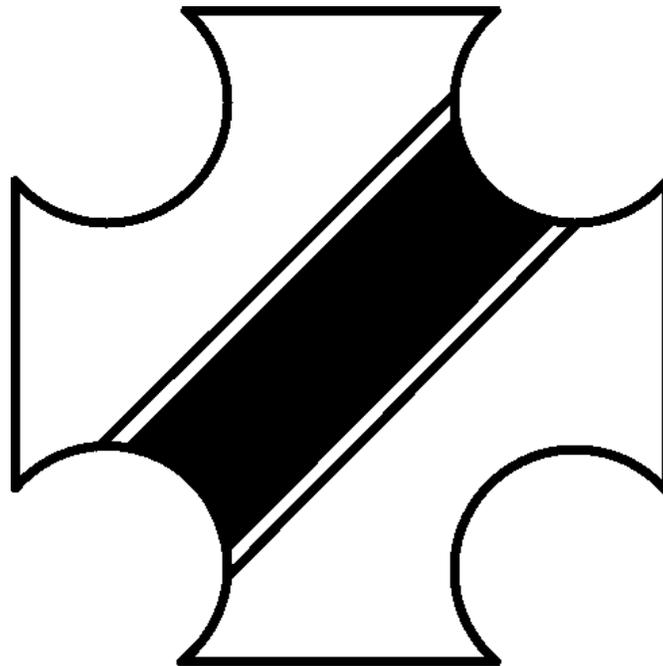




EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
of Southern Virginia



A HANDBOOK FOR
DEACONS



*At all times, your life and teaching are
to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are
serving Christ himself. (BCP, pg. 543)*

APRIL 2016



Icon of women deacons in the early Church

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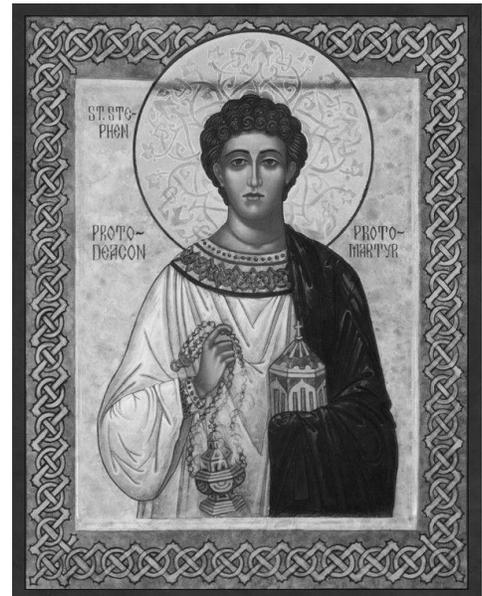
CHAPTER 1: THE CALL TO DIAKONIA

What is diakonia? Why is the church called to diakonia? And what do deacons have to do with any of this? Let us look at each of these questions.

What Is Diakonia?

Diakonia is one of those wonderfully rich words that comes from the Greek in which all of the New Testament was written. It is rightfully called a rich word because it has layers and nuances of meaning that make it impossible to translate into a single English word. Diakonia, or one of its forms, appears eighty times in the New Testament. Appendix one is a listing of the use of these words in the New Testament.¹

So what does diakonia mean? In his book *Diakonia Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*² John N. Collins presents the most exhaustive and accepted study of the use and meanings of diakonia by examining hundreds of documents written in Greek from the fifth century before Christ until the fourth century after Christ. His research involved both Christian and non-Christian documents. The way Collins explains the use of diakonia is to start off by saying that it always involved the idea of a “go-between.” It always had someone who was acting on behalf of another. This acting on behalf of another can then be broken down into three categories that Collins refers to as “Word,” “Deed,” and “House and Table.”³ In his book *Many Servants an Introduction to Deacons*,⁴ Ormonde Plater expands on these three categories in a helpful manner. Plater sees “Word” in the sense of message. Thus the go-between travels from one place to another to carry a message on behalf of another, or to bear a sacred word as a herald, or to interpret the words of the one who sent him. Under the category of “Deed” Plater sees the go-between as one who conducts operations on behalf of another, or one who carries out the desires or commands of a superior, or one who implements another’s plan. And finally, Plater sees the category of “House and Table” as when the go-between waits on another, or cares for the needs of a guest, or when the go-between conducts a religious occasion with decency.⁵ All of these are instances in ancient Greek where diakonia words would have been used.



St. Stephen - first deacon, first martyr

So how are we to grasp the meaning of diakonia? A good way to understand diakonia is to see it as performing a service or ministry, but doing that ministry at the request of or in the name of

another. A term that is more commonly used nowadays is “servant ministry.” That is a good way to express diakonia if you do not limit servant ministry to only “social work.” Servant ministry does, most assuredly, involve actions such as feeding the hungry or sheltering the homeless. But it can, for example, also involve fighting for better education, working for voting rights, or advocating for medical care for everyone, to name a few examples.

Why Is the Church Called to Diakonia?

Diakonia is the very heart of the Gospel. It is the way Jesus saw himself. In the Gospel of Mark, chapter ten tells the story of James and John requesting to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand in his glory. Of course this causes a stir among the other ten apostles. Mark tells how Jesus calls the twelve together and instructs them about ministry:

“When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them. ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”⁶

The words “servant,” “served,” and “serve” in the above passage are all forms of diakonia. Thus Jesus saw himself as performing diakonia. Who was he acting on behalf of? His father. Jesus was acting as the agent, the go-between, for his father on our behalf. But this call to diakonia is not just for Jesus. Jesus tells the twelve that they too must be servants, they too must perform diakonia.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells the story of the last judgment, the story of the sheep and the goats. How he will separate those who help others and those who refuse to do so. When Jesus tells the goats, the accursed, to depart from him, they ask Jesus the following question:

“Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’”⁷

What is translated as “take care of you” is diakonia in the Greek. Diakonia is how we will be judged.

The reality is that the need to live diakonia is vital to the church’s mission. Here is how Bishop Hollerith put it recently in a sermon given on the occasion of a service of Confirmation and Reception.

“One of the truths I think we have to wrestle with, that the author of Mark’s gospel challenges us to wrestle with, is the relationship between those of us who would dare follow the way of Jesus of Nazareth versus the culture in which we find ourselves. Christianity is by its very nature a true counter-culture, nonconformist movement.

True nonconformity, the Christian type, involves simply being, as Jesus was, deeply unsatisfied with the way the world can sometimes be and determined, for the love of God, to expend your heart, soul and mind to mend the brokenness around you. We have all but lost our nonconformist character. What is it that people see when they look at us? Do they see bold risk takers? Do they see a community of people who are addressing things that matter like racism, or inequality, or poverty, or corporate thievery, or obsession with money and sex? Or do they see a people who have settled into a maintenance mode because it feels safe and comfortable? We will have to wrestle with that question together.”⁸

Do people see in us the very spirit of diakonia? The call to diakonia is what Jesus saw about himself, it is what Jesus called us to, and it is what we must do to be part of God’s plan for salvation. What is your ministry, your diakonia?

The Role of Deacons in the Church Today

Who are deacons? What do they do? How are they different from priests? Who can become a deacon? How do you become a deacon? These are just a few of the common questions about deacons and the diaconate. But probably the most important question of all is “Why does the church need deacons?”



...select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom

In order to answer that most important question we have to start with three fundamental principles that have applied to the diaconate from the earliest days of the church. The first two of these principles are clear in the account found in The Acts of the Apostles about the choosing of the first seven deacons. At that time the church was still located in Jerusalem and centered on a communal life devoted “...to the apostles’

teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”⁹ Chapter six of Acts tells of a dispute that arose at this very early stage of the church’s history.

“Now during these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.”¹⁰

The first fundamental principle about the diaconate is that its very roots and meaning are found in diakonia. In the above passage from Acts, the phrases translated as “to wait on tables” and “to serving” are both the same word in the original Greek—diakonia. Thus both this new group of seven set aside for service and the apostles themselves are both called to diakonia. They are both called to be agents of service. In fact the title “deacon” is obviously taken from diakonia.

The second fundamental principle about deacons found in this story is that deacons are called to serve the needs of the church. The church had a problem and deacons were called upon to solve that problem.

The third fundamental principle about deacons is that the needs of the church change over time and thus what deacons are called to do is to change with those needs. It is clear that helping to run the primitive church in Jerusalem is no longer needed. But history shows that over time deacons have performed in many different roles. One of the best examples of these different roles is found in the history of the diaconate in the Episcopal Church. Omonde Plater describes four types or “waves” of deacons in his book.¹¹

1. The first types of deacons were missionary or indigenous deacons. They existed from the 1840's until the 1930's. They cared for communities either on the frontier of our nation as it expanded or to the indigenous people. They served where there were no priests. They served alone and took care of their communities by teaching and preaching.
2. The second type of deacons were known as deaconesses. This movement grew out of the squalid conditions of the slums of the industrial revolution in Germany. Starting in 1831, the Lutheran Church trained women to help provide what we today would call “social services.” These women were consecrated but not ordained by the Lutheran Church. The deaconesses lived in communities together. This movement spread from Germany to both England and America. In 1845, a sisterhood was formed in New York City based on the German model. In 1864 the bishop of Alabama “instituted” three deaconesses. In 1889 the General Convention passed Canon 10 titled “Of Deaconesses” which remained in effect until 1970. For most of the existence of the deaconesses they were devoted to charitable and pastoral functions and were restricted to unmarried women or widows.
3. The third type of deacon, the “Perpetual Deacon,” developed after World War II in response to the lack of priests caused by the rapid expansion in the number of Episcopal churches. The General Convention in 1952 restored the diaconate for men only. Their ministry was to be solely in a congregation. They were usually, but not always, older men picked from the congregation.
4. The fourth type of deacon started to emerge in the 1970's. In 1970 the canons were revised. The deaconesses were ordained, and the diaconate was opened to both men and women. By the early 1980's the whole concept of the diaconate had changed. The

deacons were seen as serving under the bishop. The deacons were also seen as serving in the world as well as serving the church.

But the question remains, what is the purpose of this fourth type or wave of deacons? What is the need of the church that deacons are to fulfill? One common answer that is often heard is that deacons are to bring the world to the church and the church to world. That is that deacons are to make the church aware of the needs of the world and help the church meet those needs. That is true, but in reality most people today are well aware of the world we live in and its many shortcomings. When he was the Bishop of North Carolina, The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, described the role of deacons this way:

“We who follow Jesus of Nazareth are called to be a church for others, to give ourselves away for the cause of God’s kingdom, for the realization of God’s dream. That is one of the reasons that at last year’s convention I asked for the expansion and the renewal of the Diaconate. Because I am convinced that deacons are not here to serve us. Let me say that one clearly. Deacons are not here to serve us. They are here to help us serve the world. That is why we have deacons.”¹²

Thus the purpose of the deacon is to help every member of a parish claim their own ministry. The Book of Common Prayer states clearly “The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.”¹³ It is not by accident that lay persons are mentioned first. Ministry is a right and an obligation of our baptism.

But are not priests called to lead people into their own unique ministry? Of course they are. So why would a deacon be needed? A good analogy can be found in Christian education. Every priest spends significant time teaching. However, most parishes, recognizing both the importance of religious education and the effort that should be devoted to it, have a staff person whose focus is on religious education. Having a deacon as the person whose focus is on the ministry of all baptized persons does not diminish in any way the leadership and efforts in priests in this vital area. Rather the deacon is an asset provided to help everyone discover and engage in their ministry. Diakonia is at the heart and center of the gospel message. It has never been more necessary for the church to embrace diakonia. The diaconate is the order in the church whose purpose and focus is to help lead each one of us to our own unique call to diakonia ministry.



Bishop Hollerith receiving a cross

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF DEACONS IN THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

We have had deacons serving in Southern Virginia for more than 30 years. Deacon Moss Armistead served faithfully at St. Christopher's Portsmouth for nearly 25 years and Deacon Claude Turner served faithfully at Seaman's House in Portsmouth and at St. Aidan's in Virginia Beach for more than 30 years. Dn. Turner was in his eighties when he retired from active service! The Rev. Dr. J. Segar Gravatt was our first, seminary trained deacon in the Diocese. She was ordained to the "perpetual diaconate" by The Rt. Rev. C. Charles Vaché. Segar eventually went on to re-discern her vocational call as one to the priesthood, and now serves as the associate rector at All Saints in Virginia Beach. Segar served as the first Archdeacon (for the Deacons) in the Diocese and did a great deal to make the Diocese more aware of the order and the role of deacons. Since then we have had 4 archdeacons. The Ven. Marjorie Holm, The Ven. Patti Davis, The Ven. Bill Jones, and our current Archdeacon, The Ven. Becki Dean. Each person serving in this role has played an important role in advancing the diaconate in southern Virginia and in making our Diocese more aware of the order. We currently have deacons serving in less than half of the convocations in the Diocese (Convocations II, IV, V, VII).



Our deacons serving our communities.

CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF THE ARCHDEACON

Mission Statement

It is the goal of the ministry of the archdeacon to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by assisting the bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia in the formation and training of new deacons, in the deployment, supervision and professional growth of deacons, and in the development of programs to promote the diaconate.



Archdeacon Becki Dean, 2016

Appointment and Qualifications

- The archdeacon is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the bishop of Southern Virginia.
- The length of the archdeacon's term of office is solely at the discretion of the bishop. However, rotation of the office from time to time ensures new ideas and fresh approaches are provided to the bishop. Thus a guideline of three years for the term of office for the archdeacon is established.
- The archdeacon shall have been ordained for a minimum of five years.
- The archdeacon shall be active in ministry in the world and serving in a parish of the diocese.

Formation and Training of New Deacons

- The Commission on Ministry (COM):
 - The archdeacon is an *ex-officio* member of the COM
 - The archdeacon shall have seat and voice but no vote on the COM.
- The School for Deacons:
 - The archdeacon shall assist the bishop and the diocesan staff in assuring that adequate training is available for the formation of deacons.
 - The archdeacon shall assign a deacon mentor to every postulant/candidate attending the school, and to every newly ordained deacon for a period of two years following ordination.
 - The archdeacon shall assist as needed in support of the school.

- Development of the Diaconate:
 - When an individual in a parish first seeks information about the diaconate, the archdeacon shall serve as a resource and point of contact to assist when and where needed:
 - At the request of the rector or priest-in-charge of a parish, the archdeacon will arrange, for that individual to meet with a deacon who can answer questions and provide information about the diaconate.
 - The archdeacon will provide recommended reading to help an individual learn about the diaconate.
 - The archdeacon will be a resource for parish clergy to answer their questions about the diaconate and deacon formation.
 - If a parish discernment committee is formed, the archdeacon or a deacon appointed by the archdeacon shall brief the parish discernment committee on the diaconate before the committee meets the candidate for the first time. This briefing will include what an individual must do to successfully complete the training to become a deacon, what a deacon's roles and responsibilities are, and what qualities to look for in a deacon.

Deployment

The archdeacon will assist the bishop and the diocesan staff in the deployment of deacons:

- The archdeacon shall be the initial point of contact for deacons seeking a new assignment.
- The archdeacon will be a resource available to a rector or priest-in-charge requesting an assignment of a deacon.

Program Development

The archdeacon will develop and maintain programs to support the growth and development of deacons and the diaconate:

- The archdeacon will work with the diocesan staff to provide opportunities for professional growth of all deacons.
- The archdeacon will select, train, and with the bishop's concurrence, assign mentors for postulants, candidates and newly ordained deacons. The deacons trained as mentors will also be assigned by the archdeacon to meet with individuals inquiring about the diaconate.

- The archdeacon will develop presentation outlines to increase the knowledge of the diaconate in the diocese. These outlines will be kept up to date as needed and will be used as a guide by anyone giving the following presentations:
 - The required brief to a parish discernment committee before it starts its work.
 - A presentation that could be given to parishes at the request of the rector.

- The archdeacon will assist the bishop in scheduling meetings with the deacons at least one time per year.
- The archdeacon will work with the diocesan staff to facilitate information resources such as the diocesan website or other resources as available to help keep the members of the Diocese of Southern Virginia informed about the diaconate in our diocese.
- The archdeacon will appoint deacons as needed to assist in running these programs.
- The Archdeacon will maintain and update the Customaries as needed.



Deacons ready for Eucharist at Diocesan Council, 2009

CHAPTER 4: ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR DEACONS IN SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

Part I: A Customary For Deacons Assisting the Bishop in Worship

Mission Statement

Isaiah 6:8 I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me."

It is the goal of this ministry to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by assisting the bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia in his/her responsibilities when leading worship in the Diocese of Southern Virginia. We are called by God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to assisting the bishop in his role of being the hands and feet of Jesus bringing worship and fellowship to the faithful in their communities.

Introduction

This customary is designed for deacons' support of the bishop in his/her ministry in the Diocese of Southern Virginia. All deacons are expected to review the customary prior to assisting the bishop in worship. It is always possible that something unforeseen may come up and the deacon, in consultation with the bishop and/or the rector of the parish, will need to accommodate those situations as seems appropriate at the time.

Deacons will assist the bishop at pre-determined Diocesan events or when a parish has requested that a deacon accompany the bishop at the bishop's visitation.

Duties and Responsibilities- Assisting the Bishop in Worship

The deacon must be completely familiarized with the customary.

- When the archdeacon is contacted by the rector of a church requesting a deacon accompany the bishop on his/her visitation, the deacon assigned will contact the bishop's office via email to let them know they will be accompanying the bishop on his/her visit.
- The deacon will make arrangements with the rector to arrive 45 minutes to one hour prior to the worship service allowing time to become familiar with the worship space; as well as:
 - Familiarize themselves with the Sunday bulletin
 - Inquire where the deacon is to sit during worship;

- Inquire where the deacon is to place the bishop's Crosier and miter following the procession;
 - Inquire where the Gospel book is placed;
 - Inquire where the rector would like the Gospel to be proclaimed;
 - Request the rector's preference on how the deacon is to set the table
 - Check that the altar book is placed on the Bishop's left side, the ribbons are ordered from bottom to top, and that the page is open to the appropriate Eucharistic Prayer, for the proper preface, consecration prayer, and post communion prayer.
The deacon will check in with the bishop when the bishop arrives.
 - When called upon the deacon will assist the bishop in preparation for worship.
 - The deacon will make sure there is water available for the bishop during worship.
 - The deacon will process directly in front of the bishop unless someone else is acting as bishop's chaplain.
- During the worship service the deacon 's responsibilities may include:
 - Proclamation of the Gospel - The deacon will retrieve the Gospel book and proclaim the Gospel from the predetermined area.
 - Assisting the bishop during confirmation by bringing the bishop's crosier forward and standing on the bishop's right side holding the crosier during the confirmation. (At a baptism offer to hold his/her Prayer Book/bulletin.)
 - Deacon of the mass
 - The deacon of the mass stands to the left of the bishop during the Eucharistic prayer keeping track of where the bishop is reading at all times. If the bishop should lose his/her place the deacon is to discretely point to the appropriate place.
 - In the case of the Ordination of a Priest, the deacon shall make sure sufficient room is made for the new priest(s) to stand at the altar with the bishop.
 - If the bishop's crosier is outside the altar rail, the deacon is to bring it inside prior to the Post Communion Prayer.
 - The deacon will make certain the bishop receives his/her crosier immediately following the Post Communion Prayer.
 - During the worship service, the bishop should never need to be looking around for the crosier when it is needed. Be attentive at all times during the worship service noting anything the bishop may need.
 - The deacon will pronounce the Dismissal

Part II: The Role of the Deacon in the Diocese of Southern Virginia

Expectations for Deacons in the Diocese of Southern Virginia

- **The Bishop.** As deacons, we serve the Bishop. Our Bishop assigns us to our work sites, may move us at any time, and may, from time to time, ask us to serve in other ways in our Diocese. Our Bishop expects us to serve competently and confidently with him or her at liturgical events such as confirmations, ordinations and Diocesan Council liturgies.

Since we represent the Bishop's office, it is important to remember that our personal opinions/concerns/issues are superseded by those of our Bishop. We should never presume to speak for our Bishop.

- **Annual Letter to the Bishop.** Each deacon will provide the Bishop an annual written summary of their ministry in the world and in your parish. This summary is due by the first Sunday of Advent. A copy will also be given to the Archdeacon and your rector to serve as the basis for ongoing conversation.
- **Mutual Ministry Reviews.** A mutual ministry review should be conducted annually with your rector. Scheduling of this review will probably vary from parish to parish based on the parish's usual practices. If your parish does not conduct mutual ministry reviews, you should ask your rector to have some form of annual discussion about your ministry.
- **Annual Meeting with the Archdeacon.** Each deacon will have a conversation with the Archdeacon yearly to discuss all aspects of their ministries and their personal and spiritual health. This meeting will be scheduled by the Archdeacon. This annual conversation is not meant to take the place of sharing any concerns and issues they might have with the Archdeacon as they are unfolding.
- **Diocesan Council.** All deacons are expected to attend Diocesan Council, just as presbyters are. You must ask the Bishop to be excused. This is usually done through the bishop's secretary. Keep the Archdeacon informed on this matter.
- **Clergy Conferences and Clericus.** Clergy conference and clericus are both important ways to form relationships with your clergy colleagues. While attendance is expected by the Bishop, many deacons, unlike priests, have outside employment which may make your presence much more difficult. If you cannot attend clergy conference, let the Archdeacon know. If you cannot attend your convocation's clericus, please let the Dean of the convocation know what your situation is, especially if you will not be attending

regularly. It is important you stay on the dean's list of clergy since the Bishop routinely uses the deans to pass information on the clergy.

- **Diaconal Gatherings.** Attendance is encouraged at all diaconal gatherings. While it is understood that your employment or other personal needs may prevent your attendance, every effort should be made to be part of these community gatherings. If you cannot attend, you are expected to let the Archdeacon know. We usually gather at the Diocesan Council and occasionally during the year.
- **Continuing Education.** Once a year the diocese plans a continuing education event for deacons. This is a requirement of the canons and each deacon should be there if possible. If one is excused from attendance at this event then participating in at least one approved continuing education course that is directly related to diaconal ministry is expected. Course information and certification should be sent with your annual report to the Bishop.
- **Diocesan Committees and Commissions.** Deacons may be asked to serve on Diocesan committees and commissions. Certainly some appropriate ones might be Peace and Justice, Racism, Formation and Liturgy. Being well informed and articulate is an important part of your role as you may be asked to speak on behalf of the diaconal community.
- **Discretionary Funds.** Discretionary funds may be established in order to allow the clergy to meet situations that require charitable response in a timely manner. In all cases, the administration of all discretionary funds are overseen by the rector. Some parishes have a joint account used by all clergy. Some parishes establish a separate discretionary account for the deacon. If the latter is the case, "The Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs" lists the requirements for establishing, using and auditing such a fund. This manual is published by the Episcopal Church and can be found on its web site. The requirements of the manual must be met.
- **Retirement.** When a deacon is no longer able to engage in active ministry or no longer able or interested in participating in Diocesan activities it is time to retire. Additionally, The Canons of the Episcopal Church (Title III Canon 7 Section 7) require deacons to retire at age 72. However, this canon allows the Bishop, with the consent of the deacon, to assign a deacon for a period of twelve months, and this period may be renewed. When the time for retirement approaches, there should be conversation between the deacon, the deacon's rector, the Archdeacon, and the Bishop. This conversation should include a clear understanding of the deacon's continuing role in the diocese and in the parish at which they will be worshipping. Retired deacons, like all retired clergy, are invited to

participate as they can in diocesan and convocation activities and in all diaconal meetings and gatherings.

The Role of Deacons in a Parish

- **Liturgy.** In liturgy a deacon proclaims the Gospel, sets and waits the table, and dismisses the people. The deacon may also be called upon to lead the prayers of the people. In some exigent circumstances a deacon may be called upon to lead worship, but deacons should always try to enable the laity to lead, stay in the background and provide support where needed.
- **Liturgy Questions for Deacons and Priests to Discuss Upon the Arrival of a Deacon.** The liturgical traditions of a parish are often well established before your arrival. It is not for a deacon to try to convince a priest or a congregation that they are wrong or to change their practice to suit our preferences. If there are liturgical practices that are not in line with BCP rubrics they beg careful consideration and conversation between the rector and the deacon. It is always important to remember that the priest is the chief liturgical “officer” in any parish. Right or wrong the deacon must follow their direction. That said, lay people have often been used in diaconal roles out of necessity rather than as an intentional exclusion of deacons. These kinds of conversations are also important and should be approached with caution. Our role is to empower the laity for ministry which is going to be hard to do if they don’t trust you because you walked in and “stole” their roles in the liturgy. At the request of the rector or priest in charge, the deacon may lead the Creed, Prayers of the People and bid the Confession.
- **At the Table** In order for a deacon to be as unobtrusive as possible in their role it is extremely important for a deacon to have ongoing conversation with their rector about their roles at the table. Each Sunday may have its own challenges! How well the acolytes are trained, how well the lay readers are trained and how much practice these aforementioned folks have had all play a big role in how smoothly the liturgy flows. Technically, the deacon is to function as the Master of Ceremonies once the liturgy at the table has begun, so these things become your responsibility, but one must tread lightly! If a deacon must coach acolytes/lay chalcers during the liturgy, they must do it with kindness and compassion; a minimum of hand gestures and in a whisper. While serving at Eucharist a deacon may, at the request of the celebrant, serve the wine or bread (on special occasions)
 - **What to do at the rail if someone asks for a blessing:** It is extremely important that in the introduction of the deacon to the congregation that a bit of education is offered. We strongly suggest that you do this from a positive perspective, as in “what a deacon does” rather than our old joke about ABC’s. (No absolution,



blessing or consecration). Still, the deacon will need to say these things as most folks do not get the pastoral/liturgical differences between presbyters and deacons. So, be very cautious about what is done at the rail. A deacon may place a hand on someone's shoulder...never on the head! In whatever is said, do not use the word blessing. For example....a deacon could say "May the peace of our Lord Jesus be with you now and always", or "Know that you are a beloved child of God."

- **The Master of Ceremony** Sometimes a deacon is called upon to function as a Master of Ceremony. In some parishes this role may be assigned to a vergers or sub-deacon or the rector may prefer to serve in this capacity. That said, if they allow you serve in the role of MC, you must take it seriously and consistently work to insure things run smoothly without putting yourself in a position that makes you stand out too much. A deacon will need to establish a good working relationship with the head of lay readers, the acolyte leader and so forth, and always in a cooperative spirit rather than one who orders people around. It is also technically a deacon's job to train and schedule **Eucharistic Visitors**, but again, a lay person may already serve in the role, so you will need to work with them. If there is no ministry of this sort, it is certainly something you could pursue with the rector.

- **Preaching** It is important to talk with your rector about regular preaching opportunities for the deacon. Each deacon has differing gifts and preaching may not be what one deacon loves most about being a deacon. One may only have a few opportunities each year to reach folks and ignite their passion for ministry, so deacons will want to take this aspect of their ministry seriously. In our Diocese there is no "standard" for how often deacons preach. It can be as few as 4 times a year and as often as every other week. Ultimately the decision is up to the rector. What is important is that the deacon have a voice in the congregation. It is also important to recognize your own limitations. There is no shame in saying to the rector that preaching may not be the greatest offering one brings to a congregation. Deacons should be willing to preach 4-6 times a year or whatever the rector thinks would be most helpful. Deacons can sometimes say things to their congregations that priests cannot. Thus it is never a bad idea, especially if you are preaching one of those sermons where you must say some challenging things to your parish, to get your priests reaction and input. If you have doubts about what you are going to say, go over your sermon with your rector. Once you have a good working relationship, it is likely your priest will not ask this of you. If a deacon enjoys preaching and is interested in congregational feedback they might consider a review group that



would meet with them and give feedback.

- **Ministry in the Parish.** In ministry the role of deacon can be quite varied. Primarily we see deacons in the area of outreach, Eucharistic visiting, liturgical training of acolytes, Eucharistic ministers, readers and Eucharistic visitors. In some parishes where the deacon has some expertise and training, deacons do baptism preparation and, catechesis. All of these are appropriate ministries for a deacon who has some experience, some training and a passion for teaching. All are not appropriate for all deacons. Deacons are often called upon to speak about their ministry, to offer prayers/ thanksgivings before meals at church functions and so forth.

Deacons' Conference Workday, 2013



APPENDIX 1: USES OF DIAKONIA WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT¹⁴

I. Heaven's Spokesmen

- i. Mediating the word
1 Thess. 3:2
1 Cor. 3:5
2 Cor. 3:3; 3:6; 3:7; 3:8; 3:9; 5:18; 6:3; 6:4;
11:15; 11:23
Eph. 3:7; 4:12
Col. 1:7; 1:23; 1:25
1 Tim. 4:6
1 Pet. 1:12
Acts 6:4; 21:19
- ii. Mandated for the word
Rom. 11:13
1 Tim. 1:12
2 Tim. 4:5
Acts 1:17; 1:25; 20:24

II. On the Mission for the Word

- i. Paul
2 Cor. 11:18
- ii. Collaborators
Philem. 13
Eph. 6:21
Col. 4:7
2 Tim. 4:11
Acts 19:22

III. Emissaries of Heaven

Heb. 1:14

IV. Emissaries of the Church

- i. Paul
2 Cor. 8:4; 8:19; 8:20; 9:1; 9:12; 9:13
Rom. 15:25; 15:31
Acts 11:29; 12:25
- ii. Stephen and Phoebe
1 Cor. 16:15
Rom. 16:1

V. Agents of the Other World

- i. The Roman Empire
Rom. 13:14
- ii. Christ
Gal. 2:17
Rom. 15:8

VI. Commissions in the Church

- i. As charisma
1 Cor. 12:5
1 Pet. 4:10
- ii. Of churchmen
Col. 4:17
2 Tim. 1:18
Heb. 6:10
1 Pet. 4:11
Rev. 2:19
Acts 6:1, 6:2
- iii. Deacons
Phil. 1:1
1 Tim. 3:8; 3:10; 3:12; 3:13

VII. The Gospels

i. Gospel Narrative

Mark 1:13 Par; 1:31 par; 15:41 par

Luke 10:40

John 2:5; 2:9; 12:2

ii. Parables

Matt. 22:13, 25:44

Luke 12:37; 17:8

iii. Maxims

Mark 9:35; 10:43 par

Matt. 23:11

John 12:26

iv. Luke's supper

Luke 22:27

v. The mission of the Son of Man

Mark 10:45 par

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE LETTERS OF AGREEMENT

Letter of Agreement between the Right Reverend _____, The Rev. _____, Deacon, the Rev. _____, Rector, _____ Episcopal Church, City, VA, and _____, Senior Warden.

It is agreed that the ministry of the Rev. _____, are guided by the “Customary for Deacons in the Diocese of Southern Virginia” including any changes made to said document after the date of this Letter of Agreement. It is important to realize that the main pastoral roles of the deacon are servant, companion, connector, messenger and prophet. The deacon’s ministry is at the point where the Church and the world intersect, a special bridge between the world outside and the people within the Church. The deacon teaches by preaching, but is called to lead by example. They identify needs in the world and offer them to the laity. If a response arrives, the deacon enables others who have gifts for ministry in the identified area to begin to address the needs. At ordination a deacon is given authority to proclaim God’s word and ‘assist in the ministration of His holy sacraments.’ Most of the deacon’s acts during the Eucharist demonstrate servant hood, especially that of proclaiming the Gospel, preparing the table and serving the sacraments. It is appropriate, therefore, to expect the deacon’s ministry in any parish to focus on servant hood in the parish and in calling the parish to be aware of the needs of people in the community. The deacon has a unique role to remind God’s people of the Baptismal Covenant’s call to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” [BCP, p. 305] The focus on community social needs should be considered to be a normative role of the Deacon.

A. DIACONAL MINISTRY IN THE COMMUNITY.

The Rev. _____ shall serve in the community beyond the bounds of _____ Episcopal Church by participation in the following ministries:

These entries are examples only

- *Development, direction, and participation in the training of Eucharistic visitors for the parishes of the diocese. This program is designed to offer training to parishes in the parish setting rather than being limited to diocesan training events held occasionally. The Deacon will design, implement, and provide training and annual follow up for parish Eucharistic visitors under the direction of the Bishop. When called to do so the Deacon will provide training for other parishes as designated by the Bishop and will be reimbursed for gas by the Diocese.*
- *The Deacon will spend three days each week as the Chaplain for The Crossings at Bon Air. The Deacon will also provide any additional care required by the facility such as hospital visits, nursing home visits, special worship services and ministry projects for the residents.*
- *The Deacon will continue to provide Manna Bags for the street people of Richmond and the surrounding community encouraging the Faithful of St. Michael's to participate in this ministry.*
- *The Deacon will continue with her Street Ministry, taking worship to the street people and homeless of the Diocese in her Convocation every Sunday afternoon. She will request the assistance of the Presbyters of her Convocation to assist in worship, providing Eucharist for the Community.*
- *The Deacon will assist the Bishop when called upon and participate in various Commissions/Committees of the Diocese.*

B. DIACONAL MINISTRIES IN THE CONGREGATION.

The Rev _____ is assigned by the Bishop to serve _____ Episcopal Church, City, Virginia, in diaconal ministry of the parish with the agreement of the Rector and concurrence of the Vestry of the parish. His/Her diaconal ministries in the parish will be under the direct supervision of the Rector, The Rev. _____, and includes the following areas of responsibilities.

1. ***Diaconal ministry in the Liturgy.*** The Deacon will serve in the Liturgy on Sundays and other feast days and occasional services with agreement with the Rector. When serving in the Liturgy, the Deacon will carry out the diaconal functions in the Book of Common Prayer.
2. ***Diaconal Ministry within the congregation.*** The Deacon will assist as liaison between the parish and the world, assisting the Rector in encouraging the congregation to respond in material and spiritual manners to the needs of the world. The Deacon's responsibilities in this ministry include the following:

These Entries are Examples Only

- Meeting quarterly with the vestry to share a short report on the social, material, and spiritual needs in the immediate community surrounding the parish. Specific actions to meet such needs will be recommended to the vestry for their action.
- Assist with the parish outreach ministries by committee.
- Preach at Sunday worship services no less than once every month.
- Work with the Rector and liturgy committee in creative worship.
- Assist the Rector with Pastoral Care.
- Supervise the work of the Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors.

3. Accountability, Supervision, and Time Commitment.

- a. The Rector, designated by the Bishop, will be responsible for supervision of the Deacon's ministry in _____ congregation. The Deacon will meet with the Rector weekly and attend parish staff meetings.
- b. The Rector and the Deacon will conduct a yearly Mutual Ministry Review.
- c. The total amount of time allotted by the Deacon to the diaconal ministry in the parish shall not exceed (15) hours per week, averaged over a monthly period.

4. Support for the Diaconal candidate.

- a. _____ will reimburse the Deacon at the current IRS rate, for any travel expenses incurred by the Deacon based upon a travel voucher submitted at the end of each month to the Treasurer.
- b. _____ shall establish a Diaconal Discretionary Fund for the use of the Deacon for expenses pertaining to diaconal ministry. This fund will be audited at the end of the year along with the regular audit of the parish financial records.
- c. _____ will provide financial support for the Deacon to attend Annual Council and spring and fall Clergy Days. This includes the costs of room and meal expenses.
- d. _____ will provide space for the storage of the Deacon's vestments.
- e. _____ will provide necessary office resources, including payment/reimbursement for all office supplies and/or office support for ministries outlined in this Letter of Agreement.
- f. The Deacon agrees to participate in the Diaconal Formation program should a diaconal aspirant be assigned to _____ Church.
- g. _____ Church will provide reimbursement for annual Continuing Education expenses for the Deacon, not to exceed the Diocesan rate per year.

- h. The deacon will be allotted not less than four weeks nor more than eight weeks' vacation each year unless otherwise decided between deacon and rector.

C. TERMS OF AGREEMENT.

This Letter of Agreement is in force when accepted by all signers of the agreement. This agreement may be terminated at any time by Bishop Hollerith following consultation with the Rector; by the Deacon with the advice and consent of Bishop Hollerith; and by mutual agreement of all signers, provided that in all cases written notification is provided to all parties involved. This agreement automatically expires the date the Rector leaves the Parish. However, a new agreement may be executed by Bishop Hollerith and the Deacon for a limited period of time to be stated in the new agreement. A new Letter of Agreement may be negotiated when a new Rector is called after consultation between the Bishop, the Deacon and the new Rector.

_____	_____
<i>Deacon</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____
<i>Rector/Priest in Charge</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____
<i>Senior Warden</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____
<i>Rt. Rev. _____, Bishop</i>	<i>Date</i>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ John N. Collins; *Diakonia Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*; Oxford University Press, 1990; New York, New York, p.338-339
- ² John N. Collins; op. cit.
- ³ John N. Collins; op. cit.; p. vii
- ⁴ Ormonde Plater; *Many Servants An Introduction to Deacons*, revised Edition; Cowley Publications; Cambridge, Massachusetts
- ⁵ Ormonde Plater; op. cit.; p. xiii
- ⁶ NRSV Mark 10:41-45
- ⁷ NRSV Matthew 25:44
- ⁸ The Rt. Rev. Herman Hollerith IV. From a sermon June 7, 2015 at Bruton Parish Church
- ⁹ NRSV Acts 2:42
- ¹⁰ NRSV Acts 6:1-5
- ¹¹ Ormonde Plater;; Op. cit.; p. 31-44
- ¹² The Rt. Rev Michael B. Curry. From “Hearing a Deacon’s Call” a video produced by the School of Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina January 2012
- ¹³ Book of Common Prayer; The Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, NY.; p. 855
- ¹⁴ John N. Collins; op. cit.; p 338-339