



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

Mentoring New Deacons

Matthew Johnson – MN

(I'll be honest, I can't find a piece of notes with their names, you may know)

Jan Grinnell: Archdeacon from RI

Gen Grewell: Archdeacon from Olympia

Deacon from Northern CA

Sara Getts: Archdeacon from AZ

The conversation began with a discussion of what is currently being done, what is currently being formed and planned, and the completed with what was hopeful to do in the future.

Jan began by discussing the fact that a canon obligates mentorship and continuing education.

CANON 7: Of the Life and Work of Deacons

Section 3

- (f) For two years following ordination, new Deacons shall continue a process of formation authorized by the Bishop.
- (g) The Bishop or the Bishop's designee, in consultation with the Commission, shall assign each newly ordained Deacon a mentor
- (h) The Bishop or the Bishop's designee, in consultation with the Commission, shall assign each newly ordained Deacon a mentor Deacon where a suitable mentor Deacon is available. The mentor and Deacon shall meet regularly for at least one year to provide guidance, information, and a sustained dialogue about diaconal ministry.

The discussion then turned to the importance of attempting to meet a canonical requirement and what that would mean for the individual states.

RI ordained three new Deacons last week. We discussed that RI is using a new distance-learning program that is in use in Providence 1. One thing that was mentioned would be the importance of increased training on the canons, structure of the Anglican Communion, and church governance. There is not a current plan to meet these needs and one is in development.

In Arizona there is a meeting of newly ordained people about 5-6 months after ordination to discuss any issues that they are having. The current plan is to increase the frequency of those meetings, along with a program for lifelong learning (which is also a canonical requirement). Distance is an issue in Arizona as they have a large number of Deacons and a great geographical area.

The Diocese of Olympia will be starting Iona online training. Distance and topography is an issue for them to work with new Deacons and have an easy space for all people to meet in community. There is an attempt at mentorship,

continued

but a revised program is currently being worked on to increase the utility of it. They are looking into integrating new Deacons into fresh start, which is a program that new priests go through. There would be both Deacon specific and then joint components.

The Diocese of North California also has the issue of distance. They do currently have a mentoring program assigned to new Deacons to work with them. They are currently looking into using Zoom technology, which is an online meeting forum, to increase availability. They also have their Deacons meet with their Bishop on a biannual basis, which allows for more conversations as a group.

There were several issues that were recurring themes within the conversation.

Distance – For many dioceses, there are large geographic areas that need to be traversed to meet with other people. Technology can help with the process and in all locations those options are being explored. The general consensus was that for new Deacons (and in general), face-to-face would be most effective.

Training – Deacon mentors needs to be both interested in being mentors, but also need some training on how to more effectively be a mentor. Not all people are meant to be mentors and not all pairings will be effective.

Time – As Deacons usually work it is not as easy to create an event that all could reasonably attend. Every attempt needs to be made during the creative process for programs to allow for this fact. One to one time is easier to coordinate, but may not be the best venue for all types of mentorship or continuing education.

Funding – The process of traveling to meetings, etc is an expense. As funding at the parish level may not allow for this (this is a reality for many of us) the expense would fall onto the Deacon, which may not be feasible. A plan for expenses would need to be included into the formation of mentorship programs.

Communication – As with everything, making sure that channels are open for communication from all parties involved to verify that the current plans are working for everyone. Communication within dioceses would also be beneficial.

Lack of formal programs – As Deacons are, and should be, contextual, we do not have a one size fits all program. This requires that the individual dioceses create what works for them, which is good in that each one is different, does require more work to create, implement, observe, refine, and reimplement the programs to what works for each diocese.