

NAAD Case Study (Spring 2010)

Diocese of Louisiana

Deacon Maggie Dawson, Director of Deacon Formation

New Orleans, Louisiana

Diocesan Profile about the Community of Deacons in LA:

Although several deacons had been ordained prior 1998, it was under Charles Jenkins' episcopacy that the Louisiana diaconate was first recognized and organized as a full and equal order. Jenkins appointed Deacon Ormonde Plater, a writer and scholar of the diaconate, as its first deacon to hold the role of Archdeacon. Plater formed a Council on Deacons, drafted Guidelines for the Diaconate, and was an active member of the Bishop's staff. During the early days after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Plater, a New Orleans resident who was forced to move temporarily, resigned, and Deacon Charles deGravelles, a long-time prison minister, was named by Jenkins to be the next Archdeacon. Under the leadership of Plater and deGravelles and the Director of Deacon Formation, Deacon Maggie Dawson, many new deacons have been ordained, and the role of the diaconate in the diocese continued to be refined and strengthened. During the post-Katrina days, a difficult period for the State and Diocese, deacons played a vital role in social ministry and leadership. After deGravelles resigned as Archdeacon in 2008, the diaconate has been guided by its Council on Deacons, of which deGravelles remains chair.

At the present, the Diocese is without a Bishop as well as without an archdeacon.

The newly elected Bishop Morris Thompson will be consecrated in May of this year and hopefully will appoint a new archdeacon.

At present, there are 25 active deacons and 3 persons in formation, which is a 3 year program. They constitute the Community of Deacons, which works together, communicates regularly through a list serv, and meets twice a year, once with the College of Presbyters and once by itself, for formation, support, and recreation.

The Louisiana deacons serve in many positions such as chaplains in schools, hospitals, retirement communities, prisons and the police force, directors of Christian education, directors of parish outreach, authors, CPT supervisors, advocates for children and orphans, and spiritual directors and are involved in many ministries such as those involving social justice issues and outreach, Stephen Ministry, CASA, prisons, nursing homes, hospice, alcohol and drug abuse, mission work outside the US, and recovery ministries throughout the New Orleans area.

1. We Can:

We developed a Clinical Pastor Training Program in a field placement outside the clinical setting to be used for deacons in formation instead of a formal CPE program in a clinical setting offered by local hospitals. This is a 200 hour program rather than the normal 400 hour CPE program. That is why we call it CPT (Clinical Pastor Training) rather than CPE (Clinical Pastor Education).

2. Background information:

Because many deacon postulants work, doing a 400 hour CPE program in a hospital setting has proven to be very difficult for deacon postulants, particularly while they are also doing monthly deacon formation or if they live in a community that does not offer CPE.

Another consideration was that other settings for ministry hours such as prisons, half-way houses, substance abuse recovery programs, and community social agencies were equally desirable and appropriate to the traditional hospital setting of CPE. More 'out in the world' options were needed for the areas in which deacons minister.

At least 15 years ago, a program was developed by the Roman Catholics in New Orleans for their deacons in formation called CPT, which was a 200 hour program where a variety of ministry settings were made available. The program had weekly night meeting (2 ½ hours) which consisted of lectures on pastoral care issues followed by small group processing for verbatim presentations. The small groups were lead by local certified chaplains.

The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana began a formal deacon formation program in the late 1990's and our postulants were invited to participate with the Roman Catholics in their CPT program. And that solved our CPT requirements for the time being. However, frequently the timings of their offerings did not match our timing and there were pieces of the program that were 'too Roman' for our people. So in 2009 we developed our own program using their model. One of our local deacons is a certified CPE supervisor and she offered to facilitate the program. One class of 3 postulants completed the program in 2009. Our formation program is a 3 year program so this will not be offered again until 2012.

We start our formation program in the spring every three years. It consists of monthly all day Saturday meeting and is about practical deacon formation. (The academic subjects are covered in the School for Ministry which is separate program for all lay people in the diocese.) The first few months cover the theology and history of the Diaconate. Then in the fall the postulants start their field work which consist of 3 modules: 4 months in a Field Project, 5 months of CPT, and 9 months in a Parish Assignment other than the postulant's home parish. The placement in the field project becomes the placement for CPT.

Definition of the Field Project:

The Field Project should involve work outside your congregation, out in the world that involves you directly with the poor, needy and the marginal with hands-on experience.

You are to develop your own project as part of your formation to gain skills as a self-starter, in investigating/discovering needs in the world, making contacts, and engaging creatively with others in meeting those needs. The purpose is twofold: (1) to develop expertise in another area of competence in ministry in the world and (2) to challenge you outside your comfort zone.

There must be a supervisor, who will submit a written evaluation at the end. Expect to put in 7 - 9 hours per week. Projects must include training and education (which may be reading books, using the internet, attending seminars), supervision, and opportunity for immediate process of ministry experiences.

3. Description of the CPT Program:

CLINICAL PASTORAL TRAINING PROGRAM (CPT)

Primary Goal of CPT:

CPT provides an opportunity for intentional ministry formation, increasing awareness and acceptance of one's unique gifts and personal limitations, of one's self, and of growing edges regarding pastoral care and vocation. The course provides participants with some basic 'tools and skill development' for ministry in various pastoral settings where they work as a ministry student with patients, clients, parish families and staffs.

CPT is basically an 'experiential learning' process. It provides a process of learning that integrates knowledge, experience and reflection, which in term helps facilitate personal, pastoral and professional development.

Objectives of CPT for the participants:

To provide weekly didactic/teaching sessions and required reading that will give participants basic concepts of pastoral care.

To assign participants to clinical or other pastoral areas, where they will function as pastoral caregivers (pastoral ministers).

To receive feedback on the effectiveness of their pastoral functioning through case conference studies. Using the learning tools of written verbatims, significant incident reports, and theological reflections, the participants will process pastoral experiences with the assistance of facilitators and the peer group.

To engage in ongoing theological reflection and self-evaluation.

Program Requirements: The program is facilitated by a certified CPE supervisor and the director of deacon formation.

a. Class Attendance: Classes are held each Thursday evenings from 5:00 - 7:30, for 18 weeks (January – May). Continuity is very important and participants are asked to attend all classes. Anticipated absences need to be discussed with the coordinators. Class consists of lectures/discussion of the assigned readings in the various topics indicated below and the processing of verbatims/critical incidents/theological reflection. Deacons from our community who are chaplains of various types will come and tell their stories.

b. Clinical Ministry Requirements: Participants are required to do seven to nine hours a week of clinical work in their assignment ministry site (continuing from the Field Project) and three pastoral care visits from the parish, preferably hospital visits.

c. Personal Goals - Learning covenant: As an adult learning process, participants will set their own personal, pastoral and professional goals of what they seek to learn during the course of the program.

d. Verbatims/Significant Incident Reports/Theological Reflection:
Each participant will submit six verbatims, and three critical incident report. Some of these will be used as a learning tool for ministry reflection in a case conference/peer group context. All written reflection will receive some feedback. At least one of these should involve pastoral care visits in the parish setting. Two of the verbatims will be used for theological reflection.

e. Individual Supervision: Each participant will meet individually for at least one sessions for an hour with the director of deacon formation and will complete Supervision Report after each meeting. A critical incident report will be processed in the session.

f. Reading Requirements: Each participants is to read the assigned readings. There are three texts assigned:

- Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling* by Howard Clinebell.
- Pastoral Care – an Essential Guide* by John Patton
- Stephen Ministry Training Manuals – Vol 1 and Vol 2.*

There are also additional reading materials handed out on these topics.

- What is PC? And Suffering.
- Theological issues/themes.
- Basic Skills – feelings, listening, process vs. results
- Prayer
- Boundaries
- Ministering to the Sick, Hospital ministry
- Diversity in Ministry
- Crisis Intervention
- Theological Reflection
- Grief and Loss
- Hope/Laughter
- End of Life and Ethical Issues

g. Forms used in the program:

- Opening Worship
- CPT Learning Covenant
- Verbatim Format
- Theological Issues/Spiritual Needs
- Critical Incident Report/Analysis
- Theological Reflection Format
- Individual Supervision Report
- Weekly Process Notes
- Personal Loss/Grief History
- CPT Final Reflection Paper

4. Principles, working assumptions, and further considerations:

Some of the principles contained in this program are:

competency based, holistic, integrative, flexible and innovative,
focused on adult learning, clear in a focus on theological reflection with praxis,
community based, relevant to Christian mission, and clear in providing
assessment opportunities.

Some working assumptions:

CPE does not have to be 400 hours.

CPE does not have to be only in a hospital setting.

For deacon formation, field placements need to be in places where deacons
are more likely to do ministry and where lay people can get involved.

A preliminary time in the field placement before CPT starts is helpful so that
the postulants are comfortable and established by the time CPT starts.

No time is wasted in orientation and learning the ropes.

Certified CPE supervisors are not essential but nice to have. Certified chaplains
may be sufficient as facilitator.

On site supervision in field work is needed, as one has in the hospital setting.

Presenters can be brought in from the diocesan and deacon communities as well
as the community at large. There is a lot of flexibility to be had here.

This was an in-house job at little cost and the participants did not have to pay.

Cost of CPE is an added burden to the expense for formation to
the individual.

Further considerations:

I am always asking the question 'Realistically, practically, how much can
I ask of the postulants in terms of ministry hours, class time, written assignments,
and reading materials? When does it become overwhelming? In particular: how
many books and handouts to read, how many verbatims and critical incidents,
how many weeks should the program be? For next time I need to cull out the
handouts. I had far too many. This begs the larger question of the practicality of
CPE for deacon postulants in terms of demands required.

We have very little money budgeted for deacon formation in the diocesan
budget. That is a diocesan determination, money is very tight, and our needs are
not top priority. Fortunately both the supervisor and myself gave of our time for
this program and it as not necessary to charge the participants. This may not
always be the case. However, the demands on me in terms of my time and energy
were enormous. This raises the question 'With deacon formation, in terms of
cost, how much belongs to the individual, the congregation who raised up the
postulant, and the Diocese? What is the Diocese willing to invest in deacon
formation?'