



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

Essential Diaconal Theology Reading List 2021

1) Susanne Watson Epting – Unexpected Consequences: The Diaconate Renewed (2015)

The renewal of baptismal identity in the 1979 Prayer made it clear that a call to the work of service is constitutive of Christian baptismal identity, not necessarily of a call to the diaconate. This call is similar to the call of all baptized Christians to be priests in the priesthood of all believers. The deacon, instead, is called to be the icon which focusses the church's self-regard outward, reminding the baptized of this call and organizing them to do it.

Groundbreaking introduction of the organizational heuristic device of the “Seven Waves” of diaconal theology in TEC history. Highlights how the interplay between race, gender, age and class biases have impacted who has been and currently is a deacon in TEC and also discourages many who should be invited into the order. Most helpful in clarifying that what the uninformed often experience as diaconal “theological chaos” is in fact a complex but intelligible theology that is preadapted to the current evangelism setting. Essential reading for those interested in broadening the scope of those able to answer a call to the diaconate in TEC in the coming years.

<https://www.amazon.com/Unexpected-Consequences-Susanne-Watson-Epting/dp/0819229792>

2) John N. Collins – Diakonia Studies (2013)

Most recent articulation of New Testament Greek scholar John N. Collins' most salient point, first proposed in 1990, that the 19th century translation of the *diak*-root words in the Bible is faulty. The actual translation of these words is more accurately described by the term “ambassador” or “agent.” Collins's works were hugely influential for Ormonde Plater's seminal work of TEC diaconal theology (**Many Servants 2006**) in clarifying what deacons *are*, instead of concentrating on what they *do* (and *cannot* do). Provided the theological undergirding for the 2006 revision of the TEC diaconal canons.

https://www.amazon.com/Diakonia-Studies-Critical-Issues-Ministry/dp/0199367574/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=john+n.+collins&qid=1623187116&s=books&sr=1-3

3) AED Diaconal Competencies (2018)

Our most recent suggestions on how diaconal formation can be best accomplished to reach the goals articulated in the distinctive 2006 canons. These clarified deacons' unique formation and support needs and distinguished them from those needed by priests. The Competencies are filled with hard-earned diaconal insight and customizable for your diocese. They were created at the request of the Anglican Communion office, are fast becoming the standard for diaconal formation, are being adapted by other Provinces of the Anglican Communion, and today are necessary tools in the design of diocesan or seminary-based in-person or virtual formation. Available in English and Spanish, with more languages in development. They are revised each Triennium by a dedicated committee, with insights garnered from formation directors from across TEC who gather annually to assess formation trends and develop new best practices.

<https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/deacon-competencies.html>

4) Michael Jackson – The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective (2020)

Proceedings and articles from a recent ecumenical conference in Canada, which features profiles and comparisons of the variety of theological understandings of the diaconate. Assists TEC readers to understand that most denominations grapple with the complexity of diaconal theology, and how it still is influenced by Reformation battles even as the denominations have renewed the diaconate simultaneously as a full and equal order focused on empowering service.

<https://www.amazon.com/Diaconate-Ecumenical-Perspective-Ecclesiology-Practice-ebook/dp/B07V7D7YVP>

5) W. Shawn McKnight – Understanding the Diaconate: Historical, Theological, and Sociological Foundations (2018)

Comprehensive theological review of the history and theology of the diaconate. Written by a Roman Catholic bishop who hopes to show that the deacon is not merely a liturgical assistant in a time of fewer priestly vocations (as generally conceived in current Roman Catholic practice) but is more appropriately regarded as communicator, bridge and organizer of the people's *diakonia*. Helpful when considering current post-pandemic challenges for TEC as it struggles to resist the temptation to abandon the unique charism of our renewed diaconate to continue to do "business as usual, but for free" in a time of shrinking resources.

https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Diaconate-Theological-Sociological-Foundations/dp/0813230357/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?dchild=1&keywords=sean+mcknight+bishop&qid=1623200944&sr=8-2-fkmr0

6) International Handbook of Ecumenical Diakonia (forthcoming 2021)

Materials from an international conference which can introduce TEC to the wide world of diaconal identity. A breath-taking array of contextualized diaconal responses to poverty, injustice, gender issues, public health challenges and war on the global stage. Essential inspiration for TEC from a world where the word "diakonia" has been in everyday use to describe all aspects of the church's traditional charitable work and addresses the current task of European Protestant deacons from a variety of traditions as they transform themselves from relatively secularized traditional hospital- and education-based ministries (as nurses, social workers and teachers) into expressly claiming a new identity as public Christian justice advocates. It provides a peek into a possible future for TEC's deacons, because of the strong appeal of a justice-oriented diaconate to Episcopal (and other) young adults.

https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/int._handbook_on_ecumenical_diakonia_flyer_3.pdf

7) Thomas Briedenthal – "Exodus from Privilege: Reflections on the Diaconate in Acts" (2013)

A thoughtful proposal concerning how to resolve the lingering and troublesome debate about the desirability of discontinuing the transitional diaconate. Suggests a theological path through the thickets of tradition that will honor the deacon's unique call while preserving some benefits of the traditional practice for forming priests. Published as an article in the Anglican Theological Review and presented by AED with permission.

https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/uploads/2/6/7/3/26739998/briedenthal_2013.pdf

8) Ormonde Plater - Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons (2004)

A basic, essential text for discernment committees and commissions on ministry, and a comprehensive look at the vital ministry of the permanent diaconate in the church today. Plater was a deacon, liturgical scholar and a former president of AED.

https://www.amazon.com/Many-Servants-Introduction-Ormonde-Plater/dp/156101270X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=ormonde+plater&qid=1633706270&s=books&sr=1-1