



## Archdeacon and Deacon Director's Conference Spring 2015 Open Space Notes

### Emerging Paradigms of Collaborative Diaconal Formation

#### Sample Panel Discussion Questions

1. Describe the history and development of your collaborative program.

The School for Deacons was founded in 1980. Called into being by Bishop of California, William E. Swing in response to the roll out of the then “new” BCP and the emerging renewal of the diaconate.

In its history it has been led by four “deans:” The Rev. Shirley Woods [1980- 1989; The Very Rev. Judith Dunlop [1990-1998] The Rt. Rev. Otis Charles (interim) [1998-1999] Mr. Roderick B. Dugliss [1999-present]. Note; none were or are deacons.

It began as all-day Saturday program with a single subject focus for varied number of Saturdays. As people came greater distances, the program evolved to long weekends every third weekend with multiple classes offered. Dean Dunlop helped formalize a semester system and a very basic scope and sequence so that from the mid-’90’s on, the offerings looked like a traditional ‘school.’

The school met in a retreat center and then two different church facilities until 1998. It has been housed on the campus of The Church Divinity School of the Pacific from 1998 to the present. Specific courses and curricular groups have been and continue to be developed and incorporated in the current structure to meet the evolving needs of the dioceses served.

How was your program designed and who designed it?

The principal architect of The School for Deacons was its founding dean, who also drew on the work and advice of the head of the diocesan School for Ministry which had been doing modest diaconal formation prior to 1980. There have been revisions, additions, discontinuations, etc. over the years. The process is very incremental but seeks always to prepare deacons for the current and the next “wave” of the Order per Susanne Watson-Epting’s metaphor

2. Which dioceses collaborate in your program?

Collaboration began early when in the year of The School for Deacons’ founding the Diocese of California divided into two dioceses, creating the Diocese of El Camino Real. The Diocese of San Joaquin participated in the school until the election of John David Scholfield as bishop who promptly forbade anyone from attending. There have also been students from the Diocese of Northern California from the beginning and they now comprise a significant presence in the School

for Deacons. From time to time we have had a student from other dioceses, most notably, Diocese of Los Angeles, and one student from the Diocese of Atlanta.

3. Describe the practical and logistical arrangements of your program.

a. What is the length of your program and how are the units or terms divided?

It is a three-year program, going full time. There are two semesters per year with six school weekends per semester. Attendance at three weekend long school retreats is required. Five “courses” are offered per semester (plus time in field education in the second and third years)

b. What is the time commitment? (days and hours; number of sessions; residential requirements, etc.)

A school weekend = 7:00am to 6:15pm on Saturday; 8:00am to 3:30pm Sunday.

Each “class” is a semester long, thus six class sessions of 1.5 to 3 hours. Field Education adds an expected 8 hours per week, or 120 hours per semester, actively engaged in a Field Education site.

The program is documented in “units.” Successful completion of the program comprises 72 units. Units are calculated on a contact-hour basis.

All classes offered on the campus of CDSP

c. In what ways is your program flexible? (Can students plug in at any time at their own pace? Must they carry a full load? Can they substitute other education from seminaries, college work, EFM?)

A full load for three years is normative. It is possible to go part-time but that does extend the number of years in the program. Because of sequencing we have learned that one must take the program in order. Sequencing means you can not start in the Spring semester. People are welcome to take a course or two, or several any time, with the instructor’s permission. Once one aspires to ordination, one is expected to complete all elements of the program—unless a diocese choses to waive some part of it. We will accept work done in other institutions if it meets program learning goals. There is a provision, rarely invoked, for well documented “credit for prior learning” for up to 15 of the 72 units. This is only useful if one needs units to qualify for a “degree” from the school.

4. Please describe your students’ spiritual life and worship opportunities.

Each student’s spiritual life is a matter taken up with and guided by a spiritual director whom we strongly encourage each student to have. [Most ordination processes mandate it.] Every student, full or part-time, is expected to participate in a Spiritual Formation Group organized by the school but offered and lead locally in the student’s own context. These groups meet between school weekends for a minimum of 16 hours a semester. Content, structure, and process varies according to the gifts of the leader and the geographic distribution of students. Each school day begins with Eucharist. Saturdays conclude with student planned and led Evening Prayer, except—at the beginning and end of each semester. At those times we reverse the order and begin Saturday with student led Morning Prayer and end the day with Eucharist, followed by a dinner to which families, discernment committee members, and other supporters are invited. From time to time there is a

brief program or presentation.

5. Please describe how your program is structured financially.

a. What is the annual expense to the dioceses which participate?

The School for Deacons is an institution of the Diocese of California which provides \$35,000 annually. The other dioceses function as regular “donors” in our ongoing fund-raising activities. They give modestly, if at all, annually.

In addition to tuition and fees (below) and the money from the Diocese of California, the school must raise between \$60,000 and \$100,000 a year to cover program costs.

b. What is the annual expense per student participant, and pays it?

Tuition is \$1,950 per semester plus a \$100 activity fee (pays for food). There are \$25 application and registration fees, and a one-time graduation fee to cover costs of that event. Individuals are responsible for their own expenses. Some congregations support students financially in whole or in part.

c. Are scholarships available?

Yes. Once one is a postulant one has access to very generous scholarship support from a long-standing endowment of the Diocese of California. Because of history etc. students from the Diocese of San Joaquin have full access to these funds. Students from Northern California do not. Students from El Camion Real have access to funds from an amount spun off to the diocese at its founding. In addition, there is a specific endowed fund for women postulants for the diaconate that is very generous, open to all dioceses—but not to men. In addition, The School for Deacons has an endowment that provides scholarships for any student in need, though the amount available is limited.

6. Please describe the technology utilized and the degree of student technological competence required. How is content delivered, discussion conducted, and contact maintained? (In-person only; on-line; Adobe Connect; Webex; Blackboard, Facebook, Youtube, Google Hang-Outs, etc.)

We are very low tech. Instructors make good use of email for communication, submission of written work, and feedback. Internet resources are accessed pretty widely in the curriculum (from watching movies to exegetical research).

We work collaboratively with the CALL program at CDSP for courses that are offered beyond the school. CDSP uses Moodle for its online work. We anticipate using CALL as a vehicle for supporting distance learning with which we are experimenting.

The style and method of classroom instruction varies according to the material to be mastered. Active student participation is strongly encouraged and supported. The written work is reflective and analytical. And, of course, in areas of applied skills the learning is in the doing.

7. Describe how your participants are evaluated. (Portfolio/GOE's/exams/informally.)

Students demonstrate competence through writing, in-class presentations, participation in discussion, preaching, doing things (liturgy, field ed activities). For record keeping, it is a Pass/Fail

system. The principal form of evaluation is narrative written for each student in each course. The dioceses conduct their own evaluations. Two are now using a portfolio system. The other two still create “canonical exams.”

8. Describe how your instructors are selected.

We are fortunate to be at the confluence of four dioceses, in the heart of a vibrant urban area, and in the middle of the Graduate Theological Union. There is a lot of talent readily available. Our faculty enjoy their work at The School for Deacons and tend to hang around for a long time. New instructors are found through networking and sometimes by open invitation to apply. We look for competence in the area to be taught or led, understanding of the diaconate, ability to encourage the learning of others, an appreciation for the unique needs of adult learners many of whom are working full-time and have family responsibilities.

What role do deacons play in formation in your program?

Of our faculty, eight are deacons, five are lay persons (including one professed religious) and three presbyters. It is a goal of the current dean (lay) to include as many deacons as possible in the program. Two of the three presbyters teach standard academic areas—New Testament and Ethics. The third is a certified CPE supervisor who teaches Pastoral Care and is our principal Eucharistic presider.

9. Does your program have any successful experience with diaconal:

a. Students under age 40?

Yes, with the few who discern a call and come to the program. [The most challenged—not in terms of study, learning, or growth but just plain time—are parents of young children who are also working full time.]

b. Students in underrepresented groups?

Yes, with the few who discern a call and come to the program.

c. Students whose primary language is not English? (What language was it?)

We have worked well with students for whom English is a second language, if their English is strong enough (a very subjective term). We have worked well with students whose first language is Cantonese. But these are few in number, reflecting the small populations of these groups in the church in the Dioceses.

Most challenging is meeting the needs of the Latino/Hispanic community. In the 1990's a special three-year program was set up at the School for Deacons with a half-dozen instructors competent in Spanish. A cohort was prepared and the program then disbanded. All but one of the graduates was ordained priest. The one deacon—the wife of a man who was priested—and her husband then returned to Honduras.

10. What else is required by your program's dioceses for ordination? (CPE; CPE alternatives; Field Education; Community Organizing/Development, SAFE Church, Anti-Racism or Title IV training). How is it accessed?

Since they are required by the Canons of TEC, Safe Church, both for adults and children, and anti-racism training are required, and provided by all four dioceses, not the school.

TEC mandated Title IV training is currently done in a session of School for Deacons' Senior Seminar—taught by the dean.

Three of the dioceses require some form of a CPE alternative for deacons. They look to extant programs (extended units, custom offerings) to meet the requirement. One has invented an experimental variant blending community organizing praxis and CPE-like processing.

Two of the four dioceses require community organizing training for ordination. This is accomplished through diocesan collaboration with one of the professional community organizing organizations. (IAF, PICO, Gameliel, ABCD etc.)

The School for Deacons program requires two year of field education. The norm is one year in a social ministry setting or agency and one year in a congregation. Variations have been created to meet the needs of two of the dioceses.

11. How do you deal with differentiation between diocesan requirements?

We are in conversation with leaders in all of the dioceses we serve and do all we can to meet any needs they have. So far this has worked well.

Two examples: 1) Each diocese does the evaluation of a person's formation differently. Some use old style canonical exams. Two are experimenting with some form of portfolio—still trying to learn how. We work with students to help them be most present and competent in their context as evaluated there. 2) One diocese has asked that we adapt Field Education to focus on community organizing. The student is assigned to a congregation for both years of Field Education and is expected to initiate and see through some form of community organizing with that congregation in its community context.

12. How does your program factor in the need for contextual adaptation of formation?

Spiritual Formation and Field Education take place in the student's context. Universal learnings are explored in a Field Education Seminar on school weekends.

A shift we have become aware of and are learning how to adapt for is to correct for an urban bias in some of the content of courses. The majority of current students will be deacons in small towns or regional centers where the economy is agricultural [and in California that can be huge agribusiness]. We are trying to pay attention to the reality that the "needs, concerns, and hopes of the world" show up differently in different contexts.

13. Can you direct us to a link or website link describing your format? What is the name and contact info for the person to contact for more information?

School for Deacons website= [www.sfd.edu](http://www.sfd.edu)

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