



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

2017 Archdeacon & Deacon Directors Conference Open Space Report: Deacon Retirement

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Convenor: Jamesetta Hammons. Notes: Jane O'Leary

Deacons identified issues:

- Separation anxiety/anticipated grief at coming of age 72 – “seems like it will force me to end all meaningful activities of my life.”
- Deacons who pass age 72 – various interpretations of what it means.
 - I can't be active as a deacon any longer – robbed of identity.
 - I can do what I want when I want, but not what I don't want.
 - I'm not perceived to be a full deacon any longer – put to pasture.
 - I am not included anymore.

Realities:

- A deacon is ordained for life (unless canonically separated).
- What do Canons require?

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.

- TEC
 - Deacons must resign at age 72. (The bishop must accept resignation.)
 - Canons use “resign” not “retire.”
 - Deacons can have active ministry/assignments granted by agreement, one year at a time. (Canonically “retired” but actively “licensed” year-to-year.)
- Ontario – no required retirement age
- Vancouver – retirement age is 67



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Recommendations:

- In year before turning 72, engage in focused discernment, perhaps with a retired deacon-mentor.
 - What contributions do I still want to make and to what extent?
 - Parish ministry? Liturgy? Preaching? Teaching?
 - Ministry in the world?
 - Diocesan committees
 - What involvement do I want to be optional?
 - Engagement in deacon community (retreats, mentoring, etc.)
 - Attend diocesan clergy activities, e.g. convention, clergy conference, clericus
 - Is my capacity diminishing? How?
 - How do I feel about stepping aside? Does this make space for someone else?
 - Where will I worship?
 - Self care
- Determine what I want to request of the bishop – make requests in letter of resignation.
- If I am requesting to remain active, meet with the bishop to establish agreement. Repeat letter, meeting and agreement every year until deacon becomes inactive.
- A chaplain to retired deacons (clergy) could provide on-going contact and support on behalf of the diocese. Helpful after deacon's bishop leaves, so deacon doesn't become lost to the diocese.
- It's desirable to have clarity about what involvement is permitted in most recent parish.
 - Flexible vs. no involvement vs. year-to-year assignment.
 - In Olympia, deacon must stay away for one year to enable parish to grow forward without deacon "meddling."
- Communication to deacon community should include all deacons of every age. Invite to retreats, clergy conference, training opportunities.