



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

2017 Archdeacon & Deacon Directors Conference Open Space Report: What Can the Episcopal Church Headquarters Do for AED?

Facilitator: Geof Smith

Scribe: Patricia Soukup

Deacon Smith described the prevue of the Episcopal Church Headquarters (aka “815”). It addresses issues that cannot be addressed at the diocesan level – global issues that cross all diocese in the areas of:

- Communications
- Administration
- Governance
 - Creation Care
 - Evangelism
 - Racial Reconciliation
 - Mission Work

ISSUES RAISED

- Not all diaconal ordinations are reported to 815 because some bishops do not believe it is necessary to do so, since deacons typically are non-stipendiary. The House of Bishops needs to be educated about this issue because 815 does not maintain a roster of deacons (AED, as the professional membership organization, has been maintaining this).
- As a result of the downsizing that has been occurring at 815, the opportunity for networking has been lost. Ecumenical awareness has been diminished, as has ministry development. These are key issues that were previously inherent in The Episcopal Church (TEC), but they are now fading away.
- People do not necessarily have a sense of the larger church anymore; diocesan level awareness is typically the upper limit of awareness.
- It would be extremely beneficial if deacons were more visible at 815, but any sort of governance change in terms of official roles falls to the Executive Council. The committees within this body then address individual issues brought before them, and this has political considerations inherent in it.
- Bottom line: AED is a tremendous asset to 815 as a professional organization, but the only way that AED will have an opportunity to raise awareness of the diaconate at the national church level is by obtaining a line item in TEC’s budget.



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Request that 815 send its videography team to different dioceses to interview deacons and capture common themes that run across all dioceses. These should be general issues that address the areas of creation care, evangelism, racial reconciliation, and mission work. It would be important for the deacons being interviewed to talk specifically about their calls to ministry.
- Make it clear to 815 that AED is an asset, and in so doing, specify what issues warrant national-level funding – issues that cannot be addressed at the diocesan level.
- Offer a full workshop for deacons about the polity of TEC and how they can become politically savvy. This might be a community organizing session for deacons about getting involved in the church at the national level.

NEXT STEPS

- The specific suggestions listed here should become part of the AED strategic plan, and this recommendation will be presented to the AED Board at its meeting on March 20, 2017 for consideration.
- Deacon Smith will represent AED to the House of Bishops. He will share with this body the concerns raised at the Archdeacon & Deacon Directors Conference, and he will request that the bishops spend some reflection time focusing on the role of the diaconate in the broader church.