



## Triennial Assembly 2016 - Diakonia: Engaging God's Mission Open Space Notes

### Deacon Competencies and Lifelong Learning

Convenor: Rev. Dr. Robin B. Hollis, Deacon, Arizona

Scribe: Rev. Janet King, Deacon, Idaho

#### FOCUS QUESTION(S):

1. Where are we on implementing pre-ordination competencies?
  - Grounded in the 5 canonical requirement areas for Deacons (Canon III 6.5 pg. 72)
    - i. (1) Academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.
    - ii. (2) Diakonia and the diaconate.
    - iii. (3) Human awareness and understanding.
    - iv. (4) Spiritual development and discipline.
    - v. (5) Practical training and experience.
  - Draft of more detailed competencies on AED Website
  - AED's Vocational & Lifelong learning Task Force under Dn. Tim Spannaus
  - Should these be consistently applied in some way for all deacons?
2. What is being done for life-long learning? Post-Ordination on an annual basis?
  - Ground in the canonical requirement for Deacons (Canon III 7.5 pg. 77)
    - i. Sec. 5. The Bishop and Commission shall require and provide for the continuing education of Deacons and keep a record of such education. [page 77].
  - What is the expectation? What is the accountability?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS/POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS:

1. Continue work on current draft of competencies to make them more consistent, look to adding behavioral based anchors.
2. Develop a Best practices resource where learnings can be leveraged/shard across dioceses.
3. Expand the current focus of the AED Vocational and Life Long Learning to begin exploring the following:
  - a. Expand the ways in which the current competencies can include ideas for Continuing Education (CE) looking at the topics e.g. missional work, cultural understanding, homelessness, community organizing, theology, issues facing the world and the church, how to explain theological concepts to parishioners,
  - b. Explore setting a common standard for lifelong learning (annual CE) – not necessarily relying on self-reporting through the annual report.
  - c. Build in accountability and define what that looks like
  - d. Look for ways to share and leverage post-ordination learning for all deacons e.g., webinars open to all dioceses (or start within provinces) to help build a robust learning community network.
4. Recommend AED build relationships and partner for CE offerings, not just CALL, look at Iona, consider other academic institutions, or other community organizations (like social justice etc.)

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5. Ensure annual Deacon letter of agreement includes funds for on-going development. Must communicate so that all deacons and priests understand the importance.
6. Conduct “CLERGY” retreats/learnings where the key notes include deacons & presbyters – actively build better relationships through these learning offerings. Utilize the gifts of both to build relationships.
7. Caution – remember that Deacons are of the world, need to understand the Church, but are not designed to be academicians – need to ensure that balance is in the development of learning opportunities but that they don’t become a barrier.
8. Volunteers stepping forward to assist this AED workgroup to build the plan and move forward.

#### BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

Kate - lifelong learning is an expectation and contextual . . .fear the deacon program that is the mini-priest program.

Cookie – is deacon formation like “pornography” you know it when you see it so it’s hard to define?

Group reviewed the Canons for Deacons.

Canon III 6.5 lists the areas of competency for a Deacon – minimum requirements-

- (1) Academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church. [page 72]
- (2) Diakonia and the diaconate.
- (3) Human awareness and understanding.
- (4) Spiritual development and discipline.
- (5) Practical training and experience.

Tim shared the update from the current draft from the Vocational and Life Long Learning Task Force has developed examples of the competencies. Focus on abilities/behaviorally anchored. How can we best assess these areas.

Portfolio is a key concept/practice. Currently these draft competencies (Available on the AED Website under resources) are focused on pre-ordination.

*Competencies are defined as knowledge, skills, and abilities and can be measured/observed through behaviors and other assessments.*

#### Canon Requirement for Continuing Education/Lifelong Learning is found in Canon III 7.5

- **Sec. 5. The Bishop and Commission shall require and provide for the continuing education of Deacons and keep a record of such education.** [page 77].
- **QUESTION: What is the canonical expectation – should it be forced how is it documented, just on annual report?**
  - o One way this is done is through self-reporting on annual report to Bishop
  - o In MI, CE (Continuing Education) does not speak to canonical areas.
  - o After Ordination, there is no accountability
  - o After Ordination one discovers what “I need to know” – How can I enhance my ministry.
  - o AZ is working with Canon Theologian on a quarterly program on a specific theological subject and offered in 2 hour blocks to Lay, Priest, & Deacons. Idea is to provide the same information but from the perspective of these orders.
- Should we define competencies for ongoing CE?
- Topics evolve, e.g. define asset mapping, etc.
- Some Deacons are self-motivated and yet some “know everything they need to know”.
- In Canada, licenses are tied to CE – requiring “Substantive learning” followed by all diocese and diocesan bishop is insistent on CE.

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- **One algorithm is to say 21 hours equivalent to 1 semester course work / equipping for ministry/** e.g. how to motivate volunteers....EFM or other forms due to rural or geographically disbursed parishes.
- Important for Archdeacons to remind Bishops that for some vocational deacons, who work full time, “you can’t always make them come or do that; they’re working.”
  - o Consequence If no CE- Bishop invites archdeacons and the offender; gives them a time frame, i.e. 3 months to find a course approved of and begin or complete it. CDSP CALL courses can be used.
- Discussion continued on what competencies do we want to see pre or post ordination? Can we use the same ones in the Canons and frame it for the appropriate situation?
- Check out the package of Draft competencies on the AED Website that mirror the Canon categories.
- In TX seminary priest required to have 24 CEUs, Bi-vocational Priests and deacons = 12 CEUs in 3 areas of
  - o 1) personal/ spiritual development
  - o 2) practical ministry
  - o 3) theology/academic
- Need to expect that context will change over time and definitely after ordination.
- Based on what God is calling “me” to do which may be very fluid
- One area of competency could be to learn Spanish, liturgical/homiletical skills
- All these may look different in various context as we develop formation opportunities.
- AZ shared a way of teaching formation using “leaders as teachers” – Bishop teaching class this day on Preaching to Deacon Postulants.; use a former ASU professor to teach religious ethics. Other deacons now wanting to go back and take classes.
- Other areas of training could be IAF (Industrial Area Foundation – community organizing). Some Bishops requiring it of all clergy.
- TX shared that last year Brene Brown was brought in to teach how to be risk takers – weeklong training.
- Ensure there are funds from the parish to cover ongoing CE costs.
- Encourage stronger relationships with presbyters and deacons – conduct CE with both as in No. Cal who has great relationships because it’s for “CLERGY”.
  - o Other dioceses where the learning is separate, seems to be more of a division between presbyters and deacons.
- Consider using online alternatives, i.e. Church Next – Kate shared they will work with you to provide a course session you may need.
- Consider partnering for increasing resources such as CDSP CALL, Iona, other diocese’s.
- Need to have AED be visible as partners won’t think of AED first.
- Consider making ourselves know to Episcopal Health formation- teaching mental health, wellness communities, sharing programs.
- Caution, to not create tiers or levels that become a challenge, eg was the issue with Nurses with diplomas, 2 year Nurses vs. nurses with Bachelors. It’s become so academic, losing sight of the goal of nursing- **don’t set the bar so high that it becomes a barrier.**
- Consider webinars for geographic diverse.
  - o But what would be the platform?
  - o How do we hold folks accountable?
  - o Where would it live? Who would administer? Each Diocese?
- Consider having a group read a book and conduct online course to discuss it...record participation
- Consider using this for Anti-Racism training
- Need to become aware of gaps in ministry or how to education, i.e. homeless, Hispanics, cultural context/ competency

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- TX suggests learning from Iona Initiative mistakes – some course use outlines, lecture notes other than video.
- It's all about creating learning communities.
- Should we have a minimum number of CEs that is at the national level? Implement a universal standard as a guide.
- We need to be careful that we are ordaining those who can afford it and who can do the work. When on the other hand they could have a 'deacon's heart'? COM is saying the individual can't write, doesn't look like us?... we need to recognize that deacons are not academicians but do need to be proficient at communicating if they are to be the bridge to the world and the translator or interpreter.
- Need to be cautious to not exclude people...may need to identify people with learning disabilities...but how do they preach...how can they proclaim if they can't write – may need alternative methods to train in formation.

List of participants and notes on opening comments/issues/concerns:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Opening Comments</b>
Tim Spannaus . . . . .	MI. . . . .	Lead on Vocation & Life Long Learning Task Force
Christine Ross* . . . . .	Kootini, Canada . . . . .	AD & Dir. Formation
Janet King . . . . .	Idaho. . . . .	No formal formation
Cookie Clark . . . . .	N. Calif. . . . .	Prefer School for deacons, need for alternatives
Ellen Cook* . . . . .	CIn. Ohio . . . . .	Standing Cmte; support for ministry development; teaching at Univ. of CInn. 35 years
Denise LaVetty. . . . .	NYC . . . . .	Director Diaconal Formation
Carol Peterson . . . . .	Texas . . . . .	(Prev. WY 8 yrs) trained parish nurses in WY – for self, no formal formation – self managed with portfolio
Mary Lenn Dixon*. . . . .	Texas . . . . .	Iona School for ministry adding 3 yr lay track / dean for Lay & Diaconal Formation.
Ann Langevin. . . . .	Nevada . . . . .	Called in 2004 – 3 bishops ordained in 2011, requirements hid from her. Doesn't want that experience to happen to others. New Bishop required EFM.
Dawnlynn Greeney . . . . .	MN. . . . .	Similar confusion with formation issues like NV. The last required course – was unemployed and couldn't pay Continuing Ed. If you don't complete it are you unordained? Online continuing ed is extremely challenging for some. Some good deacon don't do well in academic settings.
Kate Harrigan . . . . .	CPA. . . . .	Priest on the AED BOD & Vocational Task Force; on faculty of diocesan school for formation (slide away from diaconal formation and seeing move toward lay and Priestly. Fear the Deacon program that is the mini-priest formation.
Robin Hollis*. . . . .	AZ. . . . .	Director Deacon Formation Academy; Deacons Council & Anti-Racism Committee.

\*Individuals volunteering to assist/work on Vocational and Life Long Learning Task Force