

Input from your Bishop

Are you discerning a call to the diaconate? Consider the following suggestions from the Bishop.

- Get more involved in your parish ministries. Become a lector and a Eucharistic minister, perhaps a lay pastoral caregiver taking home communion and visiting the sick on behalf of the church.
- Get to know the community outreach ministries of your church and participate in some of those. Perhaps assess the neighborhood situation and lead your church in the development a new community program or project beyond collecting and giving. Is there an organization or program in your community that would benefit from your expertise? What non-profit organizations provide services in the areas surrounding your church?
- Become aware of the justice ministries of the broader Episcopal Church. For example, Episcopal Relief and Development.
- Please get involved in some community wide service. Look around. Who is serving the homeless? Who is providing mental health support? Child advocates? Juvenile justice? Support for the elderly? Is EHF active in your area? What is EHF??
- Have you considered a mission trip? If your church does not offer a mission trip, check with other churches in the Diocese to see whose mission trip you can join. What skills sets would you offer?
- Read this book on the diaconate "**Being a Deacon Today**" by Rosalind Brown.
- Meet some deacons, work with a deacon, hang out with some deacons, then tell us you want to be a Deacon.

July 30, 2020



The Diaconate Foundations Upon Which To Begin

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.” Luke 10:2

The Book of Common Prayer describes the ministers of the Church as Lay Persons, Bishops, Priests and Deacons (pg. 855)

Our Diocese values giving congregational leaders the necessary resources to empower local ministry. The Book of Common Prayer defines a three-fold model of ordained ministry. The ministry of the deacon does not replace the ministries of lay people, priests, or bishops, but instead supplements, sustains, and extends the work of the whole Church.

The spiritual gifts of evangelism and service are at the heart of the deacon’s work. Therefore, the deacon is first characterized by a commitment to serve Christ and his people as a missionary servant leader. Together with the Laity, the ministry of the deacon finds its focus in the world outside of the institutional Church. As ordained people, deacons hold a particular responsibility and accountability to the Bishop as his or her assistant. Together with priests, they have specific roles in the liturgy. Their ministry will be found working in a variety of settings, determined by the Bishop, and designed to meet a variety of needs.

The deacon represents the Church’s servant ministry to the poor, outcast, and needy. The deacon’s prophetic role is to give voice to the least members of our society and bring their message to the Church. In this way the deacon leads the baptized into those ministries that will offer all of the Church’s resources to a hurting world. The deacon is a bridge linking the Church to the world in both word and deed.

Throughout history the ministry of the deacon has varied, depending on the specific needs and goals of the Church. Bishop Doyle envisions a diaconate that will serve our Diocese by looking outward. Deacons are uniquely related to the Diocesan Bishop. The deacon’s formation and commission is directed by the missionary vision of the Bishop. Therefore the deacon works within the parameters of the Bishop’s own ministry and is constrained by the pastoral direction and leadership of the Bishop.

The deacon’s ministry may be found within institutions, parishes, and at the diocesan level. His or her ministry is collegial, working with the laity, priests, and bishops. In all of this the deacon is a missionary – always serving with an eye to the world, the lost, and the hurting. The diaconate in the Diocese of Texas offers an opportunity to foster mission-centered ministry that is flexible, mobile and committed to proclaiming Christ in word and deed by offering service to the church and the world.



The Diaconate A Servant Order

"I have come among you as one who serves." Luke 22:27

We know that all the baptized are called to follow the example of Christ "to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as our self" and to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being." A few are called to express this calling as vocational deacons.

Without deacons, the ministry of the church cannot be complete. Although deacons share certain characteristics with laity, priests, and bishops (as do all Christians), they do not replace the functions and ministries of any others, but instead supplement, sustain, and extend the work of the whole church especially in those areas of service to which deacons are called. Together with laity, their primary focus of ministry lies in the world beyond the institutional church, but unlike laity, as ordained people they are in orders and hold a particular responsibility and accountability to the bishop as his/her assistants. Together with priests, they hold specified functions in the liturgy; but theirs is not primarily a sacramental or preaching ministry, and they may well be something of an itinerant one in their attending to the variety of needs as the bishop may determine.

If you think you may be called to the Diaconate:

- Are you a confirmed communicant in good standing in a diocesan parish or mission for at least one year?
- Have you read "The Ordination of a Deacon" in the Book of Common Prayer (*pgs. 536-547*) and "Catechism: The Ministry" (*pgs. 855-856*)
- Do you have a regular spiritual discipline of prayer, reading of Holy Scripture, and worship?
- Do you already have, or have you had, an active ministry of servant hood such as Stephen Ministry, Community of Hope, prison ministry, ministry with those on the "fringe" of our society?
- Have you done reading on the ministry of the deacon, such as:
 - Book of Common Prayer, pg. 536-547, The Ordination of a Deacon
 - Book of Common Prayer, pg. 855-856, Catechism: The Ministry
 - Unexpected Consequences, The Diaconate Renewed – by Susanne Epting
 - Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World. by Rosalind Brown, Morehouse Publishing
 - The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order, James M. Barnett
 - Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons, Ormonde Plater
 - Deacons and the Church, John N. Collins

- Have you met with your rector or vicar and received his/her encouragement and support?
- Are you willing to serve the Church in what will be a non-stipendiary role?
- Are you willing to undergo academic preparation of three years, in a diocesan setting with other aspirants for the vocational diaconate, and able to provide the resources to pay the costs for such preparation?



Role of the Deacon

The Bishop says to the Deacon: You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work and worship.

In the liturgy the deacon is the Gospel-bearer and reads the Gospel as his/her first participatory act in corporate worship. This is a reflection of hi/her life as Gospel-bearers to the world. Deacons are to help carry the good news of Christ out into the world. They are to make the voice of God and God's compassion for the poor known in the midst of the congregation on Sunday and in the midst of the workplace on Monday morning.

The Bishop says to the Deacon: You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

In the liturgy the deacon calls the congregation to pray for the Church, for the world, and for any in need. The deacon then calls the Church to corporate confession for those things done and left undone. The deacon is the voice of the voiceless within the institution. Deacons are to bring the voices of those who are not heard in the midst of the Church's common life and the life of the people and to amplify them. Through their ministry and leadership they incarnate the transformation that comes from confession when amendment of life becomes acts and works of mercy by the local congregation.

The Bishop says to the Deacon: You are to assist the bishop and priest in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments.

In the liturgy the deacon helps to set the table, prepares the community for communion, and helps to administer the bread and wine. The deacon, under the supervision of the Bishop, or the Bishop's appointee, then helps the members of the local congregation become ministers of communion with God's grace and mercy. The deacon is the symbolic order that is key in contributing to the Church's real identity, and likewise the identity of the Baptized, as servants and sacramental vessels bearing food, resources, care, and companionship to people without a community and without Christ.

The Bishop says to the Deacon: At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.

The service of Holy Communion concludes with the Deacon's call to enter the world to "love and serve the Lord." The Deacon as servant leader calls forth ministry from the Baptized. The deacon brings the voice of the voiceless into the community and leads the empowered out to do ministry. The ministry of the deacon is neither a Sunday event nor a solitary ministry. The deacon everywhere embraces partnership in ministry and focuses that partnership on the suffering. In doing so, the Deacon reminds the community of the faithful both that we are Christ to the world and that in the faces of the helpless and hopeless we find Christ as his disciples.



Deacon Ministry Description

The Book of Common Prayer described the ministry of the deacon in this way:

- Ministry primarily of service to all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely
- Makes Christ and his redemptive love known by word and example to those among whom he/she lives, works, and worships
- Interprets to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world
- Assists the bishop and priests in public worship and the ministration of God's word and sacraments
- At all times, through his/her life and teaching shows Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself
- Is guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of his/her bishop
- Faithful in prayer and in the reading and study of the Holy Scripture
- Does his/her best to pattern his/her life (and that of his/her family, or household, or community) in accordance with teachings of Christ, so that he/she may be a wholesome example to all people
- In all things, seeks not personal glory but the glory of the Lord Christ

Specifically, in the Diocese of Texas, the ministry of the deacon will be expressed in this way:

- The Diocesan Bishop will make all assignments
- The Diocesan Bishop, through his appointed designees, will supervise deacons
- Deacons will continue their work at secular jobs or in the home
- Assignments may include congregations, diocesan institutions, and secular settings
- Deacons will be non-stipendiary
- The deacon will serve specific liturgical functions but does not replace the ministry of layperson
- It is not consistent with the deacon's call to be a head of congregation. There will be no "Deacon's Masses."
- The diaconate is not a "stepping stone" to ordination to the priesthood. If a deacon feels called to the priesthood, he/she will begin an entirely new process
- As stated in the Canons in the Diocese, deacons will have voice and vote with the Councils of the Diocese