

Notes on Scenarios
21 March 2009

Scenario: Create a social ministry focused field education experience for a deacon in formation in and for a small town of ~200 folks and an Episcopal Church with an ASA of 15.

Canvas people: 200 people – how many would be aged, how many children, how many single/married. How many on social security, need job training, need education, Easy to do with such a small town – such a town could be Bethlehem.

Get a questionnaire

Assess the needs – hunger, poverty, illness, job needs. Where are the resources – food pantry, hospitals, help for rent, etc. – what is in place? What are the gaps?

Assess ecumenical opportunities – are there other churches that have needs/programs, other churches that have/need similar programs. Partnerships are important.

Assess the skills, resources, desires of the congregation. How can the people be involved in total ministry? Ecumenical focus is still important. Find out – who are the leaders of the congregation. Task is finding the person/people to do God’s work in a particular area. How will the deacon gather others into this ministry? What will she/he leave behind at the end of the formation process?

Deacon-in-formation needs to be a cheerleader, supporting the ministry of those in the congregation.

Telling everyone’s stories, getting together at town-wide, ecumenical pot lucks, etc. – this can be a gift left behind for the community. Needs come out, and are addressed.

Critical part – for deacon to come away from this able to apply this learning elsewhere when ordained. Deacon in formation and supervisor need to be able to articulate – what was learned, what worked, what was left behind, how can the experience be improved? Need to have a peer group to discuss with periodically – cannot do this al alone. What is left behind – formation program FOR as well as IN a small town.

Table Group - Molly Solbak, Gail Winston, Dave Longwood, Barb Bishop

Scenario: A deacon director asks you: “Our deacons-in-formation need to start doing theological reflection on their experience and learning soon after they begin. However, they will not yet have done the academic work in scripture, history, theology that will comprise or at least inform the theological tools with which they will reflect. How do you address this?”

Postulants need to be self-starters. They can reflect on what they have already learned through life experiences, such as Bible studies and sermons; reflect on the Psalms and Gospels, as well as their relationships with others. They can reflect on what their cutting edges are as they approach their various courses. They need to ask lots of questions. "Why do I feel called?" can be starting point. They also need to do research on "What is theological reflection?" using resources such as the Internet. What does Wikipedia say about theological reflection?

Saturday 9 a.m. Mary Jo Feely, Reporter

"None of the basic Church History/or Theology/or Ethics texts available seems to even mention the diaconate. What do you use?"

Diocese of California--Uses a combination of books, lectures by the instructor of our "Diakonia" seminar, who is a deacon, and presentations by other diocesan deacons. Books are Ormonde Plater, MANY SERVANTS, John Collins, DEACONS AND THE CHURCH, Rosalind Brown BEING A DEACON TODAY, with emphasis on Collins' perspective on the deacon as authorized agent/emissary. Since our students typically are unable to take an overall course in Church History (as an accident of scheduling arrangements) the lectures cover the origins of the diaconate in the ancient Church and then a quick survey of the history of the Western Church up to the Reformation. Books (and visits to the seminar by our own diocesan deacons) present visions of the contemporary diaconate. We also consider the theology of the liturgical role of the deacon, which connects closely with the texts by Plater and Collins. (Additional resources are Barnett, THE DIACONATE: A FULL AND EQUAL ORDER.

Missionary Diocese of the Dominican Republic--this diocese faces not only the absence of diaconal content in basic texts, but the absence of materials in Spanish. In their formation references to the diaconate in the Book of Acts and other places in the New Testament were connected to a brief history of the ancient Church, the medieval Church, and the contemporary Church. Seminary professors were used as a support in preparing teaching materials in Spanish, and materials were developed not only for those in formation toward ordination, but for priests who would eventually be working with those deacons. They found one book published in Spain--Historia de la Iglesia Anglicana y Episcopal", by a Father Iglesias. (History of the Church of England and the Episcopal Church). They also consulted Anthony Guillen at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. On the basis of all this their diocese produced a small book in Spanish--still in development--that sketches the history and contemporary roles of the deacon.

Scenario: A quote from a new director of a deacon program: "We have a small program. My predecessor tried to do a seminary-like program that was heavily academic and rigorous. The interim director who succeeded him swung the pendulum the other way to totally subjective experiential learning. I am trying to establish something in the middle. Any advice for me?"

- Step backward and identify outcomes.

- Look toward competencies.
 - Talk to people who have gone through both programs to see what was effective and what could be changed.
 - Conversation with the bishop about what he/she expects from education of deacons.
 - Check with neighboring dioceses to see what's out there.
 - Scream for Rod Dugliss.
 - Review a number of programs and synthesize the best parts of them.
 - Send someone to the Archdeacons' meeting.
 - Consult or form a Deacon's Council and get their input.
 - Talk to the Commission on Ministry.
 - Add a current student into the mix.
-

Scenario: Everyone agrees that our people need CPE but they all have full-time jobs, with deacon school on weekends. They can't take 10 weeks off to work in the local hospital. What are we to do?

One of the purposes of CPE is to examine in greater depth our own biases and psyches. With this training the risk becomes that the priest will attempt to “download” more of the pastoral care function to the deacon. A practicable alternative would be for the deacon to gain pastoral experience in a nursing home or hospital, then consult with a CPE specialist to “unpack” that experience and draw the learnings from it. (**Lou Thibodeau**)

Group experience value, with other people to point out crossed boundaries and other pitfalls. The bishop requires it but it is not readily available. (**Kate H.**)

CPE is not a requirement, but might be a part of the ministry-related training which is the deacon's responsibility, in consultation with the Community executive if necessary. Diocese has several strong Lay pastoral visitors training programs which cover much of the same ground, particularly the essentials, which are also available to deacons both before and after ordination. (**Jacque B., Toronto**)

John Willets: the first question to ask is “What do we expect CPE training to do for the Diaconate?” and then be clear as to the competencies and skills we expect the deacons to possess. Then we refine the assessment criteria for those competencies and skills. And finally, be creative about how the deacon may develop those competencies and skills.

Conclusions of the group:

- 1) We need clarity as to why this training is a requirement
- 2) We need to identify the criteria, competencies and skills which this training brings
- 3) We need to find creative ways for deacons to acquire those experiences, competencies and skills.

Submitted by Jacque Bouthéon and John Willets

Scenario: We need to be much more intentional about spiritual formation in our deacon program. What is the best way to incorporate it into a ministry formation experience?

- Kate - Inquirer's day, start talking about spirituality – leaders
 - Students assigned to a spiritual formation group
 - which meets once a month: reflection, prayer, check in
 - grouped according to geographic area
 - meet away from school
 - ordained deacons is the leader of the group (assigned)
 - Group is no more than 6, stay together through the 3 years
 - Get to know each other
 - MP, EP, Eucharist
 - Lot of papers of theological reflection
 - Lot of Benedictine and Franciscan spirituality in the conversation in all classes
 - Students are expected to have their own SD, have list of Spiritual Directors in the local areas (SDI.org)
 - One class on theological reflection and a class on pastoral care, but not just one class on spiritual formation
 - Have a spouse group that meets, talk about this on Inquirer's day, orientation, the 2 community dinners per semester
 - have small local groups of ordained deacons that meet regularly
 - Kate preaches at least once a year about the difference between public & private confession
- Jim (Nebraska)
 - Similar to California
 - There are about 21 spiritual directors, provide most of the connection with the person throughout the process
 - Require rule of life to promote self-care and the
 - Worship, study, prayer, action, annual personal retreat, exercise, family & Friends, Colleagues, places of solitude (Gardening, painting, writing, long walks, etc.)
 - Set up rule of life every 6 months
- Nancy Hauser (Pennsylvania)
 - During seminary, meeting with group members were a mix of all years – was a good support system
- Liz (Newark) – in the past spirituality was probably not stressed enough, can see that requiring with a structure would be valuable
- Victoria (Texas) -
- General Comments:
 - Need someplace to download, a place to share everything
 - “every ordained person should have 2 years of personal therapy before going through”
 - Family prayers together – depends on the family, some do and some don't

Scenario: We have our students take online courses from CALL at CDSP. They each do this on their own. How can we integrate their work into the diocese's formation program?

Might be helpful to do it at a gathering of deacons to see how it works. Some people are not sure what happens.

Might be better for Continuing Ed. Otherwise, should stay through program.

Needs to be worked out ahead of time, with parameters around it. It needs to include opportunities for people to get together to discuss as a group.

This is an addition to regular meetings in community which are the preferred way.

Scenario: A group in the Commission on Ministry wants to institute a General Ordination Examination to be given after deacons-in-formation have completed their program. How would you advise them?

Advice to COM on GOEs.

First reaction, was "no!" – because exam only test academic knowledge.

Next reaction: can't just say no to COM, need to negotiate.

Find out why they want it.

Define an appropriate evaluation mechanism for deacons. Adapt from other people's experience, including presbyter exams.

Have any evaluation process and content reviewed by deacons. [Deacons Council?]

Think assessment rather than examination.

Use assessment diagnostically both for remediation, if necessary, and for discernment best match of skills and knowledge to congregation for deployment.

Evaluation is not about failure. We are trying to build people up, not tear them down.