



Ministry Development & Lifelong Formation

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.

This group convened to provide feedback for the Ministry Development and Lifelong Formation draft document put together by Deacon Tim Spannaus (Michigan), et al. The bold titles refer to parts of the document.

EDUCATION IN MINISTRY THAT IS LEARNER-CENTERED AND COMPETENCY-BASED FOR DIACONAL EDUCATION AND FORMATION PROGRAMS

Heartily agree with the report’s focus on the importance of coming up with how and why we want to develop competencies before considering ways of getting to that point.

Suggestions:

- We need easier-to-understand language, too much jargon.
- People putting together program may or may not be educators
- Example used is way too simplistic (writing prayers of people).
- If this is learner-centered, does this mean we need to have 15 means of assessment?
- This mean allowing various entry points; we are educating adults with different learning styles.

Writing and using competencies

Portfolios

The group agreed with the idea of portfolios, thinking this was a good way to assess competency.

Examples – videos, curriculum, Lenten studies, work, Sunday School lessons, research
Questions: Who will hold portfolio? Who will evaluate? How will they be used in final assessment?

Hopefully what is gathered in a portfolio is something they will use in future.



Helping individuals develop learning plans, set goals, and choose ways of learning

It's important that what is produced be responsive to different needs of dioceses. We need to keep in mind that coordination often is poor between the individual formation director who has to do all of this and the places where responsibility is.

One diocese uses the COM liaison to help students move through the process.

Who will be the evaluator?

We need to be educating commissions and boards about the wave in which deacons now belong. Sometimes individuals on commissions/boards are unaware of the evolution of the diaconate in the past few decades. Many are unaware of the five competencies.

III Teaching and facilitating on-line learning

Louisiana sees CALL courses as good fit with deacons-in-formation.

- In Oregon, CALL classes are supplemental and well appreciated.
- Can offer the academic portion in ways that work with groups.
- Group agreed that CALL can be a good resource.

Challenges with community building that result from on-line learning.

Central Pennsylvania – use of hybrid approach. Private facebook group.

Incorporation of online components for students.

The Diocese of Southern Ohio has a hybrid approach that works well for the formation of deacons in three dioceses. Three long weekends combined with on-line classes in academic subjects

SCRIPTURE

Questions group raised:

- Are the competencies listed really competencies?
- These are great themes and we want to make sure they are covered within an overview of the arc of salvation history
- How about including the theme of servanthood as a broader theme?

Suggestion that committee members develop an opening, framing statement that explains what needs to be covered.

Some had concerns about using bible study as the example of praxis. Not a primary diaconal charism. Perhaps it might be better to do a bible study based on a diaconal theme.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

We say we are not making scholars, yet look at what skills are listed.

Need language adjustment; currently too academic. It is important to be clear who the audience is. Academic language works fine for other academics. So if for some other audience, need to work on other language. (Not all teachers are academics, either.)

When discussing anything related to Christian History, we want to know why this occurred and whether they still have an impact.

Skills of interpretation might limit itself to providing a wide range of resources

Butler Bass, *A People's History of Christianity*



The Open Space suggested the following **PRIORITIES for MD&LF GROUP:**

The other four competencies:

- Human awareness and understanding
- *Diakonia* and the Diaconate
- Spiritual Practices and Discipline
- Ministerial Experience

N.B. Time, distance, money, and age are hindrances to formation – if document is silent to this, that would not bode well.

Re: the understanding of multiculturalism, how does that get woven in?

What does a deacon look like who comes from a different place?

We also have to remember that as we bring in other cultures, how do we bring this together?

Need to get these materials out to everyone soon.

Recorder: The Rev. Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen, Deacon