

Deacon Letter of Agreement – Sample Diocese of Rhode Island, 2015

This is a template to be adapted by each congregation and submitted to the bishop.

The Rev. _____, (the Priest-in-charge) and the Vestry (Bishop’s Committee) in _____ Church in _____, RI acknowledge the appointment of the Rev. Deacon _____ to serve in said Church according to the following conditions:

Liturgy and Ministry

- The Deacon will strive to encourage lay people to engage in works of service to people in need.
- It is expected that the Deacon have a special ministry of service outside of their congregation responsibilities. Such involvement and experience can be rightly shared with the congregation and throughout the diocese.
- Normally the Deacon shall read the Gospel, may lead or participate in the prayers of the People, prepare the Holy Table, assist with the administration of Holy Communion, and give the dismissal. The Priest-in-charge may invite the Deacon to preach occasionally in accordance with the policies of the Deacons’ Handbook.
- The Deacon will strive to bring the needs, concerns, and hopes of the outside community to the congregation’s attention.
- The Deacon’s ministry in said Church shall conform to the policies set forth in the current edition of the Deacons’ Handbook and by the Bishop of Rhode Island.
- The Deacon will (will not) have responsibility for pastoral care including (visitation of the sick and homebound) (oversight of Eucharistic Visitors) (other). If this responsibility is included in this letter of agreement, the Deacon should report the number of hours for this ministry on a quarterly basis in accordance with the appropriate form located in the Deacons’ Handbook.
- The Deacon will not normally “hear confessions” but may lead the *Reconciliation of a Penitent* using the same form as laity. The Deacon will not officiate at a baptism but may baptize in an emergency or at the request of the Priest-in-charge, for a special reason. The Deacon may not preside at weddings or at a blessing of a civil marriage or a same-sex blessing. They may, at the request of the Priest-in-charge, participate in liturgical leadership, including preaching, at these services. Deacons may, at the request of the Priest-in-charge, officiate at a funeral outside the church. Any of these liturgical activities that are not associated with the congregation must be approved by the Bishop.
- It is appropriate for the Deacon to lead Morning or Evening Prayer, Compline or other offices of the church. This includes doing so at the main service(s) on Sundays if requested to do so by the Priest-in-charge or, in the absence of the same, by the Senior Warden. It is appropriate for a Deacon to lead the *Ministration to the Sick* or the *Ministration at the Time of Death*. This is especially relevant if the Deacon has pastoral care responsibilities.
- The Priest-in-charge shall have final authority in liturgical and pastoral policies that do not have rubrics associated with them.
- The Deacon will serve a maximum of ___ hours per week under the supervision of the Priest-in-charge. This will include assisting at (all) (the X o’clock) Sunday service(s) plus services at Christmas, Ash Wednesday and the Pascal Triduum.

Administrative Matters and Congregation Life

- The Deacon shall have a vacation of four weeks annually. Vacation time shall be scheduled in consultation with the Priest-in-charge.

- The Deacon shall have time and funds available for continuing education as developed by the Bishop's office or, if there is no diocesan program, as agreed to with the Bishop and Priest-in-charge.
- The Archdeacon and/or the bishop's staff may consult from time to time with the Deacon and/or the Priest-in-charge regarding life and ministry in the Church.
- Deacons shall report annually to the Bishop or the Bishop's designee on their life and work.
- Should the Priest-in-charge leave her/his position, this agreement shall end. The Bishop may then appoint the Deacon to serve on a temporary assignment during the interim.
- The Deacon is appointed for a period of _____ beginning _____. This appointment may be renewed. However, the Bishop may end the assignment at any time.
- For special circumstances, other leave may be arranged. Such leave shall be authorized by the Bishop on recommendation of the Archdeacon and after consultation with the Deacon and the Priest-in-charge.
- The Priest-in-charge and Deacon shall meet from time to time to consult about ministry and reflect on their working relationship. At least once a year, the Priest-in-charge and the Deacon shall reflect on this Letter of Agreement. The Archdeacon is always available for consultation. A deacon is responsible to the Bishop and Priest in charge. Their work is not reviewed or evaluated by vestry or Bishop's committee.

Financial Considerations

- The Deacon shall be reimbursed by the congregation for mileage spent in ministry upon submission of a statement from the Deacon to the Priest-in-charge, using the current IRS approved mileage rate. This should include all congregation related ministry other than regularly scheduled worship services.
- The Deacon shall be reimbursed by the congregation for ministry expenses (up to \$_____ per year) upon submission of a statement. This includes such things as the expenses of attending Diocesan Convention and/or other diocesan events as appropriate, program materials or pastoral care supplies used in the exercise of ministry, etc.
- The Deacon shall receive a continuing education allowance of up to \$350 upon submission of receipts to the Priest-in-charge.

Date: _____

**Type Name Here,
 Priest-in-charge**

**The Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely
 Bishop of Rhode Island**

**Type Name Here,
 Senior Warden
 Rev. 7/2014**

**Type Name Here,
 Deacon**