

MENTORING THE NEWLY ORDAINED DEACON



Episcopal Diocese of Florida
Deacon School
June 2020

Introduction

The Diocese of Florida is highly focused on ensuring that the first years of a newly ordained deacon include continuing education. The Diocese wants to ensure a smooth transition from diaconal formation to ordained ministry. Hence, as required by Canon 7 of The Episcopal Church, each newly ordained deacon will be assigned a mentor for at least one year.

Our Bishop supports a mentoring program in which more experienced deacons become partners and advisors with the newly ordained. To accomplish this, the Mentoring Program for the Newly Ordained Deacon was developed. The goal of this program is quite simple - to support in heart, mind and spirit the newly ordained deacon in the Diocese of Florida.

What is a Mentor?

The word "mentor" comes from the Greek character Mentor in Homer's classic tale *The Odyssey*. In that story, when Odysseus left home to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted his friend and advisor, Mentor, to protect, to advise, guide, and train his son, Telemachus. The term "mentor" over the years has come to mean a person who regularly and faithfully provides guidance, counsel, encouragement, correction and support to another person who is in need of formation and development. Mentor is defined as a wise and trusted counselor or teacher, or an influential senior sponsor or supporter.



While the word is not specifically used in the Bible, there are many references to a mentoring relationship. Moses was mentored by his father-in-law Jethro. The relationship between Eli and Samuel prepared Samuel for his role and responsibilities after Eli's death. Jesus certainly mentored his disciples to prepare them for their new roles after his death and resurrection. Jesus set the standard for Christian mentoring. He continues to be our teacher and ultimate mentor and the model for our mentoring relationships. The mentor relies on the Holy Spirit to provide insight and change lives.

MENTORING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To continue personal and ministry support, as well as pastoral and spiritual development which all began with the Formation Process;
- ✓ To help the newly ordained deacon in focus on the development of lifelong study and learning in the areas of diaconal competency;
- ✓ To assist the newly ordained deacon develop healthy and effective ministry relationships; and,
- ✓ To assist the newly ordained deacon in develop support systems for prayer and ministry.

DIACONAL COMPETENCIES

The Competencies for Deacons (rev. 2018) (attached) issued by the Association of Episcopal Deacons outlines expected competencies prior to and after ordination. Lifelong learning is important to the continued development of deacons. This document is guided by The Ordination of Deacons Examination, the Baptismal Covenant and the Catechism. Lifelong

learning objectives include but are not limited to the objectives outlined in the document. Mentors should use this document as a guide to assist in the development of the newly ordained deacon.

DEVELOPING A MENTORING PLAN

MEETINGS

Meetings should be scheduled at least monthly – more frequently if desired or necessary. The setting should be in a private place. Time together should be uninterrupted by phone calls.

Meetings are confidential. Exceptions to this norm would be if the newly ordained deacon gives his/her permission for a release of information or if situations would arise involving civil or criminal statutes (e.g. child or spousal abuse) or problems of a destructive nature (e.g. alcohol dependency, drug abuse, suicide) where the law or good judgment would indicate the need to report the incident.

Meetings should begin and conclude with prayer.

THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

The role of Deacon Mentors is one of listening and offering counsel. Mentors are not supervisors, evaluators of performance or reporters to the Bishop, Archdeacon or Rector/Vicar.

Mentors are not problem-solvers nor are they to intervene directly to resolve problems between the newly ordained deacon and his/her Rector/Vicar. In these situations,



mentors should encourage the newly ordained deacon to resolve matters on his/her own.

Mentors should have discussions with the newly ordained deacon regarding:

- ✓ family life;
- ✓ spiritual reading and prayer life;
- ✓ the regularity of meetings with the spiritual director;
- ✓ how things are going in the parish; and,
- ✓ frustrations, accomplishments.

They are also free to share their own experiences of ministry to help the newly ordained deacon see the joys of ministry as well as its “ups and downs.”

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Deacon Mentors must willingly and enthusiastically embrace the task of mentoring a newly ordained deacon, dedicating the necessary time and energy to the effort.
2. Deacon Mentors must agree to meet with the newly ordained deacon assigned to them on a monthly basis, at a minimum.
3. Deacon Mentors and newly ordained deacon meetings *should be* at least one (1) hour in duration and focus on specific elements of Diaconal Ministry. The meeting

must be focused and not simply be a general conversation on topics unrelated to diaconal ministry, formation, etc.

4. Deacon Mentors must agree to provide their input to the Archdeacon or Archdeacon Designee. This input will be solicited in writing twice per year and on an "as needed" basis determined by the Archdeacon and/or Mentor.
5. The Deacon Mentor and the newly ordained deacon may be from the same parish.
6. While the Deacon Mentor must report the progress of the newly ordained deacon to the Archdeacon regarding his/her growth and needs, issues of a confidential nature must be respected and held as such.
7. The Deacon Mentor assists the newly ordained deacon in understanding what it means to be a cleric immersed in the secular world.
8. The Deacon Mentor advises and counsels the newly ordained deacon on how to balance the demands of family, secular occupation, formation and ministry.
9. The newly ordained deacon should have a Spiritual Director. The Deacon Mentor is not the newly ordained deacon's Spiritual Director. Communication with the Spiritual Director is always confidential. The Deacon Mentor is never to consult or communicate with the Spiritual Director.

MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MENTOR

1. Designation as a Deacon Mentor occurs only with the approval and written appointment by the Archdeacon of the Diocese of Florida.
2. Deacon Mentors must be active vocational deacons ordained for a minimum of 3 years.
3. Deacon Mentors must have a current parish assignment.
4. Deacon Mentors must be actively involved in one or more ministries in their parish or community.
5. Deacon Mentors must attend the Diocese of Florida Deacon Mentor Orientation Program.

Resources:

Competencies for Deacons 2017 (First Rev. 2018) distributed by the Association for Episcopal Deacons