

THE ORDER OF DEACONS

God has called all of us through our baptism “to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ”.

Those who would be deacons are those

- who see their gifts enabling laity and clergy (the whole church) in our service to the world;
- whose gifts lead them and us to advocacy for, and service to, those who have no voice, who are dis-empowered, marginalised, outcast, on the edges of society;
- whose gifts enrich our prayer, loose our tongues, bringing before us the needs, concerns and hopes of the marginalised, outcast, lost or forgotten;
- whom God has called to remind the Church that we are a servant-people sent into a needy world. A deacon is one who interprets the needs and concerns of the world to the Church; and, more importantly, has the gifts to empower the whole church in our response to those needs and concerns.

The Discernment of a Diaconal Vocation

Endorsement by Faith Community

A person’s vocation to the diaconate is normally demonstrated by servant ministry already being exercised through character, service and spirituality. It is usually first discerned by the candidate’s own faith community, but may also be sensed by the individual. In some instances, the Bishop may want to initiate the search for deacons. The decision-making body of the faith community (parish council) should be guided by the following considerations:

- A person called to ordained ministry as a deacon is willing and able to make a life-long commitment to the exercise of this office.
- The support of family members is important in accepting the extensive responsibilities in the ministry of the diaconate.
- Diaconal ministry is servant ministry. A true servant does not take on the tasks and obligations that rightly belong to others. In exercising the unique gifts that God has given them, candidates for this ministry should seek to enable or free others to use their unique gifts to fulfil their vocation, whether lay or ordained minister.

Application Process

*Refer to the Diocesan Policy Document on the website. **To be Updated***

The Discernment Process

*Refer to the Diocesan Policy Document on the website. **To be Updated***

The Training and Formation Process

*Refer to the Diocesan Policy Document on the website. **To be Updated***

Deployment of Vocational Deacons

- A deacon is ordained for life.

- All priests are deacons.
- A deacon may be licensed to a specific ministry.
- A deacon's ministry may be focused primarily in and around a parish (such ministry is not primarily or exclusively liturgical), or in the diocese, or in secular occupation.
- A deacon may be licensed as part of an ordained ministry team of a parish under the leadership of the parish priest, or as part of a diocesan team working under the leadership or direction of the Bishop or the bishop's appointee.
- The parish and the deacon or the diocese and the deacon sign Ministry Covenant clearly identifying the deacon's area of ministry and defining the deacon's responsibilities, resources, and accountability.
- The covenant is reviewed every 12 months by the deacon and Priest-in-Charge and should then be approved by the Parish Council and the Bishop.
- All clergy in the diocese are expected to undergo a review process.

Title and Dress

Deacons are titled "The Rev'd" in formal documentation.

Once ordained a deacon is entitled to wear clergy dress.

Role of the Deacon

Of prime importance, the candidate must have a real depth of commitment to Christ which is evident in their style and manner of life, which has been evident over a number of years to the Christian Community that has raised them up. The candidate should be involved already in some form of pastoral care ministry within their faith community; or be involved in some form of charitable and community ministry which engages the wider community. The church needs varied forms of ministry and a major function of the diaconate, in addition to ministering in diverse areas, is to provide models with breadth and imagination, of ministries for the laity to see and emulate. Deacons are the embodiment of the servant ministry Christ has sent and empowered all the baptised to share. In the early Church Deacons exercised their ministry in three (3) primary areas:

- The Liturgical Ministry (prayer and worship)
- The Pastoral Care Ministry (Pastoral referring to ministries directed towards the faith community)
- The Charitable or Outreach Ministries (those that are directed more towards the Community at large)

It is important the functions of liturgy and service both pastoral and charitable are seen to be strongly interconnected and the essence of this relationship is visibly expressed.

The Liturgical Ministry

The following may be listed as among the proper liturgical functions of the deacon.

- To carry the paschal candle, chant the Exultet (if able), and assist at Baptisms, and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.
- To assist with the preparation for and administration of, baptisms: and in cases of necessity to officiate at baptism.
- To read the Gospel at the Eucharist.
- To lead or co-ordinate the Intercessory Prayers at the Eucharist.
- To introduce the Confession at the Eucharist.
- To administer the body or the blood of Christ at the Eucharist as directed by the Celebrant.
- To assist with the preparation for, and administration of, Marriages but not to celebrate a Marriage unless directed by the Bishop.
- To administer Holy Unction to the sick, in the absence of the Priest, using oil blessed by the Bishop.
- To preside as directed by the Parish Priest, at non-Eucharistic Prayer services, such as the Daily Office and non-Sacramental Penitential Rites.
- To conduct services (with the reserved Sacrament) in homes for the Aged, Disabled and Housebound.
- To officiate at Funeral Services, but not at a Requiem Eucharist.
- To Preach or deliver Homilies as directed by the Parish Priest.

The Pastoral Care Ministry

The proper Pastoral functions of the Deacon are broad and varied. The following are primarily focused on Ministry to Parishioners:

- To visit the sick and the housebound.
- To care for, and about, the Parish's poor.
- To co-ordinate programmes for visiting and integrating newcomers into the life of the Parish.
- To visit non-church families in order to welcome them.
- To assist or lead (as directed by the Parish Priest) the preparation of candidates for baptism, first communion and confirmation.

- To lead a small home group and if directed by the Parish Priest co-ordinate such groups within the life of the Parish.
- To establish creative and effective ministries to meet needs in the community as discerned by the Parish Council. These ministries to take the shape of outreach or community care ministries.
- To train and supervise those who serve at the altar.
- When approached by those in need, offer counsel to those with problems
- To co-ordinate and train those who read at the Eucharist or other Liturgical Services.
- Where required and gifts are evident, assist with some aspect of Parish Administration.

The Charitable or Outreach Ministries

The following activities serve to illustrate the kind of functions proper to the diaconate. This work becomes a true ministry when motivated by the desire to serve Christ under the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit and is undertaken with sensitivity, care and love.

- To help and befriend the powerless, who are in need, both individually and through political action and social programmes: e.g., prisoners, minorities, the poor, the rejected.
- To counsel the troubled.
- To develop referral programmes to enable the Parish to help those in crisis situations.
- To lead or work in community action groups, to foster social change, especially in attitudes.
- To organise and promote community actions or programmes to meet special needs
- Co-ordinate community awareness seminars giving the Christian perspective on community social issues, e.g., health, abuse, domestic violence.
- Determine creative ways for the Parish to minister to the needs of the elderly and disadvantaged within the community.
- To visit the lonely and neglected within the community, especially those who are institutionalised.
- To seek creative ways of reaching out and ministering to the disabled.
- Consult with the community as to areas of need that can be developed into areas of ministry for the Parish.

It is important the functions of liturgy and service both pastoral and charitable, are seen to be strongly interconnected and the essence of this relationship is visibly expressed

The Vocational Diaconate and other matters

Below are set out a number of comments from the Bishop in relation to the vocational diaconate, priestly ministry and Anglican Tradition.

A deacon on the journey to priesting, would be expected to make the same commitment of time as a stipendiary priest. Someone in full time ordained ministry should expect to be actively engaged in ministerial activity for 48 hours a week, including preparing addresses, leading or assisting at worship and other ministerial duties.

The question of whether a person is a deacon or a licensed lay minister is a question of vocation. The deacon is primarily a bridge person between the Church and the community. The deacon is not necessarily an evangelist or a preacher but a person who represents the Church to the wider community and brings the needs of the community to the Church. A licensed lay minister will be more focused on ministry within the worshipping community.

In writing to Timothy the apostle Paul writes: *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.* It is important to remember that Paul was writing to an elder or presbyter, which in our terms would be a priest. There is a significant difference in calling between that of priest and deacon. The ministry of a priest is to be minister of both Word and Sacrament.

A preaching licence is sometimes given to a licensed lay minister where there is a need for a person to be licensed to preach and where the person has studied the BCM or its equivalent and has completed the unit on preaching.

A spiritual director is a person who is available for the particular individual to reflect with them on their journey with Christ and, where appropriate, on their ministry. It is appropriate to confer with the spiritual director as often as necessary, perhaps once a month, and at least every two to three months.

All ministry, whether ordained or lay, is a ministry of service – service to God, service to God's people and service to society. Leadership should always be thought of in terms of servant hood. All ministers, whether ordained or lay, are called to follow the example of Jesus who washed the disciples' feet.

The question of ensuring that the liturgy does not become more important than God is a question of intention. Good liturgy reflects a desire to honour God and to offer to God what is worthy.

People vary as to what they find helpful. Incense is thoroughly biblical. Inevitably some of the things we do will be strange to people who come to church for the first time. This will be true irrespective of what we do. The prime function of the liturgy is to enable the people of God to worship God. In addition to our traditional services it is good to have special services which may be less formal and non-eucharistic.

Liturgy is about our relationship with God. The sequence of worship is designed to help us get the substance right.

There are times when it may be helpful for people to speak about what is happening in their lives at worship, but it would not be helpful at every Service and it would need careful oversight and preparation.

The purpose of stained glass windows, statues and crucifixes is to point us to the One who gave his life for us and to the One who renews us with the Holy Spirit.

Praying to the saints is not part of the Anglican Tradition, however asking the saints to pray for us is no different to asking others to pray for us. We do not ask the saints to grant petitions, but we may ask the saints to bring our petitions to God.

Sometimes there is a false antithesis between the Bible and the Church. We need both the Bible and Church. The canon of Holy Scripture was determined by the Church and reflects the faith and understanding of the Church. If we belong to the Church we are bound by the doctrine and discipline of the Church. When a person is ordained, the individual undertakes to follow the tradition of the Church. Our first loyalty is to God who gave us the Church and calls us into the Church.