



Human Awareness and Understanding Competency

Archdeacon and Director's Conference: Open Space Notes - Spring 2014

Every year, AED convenes a large group of Archdeacons and Deacon Directors for a professional learning lab. Using [Open Space Technology](#) methods to shape the discussion, these experts in diaconal formation and management of deacon programs provide peer review of adaptations made in their local programs, or raise timely issues for general discussion. Discussion notes are kept. These “Open Space Notes,” while often written informally, provide the best and most recent thinking on a variety of diaconal theological and management challenges by a body of experienced deacons with a wealth of knowledge. Names listed are those of the Conveners. Contact information to initiate further discussion may often be located in the [Directory of Deacons](#) published by AED annually.

Convener: Aaron Perkins (Diocese of Maine)

Participants: Elaine Bellis (Chicago), Cookie Clark (Northern California), Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen (Oregon), Kate Harrigan (Central Pennsylvania), Bette J. Kauffman (Western Louisiana), Janet Page (Dallas), Jack Seymour (Chicago)

Province I came together to come up with ways to collaborate among dioceses for competencies. Aaron is part of the group that is looking at the Human Awareness and Understanding competency.

What are different dioceses doing?

Chicago – look at family systems theory; Bowen-based theory. There is a class in this and teachers assess competency. Plus one unit of CPE required for deacons. How to get urban pastoral care issues into the class is a challenge Chicago is addressing.

Northern California – discussed total ministry paradigm in NC. Currently, there is no field education for total ministry.

Western Louisiana – trying to get students to have hands-on experiences. During formation, students find how it feels to stand in line for social service agencies, to experience how poverty feels like. Western Louisiana want deacons to be able to take a story/a situation and not be guided by own worldview, but to listen deeply and within a larger social context, and figure out what appropriate response might be.

Dallas – deacons in formation have hands-on experience with an agency and that provides students with greater sense of the dynamics involved.



Oregon – as part of leadership course, students did DISC profile, Myer-Briggs, systems theory. Additionally, students have:

- ✚ course in Pastoral Formation, that contains many elements found in CPE training
- ✚ two years of field education, one year in an agency, one year in a congregation. Students also participate in field-education seminars which include theological reflection and critical incident/verbatim about experience
- ✚ students take courses in cross-cultural learning, e.g. Ministry in the Latino Context; they also participate in cross-cultural experiences
- ✚ diversity training (required by TEC)
- ✚ community organizing training is strongly recommended, and soon will be required

We need our students to understand self and to have more awareness of the marginalized. A two-prong approach needed.

Deacon Kauffman recommends RCC course on *Just Faith*, indicating that it “is fabulous for understanding justice issues.” (<http://justfaith.org/about/>)

Deacon Clark mentioned that this relates to the importance of community organizing.

The Rev. Harrigan emphasized relationship between theory and praxis and link with the baptismal promises.

How do we do assessment?

We need to base assessment on well-articulated competencies.

There may be many different ways to assess: written tests, coffee-hour questions, full oral exam.

What would we articulate as critical competencies in this area?

- ✚ Start with the ordination vows – bring the hopes, needs, and concerns of the world to the Church. Therefore, sufficient understanding of power and injustice, powerful and powerlessness (movie *Crash*).
- ✚ Ability to conduct one-on-one meetings and house meetings in communities to find out their concerns and what are their solutions.
- ✚ They will be encountering The Other again and again and again. How do we walk with The Other in a way that is affirming, respectful, compassionate?
- ✚ What are the kick-off competencies that will get people walking in the right direction?
- ✚ Difficult to see how systemic imperatives affect individuals.
- ✚ Field ed and critical incident response are important.

Recorder: The Rev. Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen, Deacon