



NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE DIACONATE

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Diocesan Diaconate Program Packet

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One of the objectives of NAAD is sharing information on diocesan diaconate programs. An active file is maintained on each diocese and we serve as a resource when questions arise, new programs are initiated or programs are assessed and revised.

Among the most frequently asked questions are: What is a diocesan program? What is the relationship of a diocesan deacon to the bishop and the diocese? How do you define the ministry of the deacon? To assist in responding to these questions NAAD has prepared several resources in consultation with deacons and others in a number of dioceses.

Suggested Guidelines for a Diocesan Program. A brief statement of the necessary components of preparation, discernment and selection, formation, deployment and supervision and support.

Suggested form for Letter of Agreement—Diocesan Deacon. Provides a definition and outline of the role and functions of the deacon in a parochial assignment and in diaconal service beyond the parish. Defines work conditions, supervision, annual review, how changes may be made and the agreement dissolved.

Suggested form for a Worksheet to Define Ministries. An annotated outline of the factors to be considered in establishing a diaconal ministry.

Guidelines for the Sacred Order of Deacons in the Diocese of Kansas. The deacons of the Diocese of Kansas in meeting with then Bishop Richard F. Grein adopted a set of guidelines for the ministry of the diaconate in the diocese. This was one of the first such guidelines adopted and has been widely utilized in other dioceses in establishing similar statements.

Guidelines for the Diaconate in the Diocese of Louisiana. The Ven. Ormonde Plater, Archdeacon was instrumental in preparing these Guidelines in 1999 and issued by the Bishop to aid deacons and all who work with them in implementing a new and well supported program for diaconal ministry.

The reader is also referred to Ormonde Plater, ed., *Deacons in the Episcopal Church*, NAAD, 1991 (\$3.00) which outlines many of these matters in greater detail, and to *Many Servants—An Introduction to Deacons*, Cowley Publications, Boston, 1991 (13.95), also by Ormonde Plater. Recently available is *A Working Paper of Guidelines for Deacon Programs*, Edwin F Hallenbeck, ed (NAAD 2000, \$3.00) reporting on work of the Deacon Directors Conference. All of these are available from the Centre for the Diaconate.

The Centre for the Diaconate welcomes inquiries and will provide additional information and consultation.



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Suggested Guidelines for a Diocesan Diaconate Program

Preparation

Before a diaconate program is initiated, the following steps are recommended:

1. That the diocese have a clear understanding of the diaconate as an ordained order, and that a *Mission Statement* summarizing the role of the diaconate in the diocese be created, formally adopted and subjected to periodic review involving deacons.
2. There be a commitment of both the Bishop and the diocese, in terms of:
 - *People*—The direction of the program is the major responsibility of one person, or the substantial responsibility of several.
 - *Time*—The program will continue for at least several years.
 - *Money*—There will be sufficient funds available to carry out the program.
3. Involve deacons and lay persons in planning and running the program.
4. A separate diaconate committee of the diocesan commission on ministry, for policy recommendations, and monitoring of the program as part of the *Total Ministry* of the diocese.
5. The use of ecumenical and secular resources in the area or region.

Discernment and Selection.

Men and women chosen for the diaconate shall be *of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom (Acts 6:3)*, and shall possess the following personal qualifications:

1. A stable life rooted in family, church and community.
2. If married, the approval and support of their spouse.
3. Admired and respected in the community in which they live.
4. Several years of *diakonia*, particularly in servant ministry in the world and/or in the church.
5. A sense of being called to the diaconate by the Holy Spirit and affirmed by the faith community.
6. Mental ability and competence, although lack of formal academic training should not be a barrier, and the primary language need not be English.
7. Understanding that the diaconate is a lifelong ministry involving change, study, and personal growth.

Formation

Formation for the diaconate shall include three main areas of preparation—academic, practical and, spiritual growth:

1. *Academic* study shall include the Holy Scripture, church history, theology, ethics and moral theology, studies in contemporary society, liturgics, and the theory and practice of ministry.
3. *Practical* training or experience shall be appropriate to the candidate's occupation, role in the community and ministry experience. The program should include pastoral skills used in the church and social care skills used in the world. It should be experiential and focus on specialized ministries that the deacon undertakes.
4. *Spiritual* growth will deal with the development of a spirituality appropriate to the diaconate.

Deployment

Deployment, support and periodic review of deacons should be the responsibility of the person(s) designated by the bishop with overall responsibility for direction of the diaconate program in the diocese. Consistency and coordination are important characteristics for the successful growth and development of a diaconal program enhancing the *Total Ministry* of the diocese.

Deacons serve primarily in three areas: *liturgical* (serving word and table), *pastoral* (with the church's own people), and *servant ministry* (with those outside the church in society at large).

There are at least three types of deacons:

Parish-based deacons are usually self-supporting. They operate out of a local parish under the oversight of the bishop. They are responsible to the priest for their ministry *within* the parish.

Diocesan-based deacons are usually paid by the church and work for the diocese. They operate under the immediate supervision of the bishop or other designated person.

Professional or special deacons work for a church or secular agency or institution, under the oversight of both the bishop and their institutional supervisor. This category includes deacons in religious orders.

A written *letter of agreement* or contract is recommended. It should include the bishop's specific assignment of the deacon including the deacon's liturgical, pastoral, and servant functions. Assignment usually made for a definite period of time, not more than three years. It should be reviewed periodically, annually or at end of the term, with a report to the bishop on the deacon's role and accomplishments.

Supervision and Support

There should be frequent consultation between the deacon and parish priest, and between the deacon and the bishop, program director, archdeacon or other designated person. These include monitoring the effectiveness of the deacon's ministry, discussing current and prospective assignments, and reviewing the spiritual and professional growth of the deacon.

The deacon should seek opportunity for regular continuing education, meetings with other deacons and be supported by the diocese and parish in her/his life as deacon. Wherever possible deacons should be encouraged to seek out or establish peer support among others engaged in similar ministries.

**Suggested form for
LETTER OF AGREEMENT—DIOCESAN DEACON**

Deacon _____ and _____, Bishop of _____, who has ordained him/her a Deacon in the Church, agree that her/his exercise of the diaconate in the Diocese of _____ shall be subject to the terms set forth in this **Letter of Agreement**.

1. The deacon accepts the following principles of diocesan ministry:

A. The diocese is a body of local churches with many members, each sent by Christ with special gifts to minister to one another and to others.

B. All ministries of the diocese are exercised under the oversight and care of the Bishop with the assistance of presbyters and others. The deacon serves directly under the Bishop (BCP p543).

C. The fundamental ministry of the deacon is to hold before the Church the character of the whole ministry of the Church as **SERVICE** and of ministers as **SERVANTS**.

D. The ministry of the diocesan deacon includes working in harmony with others in the diocese, especially its Bishop and other leaders, lending support and seeking always to build up the body of Christ.

2. Parochial Assignment:

A. The Bishop assigns the deacon to serve at large in the Diocese of _____, which chose him/her for the diaconate, and also to function liturgically and pastorally at _____ (*church*), _____ (*city/town*). The deacon shall be ready and able to respond to the Bishop's call to serve anywhere in the diocese.

The Bishop expects a part-time non-salaried deacon shall serve a maximum of ____ hours per week in her/his service to _____ (*church*), _____ (*city/town*), under the supervision of the incumbent rector/vicar and that this service shall not conflict with the deacon's regular employment. This service shall include diaconal functioning at the Sunday morning liturgies as assigned in the parish clergy rota. The Parish is responsible for payment of mileage and continuing education at the standard Diocesan rate.

B. The deacon shall serve liturgically as follows:

The deacon shall perform the full and proper liturgy of a deacon at the parish liturgies on Sunday, and in the liturgies on Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. In the Eucharist, the deacon proclaims the gospel, leads the prayers of the people, waits on the table (preparing and clearing), receives the offering, serves the wine, dismiss the people. The deacon shall take the eucharistic bread and wine to the sick and infirm of the parish, and may anoint the sick. The deacon shall assist in other liturgies, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals and shall also serve in the Cathedral and in interparochial or diocesan liturgies when called upon to do so by the Bishop or proper authority.

C. Within the limits of time available, the deacon shall have the following responsibilities in his/her pastoral ministry:

(state specifics as appropriate in serving the Church's own people)

3. Diaconal Service Beyond the Parish:

The deacon shall serve beyond the parish in the following servant ministries:

(state specifics of the deacon's ministry to society at large, including accountability & support and the number of hours per week in each service activity)

4. The Bishop hereby licenses the deacon to compose and preach liturgical homilies in the eucharist at any church in the diocese, when properly invited to do so, but with the understanding that the rector/vicar is the ordinary preacher of the parish. In services conducted by the deacon, the deacon is the ordinary preacher. The deacon is encouraged to lift up the servanthood of Christ and His people in preaching.

5. In liturgical service at any church, the deacon shall not function in roles proper to priests or other persons. The deacon may conduct the so-called 'Deacon's Mass' only in special circumstances and with the specific authorization of the Bishop or *Archdeacon*¹.

¹The title *archdeacon* is used here to refer to the diocesan official designated by the bishop as day to day supervisor of diocesan deacons. This title should reflect actual practice in a diocese.

6. With the exception of the deacon's proper liturgical vestments, the deacon shall avoid special dress, titles, perquisites, and other symbols of a clerical status which distinguish the deacon sharply from those among whom the deacon lives and works and whom the deacon serves.

7. The deacon shall take the following periods of leave from professional responsibilities and service and all other diaconal functions in the Church:

- A. One month vacation each year.
- B. Two weeks each year for development of diaconal capability.
- C. Sabbatical leave for continuing education, research and reflection, accumulated at the rate of four weeks per year of service.
- D. Sick leave as required.
- E. Such other leave as is required to develop and maintain self-support outside the Church.

8. Deacons serving under provisions of this agreement shall ordinarily serve the Church without cash stipend, housing or housing allowance. The diocese or parish may, at its own discretion, pay for services or expenses incurred by the deacon in service to the Church. The deacon may participate, at the deacon's own expense, in the group life insurance, group medical insurance programs offered by the diocese, and in the Church Pension Fund. Should the deacon be employed directly by the Diocese, Parish or any church entity participation in the Church Pension Fund is mandatory as required by Canon Law.

9. The deacon shall participate in ongoing programs for the diaconate in which the deacon's participation might reasonably be expected. Such programs will include regular meetings of the diaconate community, support groups with other deacons and presbyters, continuing education events and activities, especially those designed for diocesan deacons.

- A. It should be understood that the primary supervisor for the deacon is not the parish rector, but the Bishop through the *Archdeacon*. Deacons are responsible to priests for liturgical assignments in the parish and other pastoral ministries for which they volunteer, which do not interfere with their vocational activities.
- B. After ordination the *Archdeacon* is the proper advocate for all deacons, supervises the support groups, quarterly meetings, continuing education, liturgical assignments and other activities directly affecting the diaconate.
- C. All actions taken by the *Archdeacon* in the day to day process have the approval of the Bishop and decisions affecting the life and ministry of a deacon are only done with the advise and consent of the Bishop.

10. The deacon shall have seat, voice and vote in diocesan convention, and may participate in meetings of parish vestries/Bishop's committees and councils and other appropriate bodies when requested to do so by proper authority.

11. When problems arise which affect the deacon and/or the welfare and unity of the diocese, the deacon shall bring them to the Bishop, or other appropriate persons and shall make a reasonable and prayerful effort to resolve such matters with their counsel and advice.

12. The deacon shall report annually in writing to the priest of the congregation s/he serves liturgically, to her/his supervisor(s) at other diaconal ministries and to the Bishop/*Archdeacon*. Following this report, the deacon, priest and supervisor/*Archdeacon* will meet for a discussion and evaluation of the deacon's ministry of service, the purpose being:

- A. To provide a more accurate picture of how those with whom the deacon serves see his/her ministry.
- B. To allow the deacon to express and share his views about how well the Bishop and the diocese have fulfilled their responsibilities to the deacon.
- C. To establish goals for the deacon's work for the coming year, and to revise as appropriate this letter of agreement.

- D. To isolate areas of conflict or disappointment which may not have received adequate attention and may be adversely affecting working relationships.
- E. To clarify expectations on all sides which will help put future conflicts in manageable form.
- F. To develop written goals for the next year.

13. This agreement will be in force for three years from the date accepted and may be renewed at the end of that time. The agreement will expire automatically when the Rector/Vicar resigns the cure. In consultation with the *Archdeacon* and the Diocesan Deployment Officer, a new agreement between the deacon and the Vestry must be written and approved for the interim period. A new letter of agreement must be executed when a new Rector/ Vicar is called and appointed to the Parish. This agreement may be terminated at any time by the deacon with the advice and consent of the Bishop; or by the Bishop on the request of and following consultation with the deacon's rector/vicar or other supervisor provided written notice is given.

14. This agreement may be ammended at any time should the deacon's ministry change and working arrangements altered, such changes may be initiated by the deacon or by the Bishop, so long as both shall agree to such changes in writing, and the ammendment signed and made part of this agreement.

Ratification: _____ Deacon

_____ Rector/Vicar

_____ *Other Supervisor(s)*

Date _____

_____ Bishop/*Archdeacon*

**Suggested form for
A WORKSHEET TO DEFINE MINISTRIES**

Following is an outline to assist in defining ministry. All topics should be mentioned even if briefly.

1. **Title:** (A brief descriptive phrase that can be used as a capsule definition.)

2. **Goal or Purpose:** (What is the aim of this ministry in a short statement)

3. **The Approach:** (What will you be doing, what activities will be involved, what style of ministry do you anticipate, to whom will you be ministering. How will you carry out your goals.)

4. **The Accountable Party:** (To what person will you regularly report and be accountable in carrying out this ministry.)

5. **Who Receives the Report:** (To what group, or individual, will you report the activities and accomplishments of your ministry.)

6. **Liturgical Function:** (Where will you regularly and ordinarily serve as deacon in the liturgy.)

7. **Support System:** (What person(s) or group will you turn to for assistance in reflection, prayer, sharing and support as you carry out your ministry.)

8. **Short Range Objectives:** (List the objectives you define for your ministry over the next six months to a year. Under each objective list as many specific functions and implementation strategies as may be appropriate to carrying out that objective.)

9. **Long Range Objectives:** (List the objectives related to your ministry that you would like to work toward over the next year, that can be implemented only at a later time.)

10. **Support Services Required:** (List the space, office, equipment, clerical or other kinds of supporting assistance that will be needed to carry out your ministry.)

11. **Budget:** (List the costs to implement your ministry and indicate possible sources of funds.)
 - Parochial Assignment:

 - Service Beyond the Parish—Assignment(s):

Guidelines for the Sacred Order of Deacons in the Diocese of Kansas—Pentecost, 1986.

1. Intent of These Guidelines

These guidelines pertain to deacons, not transitional deacons (see 5 below).

2. The Nature of the Diaconate.

The ordinal (BCP p. 543) is the basic document that characterizes the nature of the diaconate.

3. The Relationship of the Deacon to the Bishop.

Traditionally the deacon serves immediately under the authority of the bishop. In most cases, the bishop, with the consent of the rector or vicar, will assign the deacon to a parish or mission. It is expected that the diocesan deacon will be responsible for those functions appropriate to the order. The deacon is encouraged to enter into a written agreement with the parish or mission and the bishop based upon *Use of Deacons* (Attachment A). The deacon is subject to reassignment.

4. The Relationship of the Deacon to the Congregation and to the Priest.

A deacon is assigned to a parish and must resign should the rector 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 is called, the deacon may be reassigned to that parish or mission or may be appointed to another 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.

5. References to the Order of Deacons.

The deacon is to be referred to as *deacon*, rather than *vocational* or *permanent* deacon. A deacon in the process of ordination to the priesthood should be referred to as a *transitional* deacon. This should be the normal usage in all diocesan and parish documents, including the *Plenteous Harvest* and other publications.

6. The Ordination of a Deacon.

If at all possible there should be one ordination of candidates to the diaconate per year. Preferably this will take place at a eucharist during the annual diocesan convention to highlight the fact that the deacon serves directly under the authority of the bishop. It would then be expected that a *Celebration of a New Ministry* (BCP p. 557) be celebrated in the local congregation where the newly ordained deacon is assigned. All deacons will have the opportunity to renew ordination

vows at convention within the context of the ordination service.

7. Conferences and Continuing Education.

An annual conference of deacons with the bishop will be held. Appropriate continuing education should be scheduled. Parishes with deacons are encouraged to provide some funds for continuing education. Transitional deacons are to be included in Presbyters' conferences.

8. Form of Address.

The proper title or form of address for a deacon is *Deacon*, either before or after the deacon's name. This usage should be adopted in diocesan and parish publications and newsletters.

9. The Deacon Speaking to the Church.

Because the deacon functions as the 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 and in the parishes and missions of the diocese. The deacons of the diocese are exploring the possibility of relinquishing their votes in exchange for an assured prophetic voice wherever the church makes decisions.

10. The Deacon in Diocesan Liturgies.

The deacons of the diocese shall function in roles appropriate to the order at all diocesan liturgies.

11. Diocesan Mailing Lists.

There should be a separate mailing list for deacons to receive mailings of particular interest to deacons. Deacons should also be included in all general diocesan mailings.

12. The Liturgy of the Presanctified.

The Holy Eucharist is the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day and other major feasts. The administration of communion from the reserved sacrament is not the norm for Sunday services. The deacon may, however, lead the Liturgy of the Presanctified on Sundays following the rubrics on page 408 of the BCP if no priest is available. If possible, the permission of the bishop should be obtained in advance. In any event, the bishop should be notified when this occurs.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified is appropriate for a mid-week service as needed. The rubrics on p. 408 or 396 of the BCP should be followed. It is not necessary to inform the bishop of these occurrences.

13. The Deacon in the Liturgy.

The deacon takes the appropriate place along with the bishop (when

present), the priest, other liturgical ministers, and the gathered laity. The bishop or priest should preside at the liturgy of the word. During the liturgy the role of the deacon is as follows:

1) The deacon should emphasize the place of the Gospel in the liturgy. To that end the deacon should carry the Gospel Book in procession, place it in a prominent place on the altar, and cense the book where it is the custom of the parish.

2) The deacon preaches as required. Since the deacon is the icon of servant ministry and since the deacon functions to raise up servanthood within the community, diaconal sermons should emphasize servanthood.

3) The deacon is to bring the needs of the world to the church. To that end, the deacon should lead the Prayers of the People and issue the invitation to the Confession of Sin. During the prayers, the people should be encouraged to participate and to bring the needs of which they are aware to the attention of the community.

4) Since the deacon is the symbol of servanthood, the deacon should prepare the table and receive the gifts. When appropriate, the deacon should cense the altar party and the people.

5) When using Rite I, it is appropriate for the deacon to read the Comfortable words and the Summary of the Law.

6) The deacon should stand to the presider's right during the Great Thanksgiving. A deacon, lay reader, or acolyte may point the missal, depending on which side it is on. Since the deacon is the minister of the chalice, the deacon should raise the chalice at the doxology at the end of the canon.

7) As principal minister of the chalice, the deacon distributes the wine, assisted by additional chalice bearers when necessary. The deacon supervises the preparation of and the cleansing of the additional chalices.

8) It is also appropriate for the deacon to administer the bread.

9) The deacon performs the ablutions, assisted by chalice bearers, either after distribution of communion or after the service.

10) The deacon gives the dismissal.

11) The deacon carries the Paschal candle in procession at the Easter vigil and for baptisms and for funerals.

12) The deacon leads the prayers for the candidates for baptism, con-

firmation, and reception at services of Christian Initiation.

13) The deacon sings the *Lumen Christi* and the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil.

14. Use of Clerical Clothing by the Deacon.

Appropriate choir dress is a cassock and surplice. During the eucharist the deacon should wear a deacon's stole with a cassock and surplice, alb, or alb with dalmatic. During Lent, the dalmatic should be omitted.

16. The Deacon as the Minister of the Reserved Sacrament.

The deacon, along with the priest, is a minister of the reserved sacrament for those who, for reasonable cause, cannot be present at a public celebration of the eucharist. The service for *Communion Under Special Circumstances* (BCP p 396) is to be used. It is appropriate for the deacon to train and supervise lay eucharistic ministers.

17. The Deacon and Christian Initiation.

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. The deacon may perform the water rite in the baptismal liturgy when there are many candidates to be baptized or when the deacon has been particularly involved in the preparation of the candidate for baptism.

18. The Deacon as the Symbol of Servanthood.

The deacon is to be seen as the icon of servant ministry. The role of the deacon in the liturgy is to reflect this. The deacon models servant ministry for the congregation and encourages involvement in servant ministry in the world, both individually and corporately, of all the members of the parish, as part of the fulfillment of the baptismal covenant.

19. The Deacon and the World.

The deacon, in addition to being an icon of servanthood, interprets the needs and concerns of the world to the institutional church. It is appropriate for parishes to have a committee to work closely with the deacon on outreach ministry. It is also appropriate 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.

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Guidelines for the Diaconate in the Diocese of Louisiana

[issued 12/7/99, revised 1/28/00]

1. Deacons in the Church

All members of the body of Christ are the anamnesis or re-presenting of Christ and his church. In a sacramental way, deacons re-present Christ in his eternal role as *diakonos* or agent of God in creation and salvation, and they re-present the church in its loving duty to strive for mercy, justice, and peace. As servants of God, deacons announce the good news to the poor. As servants of the church, deacons marshal, coordinate, and facilitate the various ministries of its members in the world. Thus the liturgical role of deacons concentrates on proclaiming the gospel, urging the people to pray for those in need, and overseeing practical arrangements to feed the hungry. In the church's extended liturgy and life, deacons serve all people in word, action, and personal attendance.

2. Deacons in the Diocese

Every congregation of the diocese should claim the full ministry of the church, including priests and deacons. The Bishop may assign one or more deacons to any congregation willing to accept them and work with them, if qualified persons can be found.

3. The Diaconate Program

The Bishop has appointed an Archdeacon to administer the diaconate in the diocese. The Bishop also has appointed a Commission on the Diaconate, chaired by the Archdeacon, to oversee the program, educate people on the diaconate, and identify and recruit potential deacons.

The Archdeacon appoints a Director of Diaconate Formation to oversee the formation of deacons-elect preparing for ordination and of new deacons during their two-year period of internship and residency.

The Archdeacon and the Director of Diaconate Formation work with the School for Ministry, Clinical Pastoral Education administrators, and others as necessary to prepare deacons-elect for ordination and to form deacons in ministry.

The Community of Deacons, consisting of all the deacons of the diocese, meets at least once a year for worship, formation, support, and business.

4. Selection of deacons

All persons called to the diaconate must first complete the discernment in community required of all those entering the ordination process and receive the call of the congregation and the diocese. The call must be based on evident gifts and the exercise of ministries of mercy, justice, and peace. The spouse, if any, must consent in writing to their election as deacon.

5. Formation of deacons

Deacons-elect shall participate in a program of academic, practical, and spiritual formation for at least two years before ordination. Because the core of ministry is the assembly, all

formation shall emphasize the interaction of deacons in the Christian community.

Deacons-elect must complete a two-year cycle of courses at the diocesan School for Ministry. They are required to complete a half unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, although a full unit is strongly encouraged. In special circumstances, with the approval of the Archdeacon, they may complete an equivalent pastoral course or experience, under certified supervision and with evaluation. Those who have completed any of these requirements before selection must continue to participate in formation in community, and to complete special assignments under supervision, for at least two years before ordination. Deacons-elect must make regular use of a spiritual director and attend one silent retreat every year. Their formation includes regular meetings of deacons-elect and practice in the role of deacons in the liturgy. The expense of their preparation for ordination shall be borne by the congregations that sponsor them.

After ordination, new deacons must complete two more years of internship and residency under supervision, as appointed by the Archdeacon. This period involves special assignments and projects and perfection of their liturgical role.

Thereafter, all deacons shall take part in at least one continuing formation program or event each year. They shall report completion of this requirement in their annual report to the Archdeacon.

6. Deacons and the Bishop

Deacons serve directly under the Bishop, and they have the right to direct access to him. In the name of the Bishop, the Archdeacon oversees the deacons of the diocese and is in charge of their formation, deployment, supervision, and support. All actions taken by the Archdeacon as director of deacons have the tacit approval of the Bishop. Major decisions affecting the life and ministry of any deacon are taken normally after consultation among the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and the deacon.

Deacons shall be ready and able at any time to respond to the Bishop's call to serve anywhere in the diocese. The Archdeacon advises and assists the Bishop in the deployment of deacons. The Bishop usually assigns new deacons to serve in the congregation from which they came, but for good reason he may assign them elsewhere. Initially, each assignment must be at the request, or with the consent, of the rector and vestry. Thereafter, each assignment will be reviewed periodically and maintained or changed at the Bishop's discretion. When a new rector is called, the deacon may remain in the congregation or be assigned to another one. After several years, or for other good reason, the deacon may be assigned to another congregation.

Each assignment will specify the nature and scope of the deacon's ministry. Some deacons will serve in both the

liturgical and the pastoral life of a congregation. Some will serve only in liturgy and otherwise minister at home, at work, or in the community. Some will mix service in church and service in world in varying degrees. All deacons must maintain a significant and articulated ministry in the world.

Deacons may take sabbatical leave from all assignments and other church duties, normally after each seven years of service, after application to the Archdeacon and with the consent of the Bishop. The typical length of such leave is six months.

For good reason, the Bishop at his discretion may withdraw the assignment of any deacon. Deacons not assigned to congregations, for whatever reason, remain subject to the authority of the Bishop, to the provisions of these guidelines, and to the supervision of the Archdeacon.

7. Deacons in Congregations

In assigned congregations, deacons serve in accordance with a Letter of Agreement between the deacon and the parish presbyter, signed before or soon after the assignment. The letter must be approved by the Bishop and filed with the Archdeacon. The letter shall be reviewed upon a change of presbyters but may not be cancelled or revised without the Bishop's consent. The Archdeacon shall assist the deacon and presbyter in drafting or revising the letter.

Deacons are not "assistant clergy" but "deacons," as defined in canon law. Deacons hold a specific office in their assigned congregation, which requires them to work closely with the presbyter and people in the liturgy and life of the congregation. In all matters concerning a congregation, the priest exercises authority. Deacons shall meet periodically with the presbyter to review and coordinate their ministry. In other matters concerning the church, deacons are responsible to the Bishop, as supervised by the Archdeacon.

Deacons may have seat and voice (but not vote) on the vestry of their assigned congregation. The terms of attendance at vestry should be spelled out in the Letter of Agreement.

The Letter of Agreement shall specify at least the following periods of leave:

- One month vacation each year, preferably to coincide with the deacon's leave from professional employment
- Two weeks each year for the development of diaconal proficiency
- Sabbatical leave for continuing formation, research, and reflection
- Sick leave, as required
- Such other leave as is required to develop and maintain self-support outside the church

8. Address and Dress of Deacons

A deacon is referred to as *deacon*, rather than *vocational* or *permanent deacon*. A deacon preparing for ordination to the priesthood is referred to as *transitional deacon*.

The proper title or form of address for a deacon is "Deacon." This shall be the normal usage in diocesan and congregational publications, newsletters, and documents.

Street clothing is the norm for deacons. They should wear what is appropriate for ministry in their congregation.

9. Deacons in the Liturgy

At assigned parishes, deacons serve in their proper liturgical role on Sundays and other occasions of worship, including Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, and the Paschal Triduum. Whenever possible, deacons shall serve in parochial liturgies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and in inter-parochial or diocesan liturgies when called upon to do so by proper authority.

At all liturgies the proper role of deacons is:

- to proclaim the gospel
- to lead or to participate in leading the prayers of the people
- to serve at the table (preparing the table and gifts, assisting during the eucharistic prayer, assisting with communion, and supervising the ablutions)
- to give directions (such as the invitation to confession and the dismissal)

At the Easter Vigil the deacon carries the paschal candle, sings the Exsultet, and assists according to order at baptism and the eucharist. The Book of Common Prayer describes this function as "the prerogative of a deacon" (p. 284).

In liturgies deacons wear the alb, the stole hanging from the left shoulder, and normally the dalmatic. They should not wear personal ornaments over their vestments.

In assigning deacons to congregations the Bishop automatically grants the faculty of preaching, unless he specifically withholds or limits the faculty. Deacons so licensed may compose and preach liturgical homilies at any church in the diocese when properly invited to do so, but with the understanding that the parish presbyter is the ordinary preacher of the congregation.

The liturgical role of deacons includes directing the lay eucharistic ministers of the congregation, bringing the sacrament to the sick and absent, and (if a priest is not available) anointing the sick with oil blessed by the bishop.

Deacons shall not normally preside in the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified (the so-called "Deacon's Mass"). Without requiring advance notice, the Bishop grants permission for deacons to lead this liturgy in two extraordinary circumstances:

- On a Sunday during the vacation of the parish presbyter, when another presbyter cannot be obtained after diligent effort.

- On a Sunday when the only available presbyter is taken suddenly ill or is otherwise unexpectedly absent for a scheduled eucharist.

Deacons may lead this liturgy only in their assigned congregation, or elsewhere only with the permission of the Bishop. They shall follow the rubrics on page 408 of the Book of Common Prayer. They shall use the sacrament, preferably both bread and wine, reserved from a prior eucharist in the same congregation. A deacon leading this liturgy shall report it to the Archdeacon during the following week.

Deacons shall not preside in Holy Matrimony, unless they receive special permission from the Archdeacon. If no priest is available, deacons may preside at the Burial of the Dead but may not administer communion.

10. Deacons in Diocesan Liturgies

The deacons of the diocese shall function in roles appropriate to their order in all diocesan liturgies. When the Bishop presides, normally three deacons take part: a deacon of the mass (taking the deacon's spoken parts and serving at the table) and two deacons attending the Bishop (handling mitre and staff). Other deacons may assist with communion and ablutions.

The deacons shall participate in the Bishop's visitations, as his attendants and as deacons of the mass. The Archdeacon organizes and schedules this rota.

11. Support groups and meetings

Deacons shall take part in meetings of the Community of Deacons, unless excused by the Archdeacon. This meeting is in addition to the requirement of a continuing formation event.

Deacons shall take part in other groups for support and formation, including presbyters and baptized persons.

12. Compensation of Deacons

While it is the norm for a deacon to be non-stipendiary (not salaried), it is expected that the congregation will offer the deacon:

- reimbursement of actual expenses, including mileage (other than from home to church)
- reimbursement of the expense of attending diocesan convention and other required meetings
- a regular discretionary fund
- assistance in continuing formation

Some deacons may receive a stipend as a salaried employee of the church or of a church agency. They are subject to the canonical and other normal provisions for such employment.

13. Review and evaluation

Each deacon shall submit an annual report to the Archdeacon, using a provided form and covering the deacon's life and ministry. The Archdeacon shall meet with each deacon at least every year for a discussion and evaluation:

- to provide a picture of how those whom the deacon serves see the deacon
- to allow deacons to express opinions about how well the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and the diocese have fulfilled their responsibilities to the deacons
- to set goals for the deacon's work in the diocese
- to clarify expectations and anticipate future problems

14. Retirement

The canons of the Episcopal Church require that deacons, like other clerics, retire from their positions and from active service on reaching age seventy-two. The Bishop may assign retired deacons as follows:

- If they are non-stipendiary, to the same position for six months.
- To a salaried position for one year, with the approval of the Standing Committee.

The Bishop may renew the assignment from time to time.

Retired deacons may also serve in congregational and diocesan liturgies when invited by proper authority.

Retired deacons are not required to fulfill the obligations of these guidelines for continuing formation, attendance at meetings, annual report, and evaluation.

15. Approval of these guidelines

The Bishop has issued these guidelines. They will be reviewed periodically, and revised as needed by the Commission on the Diaconate, with the approval of the Bishop.

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