



Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

The Role of the Deacon in the Church and the World

Episcopal deacons are the bridge leaders of the church. They follow Jesus's way of love in the world and bring the needs of the hurt and marginalized to the church. In the secular realm they serve all people, regardless of faith, but especially those who may be missed, neglected, or feared by the majority. In the sacred realm they proclaim Jesus's message of love and justice to the baptized.

The Rev. Sam Pillsbury, Deacon EDLA



The Rev. Joanne Leslie, setting the table for Eucharist

Who are Deacons?

Today's deacons are from diverse backgrounds. Many of us have day jobs as lawyers, nurses, marketing executives, teachers, administrators, and counselors.

We follow a long line of those who have been called to serve, all the way back to the book of Acts (Acts 6: 1-4), when the first nine deacons were called to pastoral ministries in the early church. We became table waiters at the Eucharist, assistants in the church, and envoys for the bishop. Throughout the history of the church, deacons have lived out their ordination vow to “interpret to the church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.”

Diaconal Ministry takes many forms: We serve in jails, hospitals, care facilities, connecting those who are homeless to resources; we are on both sides of the border caring for immigrants and those who are undocumented. We serve in transitional and recovery homes while advocating for justice at city council meetings, state houses and in congress. Every diaconal ministry touches not only the lives of the people we serve, but also the congregations that serve along with us.

Why are we Deacons?

We serve as deacons because we are called specifically to that “in between place” that links the church and the world. We do it because we are passionate about showing the world the healing power of Christ and our understanding of justice that Jesus calls all of us to.



The Rev. Paul Eustace, serving as chaplain at Vandenberg Tracking Station

We know that it is easy to disconnect the beauty of our worship from following the way of Jesus. A deacon is someone who not only serves our neighbors, but also invites the church to leave the pews and serve alongside us. Today’s deacon serves much as the original nine did in the early church.

While engaging the community, deacons hear the stories and aspirations of the poor, the unseen, the sick, and the lonely. We find ourselves on the streets, and in the kitchens that feed people, and in the board rooms that offer funding for ministry, and at the Altar of our congregations. We invite the community of believers to join us in ministry.

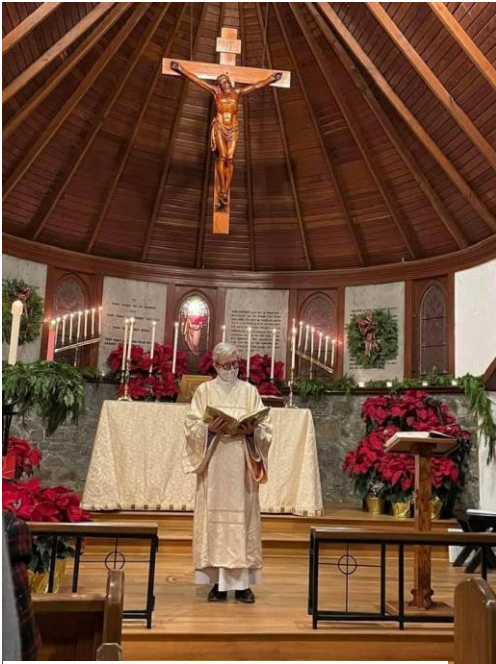


The Rev. Joanne Leslie, advocating for Immigrant rights in 2017



The Rev. Jammsetta Hammonds with LAPD at the anniversary of the Watts Riots.

*“I think the deacon is positioned to summon the church to actually follow Jesus in that way of radical servanthood”
Presiding Bishop Michael Curry*



The Rev. Ed Sniecienski,
proclaiming the gospel

How Do We Participate in Worship?

Within the Eucharist, the role of the deacon is meant to be symbolic of our call to ministry:

We proclaim the gospel, write the prayers of the people, set the table for the Eucharist, and dismiss the congregation into the world.

Our preaching invites the congregation into the world to serve the needs, hopes and concerns of God's people.

Finally, we ask challenging questions: Who is not at the table? How does God ask us to care for others?

Where is God calling us today?

"The deacon is at the intersection of world and church if you will. Which is why the deacon reads the Gospel. I mean it's not because it's an honorific position. The deacon is reading the Gospel because it is the teachings and the life and the spirit of Jesus, who was God incarnate, who bridged Heaven and Earth. You see what I mean? Who is our bridge to church, our faith in the world? And so, the deacon is that person, at the intersection. That's a unique charism and calling for the deacon. It's not the same for priests. It's different for a priest. It's not the same for a bishop. Though, the irony is bishops and deacons have the most in common."

Interview with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry for The Episcopal Café.



Deacons serving at the consecration of The Rt. Rev. John Taylor, Bishop EDLA

A Message from the Archdeacon The Venerable Laura Siriani



Thank you for your interest in the Sacred Order of Deacons. We are always available to talk about our ministry and invite you to join us in the world as we navigate the vulnerable places and people around us. We can connect you with deacons who serve in a particular ministry that is important to you or we can even help you start one in your own parish.

You may find that our stories speak to you in a deeper way; if so, it could be that you are hearing the call of the spirit to become a deacon. That is not unusual for those who have a heart for ministry in the world.

Wherever you find yourself, please know that we will help you find your way in the world of diaconal ministry.

Grace and Peace,

Laura

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