

PRINCIPLES COMMON TO QUALITY DEACON FORMATION PROGRAMS

The programs are:

- Competency based: Expectations are clearly stated so that outcomes can be recognized and achieved in a variety of learning experiences and opportunities. This affords the possibility of different learning plans for different individuals.
- Holistic: By engaging in all five competencies¹, holistic Christian formation occurs for the individual (personal, psychological, relational, spiritual, and academic) as a person in and of the world, empowered to live out the baptismal and diaconal vows. The sacred and secular, church and world are involved and integrated.
- Integrative: The content is not learned in a vacuum, but includes attention to experience, content, reflection, ministry and life context, knowledge and spirituality.
- Collaborative: Collaboration means that what affects me, affects you and we work alongside one another. Cooperation and Coordination are also important, especially in our processes with the Commission on Ministry and others, including agencies, congregations, and individuals. Partnership with other organizations is encouraged and developed. Collaboration means that we decide on things together, that we are both prepared to give things up as well as benefit from mutual gifts.
- Flexible and innovative: The program allows adjustments for life experiences, level of education, life circumstances, and learning styles. The program is oriented toward a changing church which honors the past but allows for current trends and future possibilities. Various alternatives exist for fulfilling requirements, ie, CPE alternatives. Being innovative is acceptable and necessary.
- Focused on adult learning: The program focuses on outcomes. The learners gain new knowledge and skills that empower them to apply that knowledge and those skills to relevant situations. When we place the focus on learning we are able to learn from our mistakes as well as our successes. In order to focus on learning, supervision, mentoring and coaching are important. Adult learning is experiential, inductive, collaborative, appreciative, and reflective. Current prevailing adult learning principles are applied; different learning styles recognized; and new technological opportunities employed (ie, on-line courses).

¹ As listed in the Title III Ministry Canons: (academic studies, diakonia and the diaconate, human awareness and understanding, spiritual development and discipline, practical training and experience)

- Oriented toward life-long learning: The program authenticates that learning is on going and provides the learner with the foundation and resources for life long learning. The learner understand the program is simply one stage along the lifelong learning spectrum and is able to set learning goals and prepare learning plans beyond the prescribed program.
- Clear in their focus on leadership development: The program provides opportunities to engage in a broad spectrum of leadership possibilities in the church and community, locally, nationally and globally.
- Clear in their focus on theological reflection with praxis (doing ministry) within a peer group: The program teaches a variety of methods for theological reflection and the program provides opportunity to theologically reflect with peers on the ministries in which the learner is engaged.
- Community based: Learning occurs in community and out in the community. Growth in human awareness and understanding of self and others and the ability to relate and appreciate to ‘the other’ are important aspects of formation.
- Relevant to diaconal identity and the Baptismal Covenant: The program focuses on the understanding of the diaconate as outline in the Book of Common Prayer. (Deacon Ordination, Catechism) It integrates an understanding of the diaconate that includes both the Baptismal Covenant and the ordination vows and charges. Deacons realize themselves as a part of the *laos* and are developers of diaconal ministry in others.
- Relevant to Christian Mission (needs and concerns of the world today): Ministry focuses on situations and needs in the world and current social issues are engaged. Practical training and experience in the church and world occur.
- Contextual: The program takes learner and diocesan context into consideration. This includes geographical, economic, social, ethnic and racial identities. The program helps the learner to grasp the drama of the story of salvation and how the learner fits into that story so that the learner acts in congruence with the drama of salvation.
- Clear in providing assessment opportunities that are always done in the context of learning. The assessment process is a learning, and empowering process.
- Clear about the place of discernment. Discernment is foundational and integral to formation. The learner realizes that discernment is life long as well as critical prior to beginning formation. Christian discernment begins at baptism and ends at death.

- Clear in their focus on the place of Spirituality. Spiritual practices are incorporated and the integration of those practices is an essential part of formation.

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