

AED's Archdeacon & Deacon Directors' Conference – February 2018

Notes from Open Space discussions at A3D Feb. 24, 2018

1. Deacons from the margins
 - i. Roxanne (MT) met and discerned a call with a woman who was outside the typical Episcopalian mold (she was brown or black, had no higher education, had a low income, had a rough history). Along the journey, they encountered many barriers that worked to keep her from a smooth road to ordination.
 - ii. Agreement that we want deacons from outside the mainstream, that people on the margins should see deacons who look/are like them. Question: How can we open up this ministry to committed people who “don't fit the mold.” Not like us.
 - iii. Various people talked about actual deacons who “don't fit the mold,” the struggles to get to ordination, and some accommodations that had to be made, for example:
 1. Giving oral exams instead of written exams.
 2. Yielding to different cultural contexts.
 3. Providing subsidies to make formation affordable.
 - iv. Barriers are financial and academic. Flexibility is key. One person cautioned about the importance of assuring standards required by the canons.
 - v. Challenge of being the “only one” of a minority group.
 - vi. How is the competency system keeping diverse peoples out?
 - vii. How to assure people (e.g. formerly addicted) are stable enough.
 - viii. Peter: In Hispanic communities we are marrying and baptizing; in white communities we are burying. – Look at data.
2. Young Deacons
 - i. Tracie (Fort Worth) told about the work of the Young Deacon Task Force who surveyed deacons under 45 and studied what they found to be barriers to younger people becoming deacons. Some of these are:
 1. No deacons that look like them (young)
 2. Cost (dollars and time) are too high.
 3. Formation and placement demands may be inconsistent with demands of young families.
 - ii. They divided their recommendations into:
 1. Recruitment/Discernment
 2. Formation
 3. Post ordination sustainability
 - iii. For each barrier, they planned strategies for reducing or eliminating those barriers. Like with marginal people, the key is flexibility in selection, formation and deployment
 - For more info <http://www.youngdeacons.net/reducing-barriers/>
 - iv. Recommendation to Tracie: survey deacons (any age) who were ordained when they were young to learn what worked and didn't work to make their diaconate possible.

3. Attracting recruits to the diaconate
 - i. Many dioceses want more deacons than they attract.
 - ii. Strategies to address this are mostly marketing/exposure:
 1. Hold discernment meetings routinely.
 2. "Want ad" distributed at convention
 3. Deacon report at convention
 4. Articles, events published in diocesan media
 5. Tell stories, tell stories, tell stories
 6. Go to parishes to spread the word
 7. Hold an annual deacon information event.
 - iii. Question: how effective are these strategies? Do they increase the # of deacons?
 - iv. How to say we don't need any more old, white people?
 - v. Diocese of MD has begun a strategy over the past year:
 1. Developed a "deacon bookmark" that asks. "Are you called to be a deacon?" These are distributed widely in diocesan outlets.
 2. A deacon chaplain accompanies both bishops to every parish episcopal visit. During the Eucharist, the bishop introduces the deacon who gives an "infomercial" about deacons and distributes bookmarks.
 3. Deacon is present and available to answer questions during coffee hour.
 4. To train deacons uniformly on this routine, they produced a video: [\(19\) When A Deacon Serves As Chaplain To A Bishop - YouTube](#)
 5. This effort seems to be producing a greater number of inquiries, but it's too early to tell.