

Customary for Deacons Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

VISION

“A deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Church to be a model of Christ's servant ministry for all people. As agents of God's compassion and reconciling grace, deacons are missionaries to the world and messengers to the Church of the world's needs, hopes, and concerns. In the Church, deacons call forth, empower, and inspire the baptized to respond to these needs. The role of the deacon in liturgy mirrors this role of the deacon in the Church and world. Deacons are living symbols of Christ's presence as they embody Christ's servant ministry and point to the presence of Christ in those they serve.”

-- Association for Episcopal Deacons (AED)

INTRODUCTION

The Order of Deacons: Coming from the Greek *diakonos*, the word deacon means “servant” or “envoy.” Deacons are not those who alone do the work of the Church in the world, rather, they gather, lead, equip and inform the baptized in that work. In all their work, deacons enhance the ministry of the laity; they do not supplant it. In accordance with Title III, Canon 6 of *The Episcopal Church Constitution and Canons*, deacons must be academically trained in the Holy Scriptures, theology, and the traditions of the Church. They must also be familiar with *diakonia* and the diaconate, demonstrate human awareness and understanding, exemplify spiritual development and discipline, and undergo extensive practical training and experience.

Because the diaconate is usually non-stipendiary, those called to this ministry must exhibit the energy necessary for work both inside and outside the Church. Deacons serve under the authority of the bishop, and are assigned in the diocese where needed. Deacons will, in most cases, work with parish priests, and the capacity to work comfortably in that relationship is fundamental. Deacons live a *Rule of Life*, which includes prayer, immersion in Scripture, and self-examination with the help of a spiritual director. Deacons seek regular continuing opportunity, encouraging others to take risks, and serving as agents of change.

DEPLOYMENT OF DEACONS

The bishop, after consultation with the deacon, the archdeacon, and the presbyter or other leader exercising oversight, may assign a deacon to one or more congregations, other communities of faith, or non-parochial ministries (Title III, Canon 8.4). The bishop may re-assign a deacon, or the deacon may request re-assignment, at any time. The gifts, talent, and experience of a deacon will be considered in deployment decisions, as well as the ministry needs of the diocese.

The bishop has the authority to appoint deacons to ministry in congregations, upon request of or with concurrence of the priest, vestry, or bishop's committee of the congregation. The congregation to which the deacon is appointed may or may not be the same congregation from which the deacon is raised up and sponsored for ordination. A letter of agreement (LOA) will be developed for each deacon and congregation in consultation with the priest-in-charge, the deacon, and the archdeacon. The Office of the bishop will supply model agreement for use in preparing the LOA. Completed LOA are submitted

to the bishop for approval.

Deacons are not relieved of their appointed ministry except by action of the bishop. In the event of any concerns about a deacon's service in a congregation, the bishop will be consulted promptly. The bishop may consult with the archdeacon regarding such circumstances. Deacons are subject to ecclesiastical discipline according to Title IV of the Episcopal Church canons and appropriate diocesan canons.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARISH

It is expected that the deacon will be reimbursed by the parish for expenses related to his/her service, including reimbursement for mileage and expenses of attending Diocesan Convention and the annual clergy conference. These matters, as well as the number of hours the deacon serves weekly, should be specifically addressed in the deacon's letter of agreement. The congregation will also provide fund for continuing education for the deacon (books, courses, etc.).

Consistent with the practices of other parish clergy, deacons also have access to a discretionary fund so they may receive and distribute funds in connection with their specific ministries. A specific line item should be in the congregation's budget for these purposes. Ownership of discretionary accounts remains with the parish to which the deacon is attached (Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs, Chapter 5, Section C.). Additional responsibilities and roles within the congregation are negotiated and mutually agreed upon between the deacon and clergy in charge. When a deacon holds employment outside the parish, this role needs to be taken into account when negotiating the deacon's parish agreements and requirements.

Ordained deacons who arrive from other dioceses into the Diocese of San Diego will quickly schedule an appointment with the bishop and archdeacon.

DEACONS IN THE LITURGY

Deacons shall serve in the liturgies of the church as specified in the *Book of Common Prayer*. In such liturgies, deacons shall proclaim the Gospel, invite the Confession, set and clear the table for Eucharistic liturgies, and pronounce the dismissal. The deacon customarily carries the Paschal candle in procession at the Easter Vigil and for baptisms and funerals. If trained and able, the deacon may sing the Lumen Christi and the Exsultet at the Easter Vigil. **It is not appropriate for any of the liturgical responsibilities of the deacon to be exercised by a priest when a deacon is serving in the liturgy.** Other liturgical roles are negotiated between the deacon and the supervising priest, in consultation with the bishop, as appropriate.

The deacon is to emphasize the place of the Gospel in the liturgy. To that end, the deacon may carry the gospel book in procession, place it in a prominent place, read the Gospel, and bless prior to proclamation of the Gospel as may be custom of the parish, as it is the deacon, not the book, that is being blessed.

The deacon brings the needs of the world to the Church. To that end, the deacon may be responsible for or supervise the Prayers of the People and issue the invitation to the Confession of Sin. The deacon customarily dismisses the congregation to go forth into the world spreading the Gospel message.

PREACHING AND PROPHETIC VOICE

A deacon has the courage to be a prophetic voice to the church concerning the needs of the powerless and voiceless people in the community. It is expected that deacons will be included in the preaching rota of the parish to which they are assigned. Because of the special nature of the deacon's ministry, it is anticipated they will bring their unique perspective to the interpretation of scripture and give voice to the needs, hopes, and concerns of the world. Sermons should emphasize servanthood or service or the mission of the Church.

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION AND RECEPTION

Deacons in the Diocese of San Diego may perform Baptisms with permission from the Bishop (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 312). Permission is granted for a deacon to perform this sacrament when the deacon has directly evangelized the candidate.

The deacon may lead the prayers for the candidates and other parts of the service where appropriate for baptism, confirmation, and reception at services of Christian initiation.

MARRIAGE

Deacons may assist a priest at a marriage ceremony as follows:

- Deliver the charge.
- Request the Declaration of Consent.
- Read the Gospel.
- Perform other assisting functions as agreed upon with the priest.

It is preferable that a priest or the bishop preside at a marriage ceremony. However, if no priest or bishop is available and a deacon is asked to officiate in their absence, the deacon may accomplish the celebration of a marriage up to, but not including, the Blessing of the Marriage. Prior to agreeing to perform the marriage ceremony, the deacon will consult with the bishop.

OTHER SERVICES

The priest in the parish/mission is responsible for funerals and is expect to preside at this liturgy. The Deacon may assist in these services as her/his schedule permits. The deacon has the usual diaconal functions and may have additional roles at the direction of the priest.

Upon occasion, the priest may authorize the deacon to preside at a funeral or wedding, if there is to be no Eucharist. In these cases, the priest must request permission for this assignment from the bishop and then notify the archdeacon that the deacon ha permission to preside. In the event there is a request outside the parish for a deacon to perform a funeral, the deacon will contact the bishop for permission.

COMMUNION FROM THE RESERVED SACRAMENT

Communion from the Reserved Sacrament given by deacons as part of the parish's corporate worship (Deacon's Mass) is permitted only under special circumstances and only with the specific prior

authorization of the bishop.

Communion from the Reserved Sacrament for those who, for reasonable cause, cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist, is appropriate. The service for “Communion Under Special Circumstances” on page 396 of the *Book of Common Prayer* shall be used. It is appropriate that the deacon train and supervise lay Eucharistic Visitors.

DEACONS IN THE LIFE OF THE DIOCESE

Upon ordination, deacons begin their life in the diocese as active members of the clergy. As such, pastoral care for deacons and their families is provided by the bishop and archdeacon.

Deacons will be informed about, and are expected to attend, the Annual Diocesan Convention, and are encouraged to attend diocesan clergy conferences and clergy days. It is expected that all persons planning diocesan functions and liturgical events will include deacons, and will provide for appropriate participation according to the order.

Deacons are encouraged to take their place in the councils of the Church. These places might include appointed and elected positions on program groups and commissions of the diocese, the province, and/or The Episcopal Church. In the Diocese of San Diego, deacons are specifically required to:

- Send an annual report to the bishop and archdeacon.
- Attend an annual Deacon's Day with the bishop.
- Attend the Fresh Start program.
- Make every effort to serve on Deacon's Council as they are invited to do so.