

DEACON RETIREMENT in the Diocese of Maryland

The Episcopal Church - Canon III.7.7

On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months, and this term may be renewed.

The Diocese of Maryland encourages continuing engagement of deacons in the diocese, to the extent of their availability, desire, and capacity, in accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, and by assignment of the Bishop.

- Deacons, like all Episcopal clergy, retire at age 72 in accordance with the Canons. After age 72, the deacon is canonically retired, but may be licensed year-to-year.
- Deacons normally leave their current parish assignment on or near their 72nd birthday.
- A post-retirement appointment as Deacon Associate to a congregation is at the discretion of the Bishop in consultation with the deacon (and the priest), for a term not to exceed 12 months, and may be renewed.
- The responsibilities of the Deacon Associate and the congregation are defined by mutual agreement of the priest and deacon.
- This deacon must keep current on required trainings.
- Post-retirement deacons are invited but not required to attend previously mandatory events (convention, clergy conference and clergy renewal of vows).
- Post-retirement deacons continue to receive all notices of deacon activities.

Process:

- Around their 71st birthday, archdeacon contacts the deacon to assure they are discerning possibilities for future engagement as a deacon, they are planning for their exit from their current congregation, and they are aware of resources available to retired clergy in the diocese. Archdeacon will offer resources for use during their discernment, including a retired deacon-mentor.
- About 9 months before their 72nd birthday the deacon discusses with the archdeacon their proposed future engagement as a deacon.
- About 6 months before their 72nd birthday, the deacon meets with the Bishop and the archdeacon to agree on a plan. This plan will be documented in a written agreement to

include exit date from current congregation and details for future engagement. This agreement will be effective for no more than 12 months and is renewable.

- Deacons may request renewal or change of their assignments annually.

Discernment Considerations:

- Where/how do I still want to remain active, and to what extent?
 - Parish ministry? Liturgy? Preaching? Teaching?
 - Ministry in the world?
 - Diocesan assignments/committees?
 - Deacon Formation Program?
- What involvement do I want to be optional?
- Is my capacity diminishing? Do I want/need fewer responsibilities?
- What does my current parish need as I depart? Timing, leadership succession, etc.
- Where will I worship? Who will be my spiritual community?
- Self care

Resources for Deacons at Retirement:

Appendix A Liturgy at the Conclusion of a Deacon's Service

Appendix B Self-Care from Spiritual Directors International

Appendix C Fund for the Diaconate

Appendix D Associations, Organizations, and Other Resources

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Revised 11-8-17

RESOURCES for Deacons at Retirement

Appendix A Liturgy at the Conclusion of a Deacon's Service – Diocese of Maryland

After the post communion prayer the deacon, altar party, and wardens move to the front of the congregation. The congregation is seated.

Deacon

Deacons are placed in various ministries for a period of time to serve the needs of the Diocese under the bishop. In [Date Assignment Began] I was assigned by [Bishop Name] to [Parish Name], in the Diocese of Maryland. With God's help and to the best of my abilities, I have exercised my diaconal responsibilities and privileges here as you have entrusted them to me. After much prayer and careful consideration [Bishop Name] has discerned that it is time for me to serve in another ministry setting; therefore my service as deacon among you ends this day, [Date].

Presider

Do you the people of [Parish Name] recognize and accept the conclusion of this ministry relationship? **We do.**

Deacon present the warden(s) a letter of resignation, the Gospel book, the keys to the parish, and any other symbols of ministry that have been given.

I present to you this letter of resignation signifying the end of this ministry relationship.

Warden I receive your letter.

I present to you this Gospel book that represents one of my primary roles as the deacon – to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and call the people forth to do his work.

Warden I receive this Gospel book.

I present to you the keys of this parish that were given to me in trust that the doors would remain open to all people.

Warden I receive these keys.

Prayer of Leaving

The congregation stands (as able).

Deacon

Lord, we have been bound together for a time as deacon and people to work for the advancement of your kingdom in this place. We give you humble and hearty thanks for the ministry which we have shared these years now past.

People: **Be with those who leave and with those who stay.**

We thank you for your never-failing presence with us through these past years and for the deeper knowledge of you and of each other which we have attained.

People: **Be with those who leave and with those who stay.**

We thank you for those who have been joined to Christ's family through Baptism. We thank you for opening our hearts and minds again and again to your Word and for feeding us abundantly with the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of your Son.

People: **Be with those who leave and with those who stay.**

Concluding Collect

Rector (or priest-in-charge)

O God, our loving Creator, whose glory fills the whole world, and whose presence we find wherever we go, preserve and guide [Deacon Name] who is leaving this community. Surround *her* with your loving care; preserve *her* from every danger; and bring *her* safely to the journey's end. We give thanks for *her* time with us and for all the ways *she* has supported this community. Bless *her* steps in this time of transition and remind *her* again and again of your presence and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Rector (or priest-in-charge)

Please express your appreciation for [Deacon Name] and *her* ministry with your applause.

Blessing

The presider offers a blessing and the people respond. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Departing deacon offers the dismissal after the concluding hymn.

Appendix B Self-Care from Spiritual Directors International

In troublesome situations like those we are experiencing today, we would be well-served to observe these three R's of compassionate care for spiritual guides:

Regulate:

Regulate your input and the amount of media-dispersed information you consume. Manage the time you spend in discussion with others about heated issues. Be responsible for your thoughts and feelings by caring tenderly for them. Give yourself the time and space you need to address them with calm and clarity—alone.

Rest

Rest in the silence. Rest your attention in your body, in your breath. Partake of beauty. Listen to birdsong. It's alright to feel weary considering what is being asked of you right now. Give yourself permission to let go of what feels heaviest, if even for a short time. Extend your sleep time to allow your body to repair any damage caused by stress. Take naps as you need them. Rest is sacred.

Recommit:

Recommit to your spiritual practices. Our spiritual practices root us in the truth, the Ground of our Being, that which we value most. When we bring ourselves to the mat or the pew or the river's edge, we reaffirm that our personal connection to Self and Spirit matter. Engaging in our chosen practice can bring much needed refreshment—body, mind, heart and soul. Amp up your meditation and prayer time. Desperate times call for deeper measures.

There is another "R" that speaks to my heart in difficult times and it is this:

Remember to bring yourself into the circle of care. However it is that you pray, meditate or bless, when offering phrases of goodwill to others, include yourself. "May you be free of pain and suffering" is my Metta prayer for others. "May I hold myself in compassion" is my prayer for myself. If you meditate visually, send whooshes of loving-kindness to wash over families, communities, and groups around the globe who are struggling, and imagine yourself right there with them, receiving this goodwill and care.

These are burdensome times in our human history, and you, just like anyone else who is bearing witness to heartbreak, deserves loving-kindness. May we continue to hold space for peace and reconciliation to blossom and grow, beginning with ourselves.

Lundy, J. L., (21 August 2017). Excerpted from "Compassion Fatigue? - Bring Yourself into the Circle of Care". Spiritual Directors International. Retrieved from <http://www.sdiworld.org/blog/compassion-fatigue-bring-yourself-circle-care>.

Appendix C Fund for the Diaconate

The Fund performs a vital service for our Church by assisting deacons – working, retired or disabled – who have insufficient funds for their needs. The Fund is administered by its board of directors, with the assistance of a Fund Accountant and a Grants Coordinator. Funds are usually distributed by periodic allowances based on individual needs. Special grants can be made to cover emergencies, such as illness, dental care, disaster relief or other special needs.

The Officers and Directors of the Corporation consist of nine deacons, elected by the deacons of The Episcopal Church for three years terms. The officers, chosen from among the board members, are president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. They are elected for one year terms at the Annual Meeting of the Corporation in October, and take office when elected.

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation is held on the second Tuesday in October, in New York City. Members of the Corporation entitled to vote are all ordained deacons in The Episcopal Church, who are not further ordained as priest or bishop. The board also holds its semi-annual board meeting at that same time. The other semi-annual board meeting is held on the second Tuesday in May, also in New York City, and includes a half day strategic plan review.

In 2011, for the first time in recent history, a deacon was elected as president of The Fund. The spring 2014 meeting of the Board of Directors began a planning process to explore how the Fund might broaden how it assists deacons.

Reports from the Board are published semi-annually in *Diakoneo*, the magazine of the Association for Episcopal Deacons, and at the AED's Triennial conferences.

About The Fund for the Diaconate of the Episcopal Church. Retrieved from <http://www.fundfordiaconate.org/about.html>

Appendix D Associations, Organizations, and Other Resources

Association for Episcopal Deacons

P.O. Box 1516

Westborough, MA 01581-6516

Phone: (508) 873-1881

<http://www.episcopaldeacons.org>

Listening Hearts Ministry

3000 Chestnut Ave, Suite 100B

Baltimore, MD 21211-2759

Phone: 410-366-1851 Fax: 410-243-7062

listening@listeninghearts.org

<http://listeninghearts.org/resources/open-hearts/spiritual-primer/>

Maryland Episcopal Clergy Association (MECA) (Active and Retired Deacons and Priests)

[MarylandEpiscopalClergy@groups.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandEpiscopalClergy/)

Retired Clergy Gatherings and

The Annual Luncheon for Retired Clergy and Their Spouses - Hosted by the Bishop

Contact the Rev. William Dunning, Chaplain to Retired Clergy

dunn36@verizon.net

Appendix E Suggested Readings on Topics Related to Retirement

Chittister, Joan. *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*. Katonah, New York: BlueBridge, 2008.

Chondron, Pema. *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001.

Craddock, William S., Jr. *All Shall Be Well: An Approach to Wellness*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2009.

Craddock, William S., Jr. *Restreaming: Thriving in the Currents of Retirement*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2017.

Crafton, Barbara Cawthorne, *The Courage to Grow Old*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2014.

_____. *Some Things You Just Have to Live With: Meanings on Middle Age*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2007.

Hollis, James. *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life: How to Finally Really Grow Up*. New York: Gotham Books, 2006.

Houston, James M. and Michael Parker. *A Vision for the Aging Church: Renewing Ministry for and by Seniors*. Downers Grove, IL: ILVP Academic, 2011

Judy, Dwight H. *Discerning Life Transitions: Listening Together in Spiritual Direction*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2010.

Krushchwitz, Robert, ed. *Aging: Christian Reflection*. Waco, TX: The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2003.

Nelson, John and Richard Boles. *What Color Is Your Parachute for Retirement*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2010.

Palmer, Parker. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Richmond, Lewis. *Aging as a Spiritual Practice: A Contemplative Guide to Growing Older and Wiser*. New York: Gotham Books, 2012.

Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Stevens, R. Paul. *Aging Matters: Finding Your Calling for the Rest of Your Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.

Thibault, Jane M. and Richard L. Morgan. *Pilgrimage into the last Third of Life: Seven Gateways for Spiritual Growth*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2012.

Thomas, Bill. *Second Wind: Navigating the Passage to a Slower, Deeper, and More Connected Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

Appendix F Suggested TED Talks

Benartzi, S. (2011, November). Shlomo Benartzi: Saving for tomorrow [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/shlomo_benartzi_saving_more_tomorrow
[Tips are shared about saving for retirement.]

Buettner, D. (2009, September). Dan Buettner: How to live to be 100 [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_buettner_how_to_live_to_be_100 How to Live to Be 100+
[The author collaborated with the National Geographic and the National Institute on Aging to study Blue Zones, or communities whose elders live to record-setting ages in good health.]

Carstensen, L. (2011, December). Laura Carstensen: Older people are happier [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_carstensen_older_people_are_happier
[Research is presented showing that even with an ever-increasing lifespan, people can and do get happier as they age.]

Fonda, J. (2011, December). Jane Fonda: Life's third act. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_fonda_life_s_third_act
[Jane Fonda presents tips for aging well.]

Jobs, S. (2005, June). Steve Jobs: How to live before you die. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/steve_jobs_how_to_live_before_you_die
[Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple and Pixar, delivers a Stanford commencement speech that encourages hopefulness even when faced with setbacks.]

Pausch, R. (2007, September). Randy Pausch: Really achieving your childhood dreams [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/randy_pausch_really_achieving_your_childhood_dreams
[Carnegie Mellon professor Randy Pausch delivers a moving last lecture while facing terminal illness.]

Ricard, M. (2004, February). Matthieu Ricard: The habits of happiness [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_on_the_habits_of_happiness
[A French Biologist and Buddhist monk shares his thoughts on achieving deep serenity and fulfillment through developing positive habits of mind.]

Waldinger, R. (2015, November). Robert Waldinger: What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness

[The author, director of a 75-year Harvard study on adult development studying various aspects of the lives of 724 men, half from Harvard and the other half from low income neighborhoods in Boston, shares the results of the research.]

Wallach, A. (2016, October). Ari Wallach: 3 ways to plan for the (very) long term [Video file]. Retrieved from

https://www.ted.com/talks/ari_wallach_3_ways_to_plan_for_the_very_long_term.html

[Tips are shared regarding planning for the future.]

Zimbardo, P. (2009, February). Philip Zimbardo: The psychology of time. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_prescribes_a_healthy_take_on_time

[This is an examination of the relationship between seniors' outlooks on time and quality of life.]