



Guidelines
for
the Sacred Order of Deacons
in the
Episcopal Diocese of Kansas



I. Intent of These Guidelines

These guidelines are set forth to articulate a normative understanding of diaconal ministry (i.e., its form and function) in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas. These norms pertain to those called to serve the Church as Deacons, and not those serving as “transitional Deacons” who are preparing for ordination to the Presbyterate.

II. The Nature of the Diaconate

The understanding of diaconal ministry set forth herein is grounded in three primary sources: the Holy Scriptures, *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979; hereafter “BCP”), and the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church. Each of these sources bears witness to diaconal ministry as being characterized chiefly by service, both in the Church and in the world. As servant ministers, Deacons (and those who aspire to ordination to the Diaconate) should exemplify in their lives a spirit of service to others, including a dedication to helping others enter into the ministry of Christian service. Ordination to the diaconate is not the way we recognize or validate existing ministries; it is rather a means of forming ministers of the Gospel whose call it is to model the servant ministry of Christ to all the baptized. Deacons are not ordained to do outreach ministry on behalf of the Church, but to be an icon of prophetic servant ministry and to lead all members of the Church into servant ministry in the world. Deacons also help interpret the needs and concerns of the world to the Church. Deacons will be ministers who have a visible ministry to the dispossessed, are willing to undertake prophetic ministry, and will strengthen the servant ministry of the Church in the Diocese. As is the case with all ordained ministers serving in the Episcopal Church, Deacons are required to resign from active service upon reaching 72 years of age; annual reappointment by the Bishop may occur on a case-by-case basis.

III. The Relationship of the Deacon to the Bishop

Deacons are appointed to their respective ministries by the Bishop (see Canon III.7.iv). The Bishop may designate a Deacon to serve as a parochial Deacon, a diocesan Deacon, or an Archdeacon; it is expected that every Deacon will at all times strive to exercise the ministries and responsibilities particular to their order (see section two, above). All Deacons are expected to enter into written agreements that detail the parameters of their specific service and ministry (see the Sample Letter and Ministry Agreement, Appendix A). Parochial Deacons are charged with serving a particular parish or mission; within that context, they work collaboratively with the other clergy serving that parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. Diocesan Deacons are charged with actualizing and developing Diocesan ministries and initiatives under the guidance and direction of the Bishop or other designated authority (e.g., Canon to the Ordinary, etc.). The Bishop may also, at his or her pleasure, appoint two diocesan Archdeacons, one to serve the two Convocations of the eastern half of the Diocese and one to serve the two Convocations of the western half of the Diocese. Archdeacons will provide oversight and pastoral care for Deacons, provide support and counsel to the Bishop, and assist the Bishop liturgically as needed as requested by the Bishop. Archdeacons will also perform annual ministry reviews of all active Deacons and report annually to the Bishop on the state of the diaconate within the Diocese. While Deacons are always subject to reassignment to further the work of the Church, under no circumstances shall a Deacon resign or vacate an assignment without the prior approval of the Bishop. Deacons may serve as chaplains in prisons, hospitals, hospices, schools, and other institutions, provided they are trained and credentialed to do so.

IV. The Relationship of the Deacon to the Parish

Parochial Deacons serve in a particular parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. Under canon law, a parochial Deacon is considered an “Assistant Minister” and, as such, must offer his or her resignation to the Bishop should the clergy charged with oversight of the parish resign the cure. The Deacon may be reappointed by the Bishop to serve during the interim under the direction of the Bishop and the Senior Warden. When a new Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge is called, the Deacon may be reassigned to the parish or mission by the Bishop. Upon reassignment, the Deacon is encouraged to enter into a new written agreement with the parish or mission and the Bishop. All Deacons assigned to a parish shall enter into a Ministry Agreement (see Appendix A) with the parish and the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. This covenant must be approved by the Archdeacons and the Bishop and will provide the structure for an annual ministry review by the Archdeacons. Ordinarily, every covenant will include provision for the following:

- annually, four weeks of vacation;
- annually, two weeks for continuing education and diaconal formation;
- as needed, any days needed for sickness or other debilitation;
- as needed, any time necessary to develop and maintain self-support outside the Church, with adequate advance notice;
- a three-month sabbatical leave every 5 to 7 years, contingent on the Bishop’s approval.

The Deacon’s primary ministry within the context of a parish should be structured in a manner consistent with the understanding of diaconal ministry set forth above (see section two).

It is appropriate (though not necessary) for parishes to have a committee to work closely with the Deacon on outreach ministries. It is also appropriate (though not necessary) for the Deacon to be

the almoner for the parish and to have a discretionary fund with which to render assistance to those in need.

Disagreements between clergy open the possibility for scandal and division within the Body of Christ. In the event of irreconcilable differences between a Deacon and other clergy with whom the Deacon serves, conflicts should be quickly and discretely brought to the attention of the Archdeacons and the Bishop. Likewise, if problems arise that affect the welfare and unity of the parish, the Deacon shall bring them to the clergy charged with oversight of the parish and shall follow their advice and counsel.

V. The Ordination of Deacons

Ordinarily, there should be one ordination of candidates to the diaconate per year, which will take place at Grace Cathedral under the direction of the Bishop. All Deacons are expected to attend all ordinations within the Diocese unless they receive a written excuse from the Bishop. All Deacons are given the opportunity to renew their ordination vows at the annual Chrism Mass during Holy Week, and are expected to participate in this liturgy. It is appropriate that a service be held to mark the beginning of a newly-ordained Deacon's ministry in the context where the Deacon has been assigned.

VI. Conferences and Continuing Education

A Deacons' retreat with the Bishop will be held annually and will be scheduled at least one year in advance of the event. The Bishop views this time with the community of Deacons as crucial to their mutual ministry, and every effort should be made by the Deacons to prioritize this event. Appropriate continuing education should be pursued by Deacons annually. Parishes with

Deacons should provide funds for the annual Deacons' Retreat as well as for other continuing education programs, as Deacons are expected to place a high priority on continuing education and formation. Deacons should submit an annual report of continuing education to the diocesan office. Transitional Deacons will not be invited to the Deacons' Retreat and will be expected to attend the annual Gathering of Presbyters.

VII. The Deacon Speaking to the Church

Because the Deacon functions as a symbol of servant ministry and brings the concerns and needs of the world to the attention of the institutional church, the Deacon is expected to have a voice in all decision-making bodies in the Diocese. Deacons may be appointed by the Bishop to diocesan institutions, commissions, committees and task forces.

VIII. The Deacon in the Liturgy

Liturgical service is not the primary ministry of the Deacon; Deacons function in liturgical celebrations in a manner primarily intended to express symbolically the aspects of their ministry as outlined above (see section two). Deacons thus adopt a role in liturgical celebrations appropriate to their order, taking their place along with the laity, the Presbyter(s), and the Bishop (when present). All diocesan liturgical celebrations will employ the services of Deacons, who will function in such liturgies in a capacity appropriate to their order. Parochial Deacons serve in the worship of the community under the guidance and direction of the Presbyter charged with oversight of the parish. The liturgical role of the Deacon may include the following:

1. The Deacon should emphasize the place of the Gospel in the liturgy. To that end the Deacon will normatively carry the Gospel book in procession and cense the book (if that is the custom of the parish.)

2. The Deacon may, at the discretion of the presbyter charged with oversight of the parish, preach regularly, but not necessarily frequently. Since the Deacon is an icon of prophetic ministry and exercises a prophetic voice in the Church, it is appropriate for sermons by Deacons to emphasize servant ministry.
3. The Deacon is to bring the needs of the world to the Church; to that end, the Deacon may, at the discretion of the Celebrant, lead the Prayers of the People and issue the invitation to the Confession of Sin. During the Prayers, the people should be encouraged to add their own intercessions, thanksgivings, and petitions.
4. As the Deacon is the symbol of servanthood, it is appropriate for the Deacon to prepare the Holy Table and receive the alms and oblations. When it is the custom of the parish, the Deacon may, at the discretion of the Celebrant, cense the ministers and the people; this task, however, is normally reserved for a designated Thurifer.
5. At the discretion of the Celebrant, the Deacon may stand to the Celebrant's right during the Great Thanksgiving, and may assist by pointing to the missal as requested by the Celebrant.
6. The Celebrant may hand the chalice to the Deacon to raise at the concluding doxology.
7. At the discretion of the Celebrant, the Deacon may, along with the Eucharistic Ministers of the parish, assist in the distribution of the consecrated elements (both the bread and the wine). Deacons should refrain from offering a blessing to those who come forward not intending to receive the consecrated elements; the ministry of blessing is part of the ministry of the presbyterate.
8. The Deacon may give the appropriate dismissal for the liturgical event or season; the use of the two-fold "alleluia" is appropriate only during Eastertide.
9. The Deacon may carry the Pascal candle in procession at the Easter Vigil, as well as during baptisms and burials.
10. The Deacon may lead the prayers for the Candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, and Reception at services of Christian Initiation.
11. The Deacon may say (or sing) the *Lumen Christi* and the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil.
12. It is appropriate (but not necessary) for Deacons to be significantly involved in the recruitment, training, and liturgical service of Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors.

During the celebration of the Eucharist, the Deacon should vest in a manner consistent with their order and with the custom of the parish, with a diaconal stole over a cassock and

surplice or alb; a dalmatic may also be worn if it is the custom of the parish. This vesture is also appropriate when assisting in the Celebration of Holy Matrimony or the Burial Office. For other services, the Deacon will normally wear cassock, surplice, and tippet; academic hoods may also be worn. The wearing of large pectoral crosses is associated with the episcopate and therefore is not appropriate for Deacons.

IX. The Deacon as a Minister of the Reserved Sacrament

Although the Holy Eucharist is the principle act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day and other major feasts, the administration of communion by a Deacon from the Reserved Sacrament is not the norm for such services. The Deacon may, if a Presbyter is unavailable and with the prior written approval of the Bishop, lead the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified on Sundays following the rubrics of the BCP (BCP, 408).

The Deacon may, along with the Presbyters and Eucharistic Visitors of a parish, serve as a minister of the Reserved Sacrament for those who, for reasonable cause, cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist. The order of worship for "Communion Under Special Circumstances" (BCP, 396) may be used.

X. The Deacon and the Rite of Christian Initiation

Ordinarily, the Bishop or a Presbyter will preside at all celebrations of Christian Initiation in this Diocese. For pastoral reasons (and with the express consent of the clergy charged with oversight of the parish), it may in some cases be appropriate for the Deacon to administer Baptism, but in no case should a Deacon preside over the Thanksgiving over the Water (BCP, 306-307) or the blessing that follows the Baptism (BCP 308). It is appropriate for the Deacon to participate in the

preparation of candidates for Holy Baptism and Confirmation, especially in regard to the candidates' intention to promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to strive for justice and peace among all people.

XI. The Deacon and the Rite of Holy Matrimony

Ordinarily, the Bishop or a Presbyter will officiate at all weddings in this Diocese. The liturgical role and function of the Deacon during a Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is outlined in the BCP (BCP, 422).

XII. References and Forms of Address

A Deacon should be referred to simply as “Deacon,” rather than “vocational Deacon” or “permanent Deacon.” A Deacon in the process of ordination to the presbyterate should be referred to as a “transitional Deacon.” This should be normal usage in all diocesan and parish documents, including *The Harvest*, *DioLog*, and all directories, websites, and other publications. Archdeacons may be referred to as such, but there is no distinction regarding reference between parochial Deacons and diocesan Deacons.

The proper title or form of address for a Deacon is “Deacon,” either before or after the Deacon's name, with no qualifying adjectives (e.g., “Senior Deacon,” “Vocational Deacon,” etc.). This usage should be adopted in diocesan and parish publications and newsletters. The secular employment of a Deacon may warrant the use of “The Reverend.” Deacons appointed by the Bishop as Archdeacons may use the title or form of address “Archdeacon” and the historic honorific “The Venerable” in formal written communication.

XIII. Use of Clerical Clothing by the Deacon

To avoid confusion of orders, secular dress is the norm for Deacons in this Diocese. Clericals may be used with discretion when appropriate to the circumstances, such as the following:

- when administering communion from the Reserved Sacrament to the sick and shut-in;
- for admission and recognition in hospitals, jails and other institutions (and in other specialized ministry situations, when appropriate);
- during liturgical celebrations and at events where such celebrations take place.

It is preferred that when wearing clericals, Deacons wear gray clerical shirts or blouses to further distinguish among the orders.

XIV. Conclusion

These guidelines are meant to assist the people and the clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas in the pursuit of the most effective Christian mission possible. They are intended to outline normative practice for the Deacons of this Diocese and are not intended to address every eventuality. In the vast majority of instances, common sense, humility and Godly intent will result in the most effective and faithful actions by the Deacons of this Diocese.

May God grant us the courage to pursue Christ's mission in the world, and the grace and the faithfulness to accomplish it.

*1st edition: Pentecost, 1986, issued by the Rt. Rev. Richard F. Grein, Seventh Bishop of the Diocese.
2nd edition: February, 1990, issued by the Rt. Rev. William E. Smalley, Eighth Bishop of the Diocese.
3rd edition: March, 2008, issued by the Rt. Rev. Dean E. Wolfe III, Ninth Bishop of the Diocese.*