

A Resource Guidebook for

Deacons In The Diocese Of  
Pennsylvania

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## I. The Deacon's Ministry

*My sister/ brother, every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ, serving God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your Bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.*

BCP, The Ordination Of A Deacon.

A Deacon is a person called by God and the Church to lifelong, well-trained, sacrificial service in Christ's name to all people in need. A Deacon embodies servant ministry, encouraging the Church in its ministry to the world and interpreting the needs of the world to the Church.

As one of the three distinct orders of ordained ministry, the diaconate has a special historical and canonical link to the Bishop of the Diocese to exercise ministry as an extension of the Bishop's outreach to serve all people.

The diaconate is a full and equal order to the Priesthood.

Deacons are dedicated women and men who manifest in their lives a commitment to serve others, especially the poor, the forgotten, the vulnerable, the sick, the oppressed and the marginalized; engage in active ministry at the crossroads of the Church and the world and the community in which they serve.

Deacons have a vision of and work for the transformation of both the church and the world, based on God's justice, love, mercy and peace; and have discerned, in community, a call to serve as servant leaders in Christ's church in the traditional Diaconal roles of servant, advocate, prophet, witness and partner in ministry.

The role of the Deacon in the Church is also defined in the Canons of The Episcopal Church, in the liturgy for the Ordination of a Deacon and in the Outline of Faith.

## **Diaconal Activities**

The ministry of a Deacon reflects the unique gifts of the individual:

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.* (I Corinthians 12).

As most Deacons carry on full-time employment, the ministry of a Deacon reflects the time constraints of her/his life, and the needs and opportunities for ministry in the parish and the world. It encompasses both outreach to the world and inreach to the Church.

*And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the Priests became obedient to the faith.* (Acts 6-8).

### **In the World**

The call of a Deacon is exercised in the world outside the church community, reflecting the church's prophetic concern for economic and social justice, and exemplifying the servant ministry of Christ.

A few examples of these areas of ministry are:

- Caring for the homeless and others in shelters
- Caring for those in prison
- Caring for the hungry
- Caring for victims of abuse and violence of all kinds
- Advocacy for and ministry to people on the margins of society; and specialized ministries with the aging and elderly; with gay, lesbian and transgender persons; with children and families; with hospital chaplaincy; and with hospice and bereavement support.

### **In the Church**

The Deacon then brings her/his work in the world to the church community, to enable the servant ministry of the baptized. Thereby, the baptismal ministry of all people is enhanced.

The Deacon's pastoral, teaching, preaching and liturgical activities in the parish are understood in this context. Pastorally, Deacons are involved in visitation of the sick and shut-ins, with parish nurse and wellness programs.

Liturgically, the Deacon reads the Gospel, leads and oversees the Prayers of the People, sets and clears the Table, proclaims the Dismissal, and serves in other ways as described in the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer. The Deacon may also be involved with the vestry and various parish committees, especially those concerned with outreach. All of these activities take place in a spirit of cooperation, and as the gifts of the Deacon allow, with the Deacon and the Priest of the congregation to which the Deacon is assigned.

## **II. THE CALL AND DISCERNMENT**

Details of the ordination process are given in the "Discernment and Ordination" section on the DIOPA website. This is a comprehensive effort between the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry.

Listed here, in this guidebook, are considerations specific to the diaconate. When a person senses God's call to Holy Orders, or when someone suggests to an individual that he/she consider Holy Orders, after prayer and reflection, the individual should have a conversation with the Priest to begin a discernment process. <https://www.diopa.org/ordination/>

### **The Qualities We Seek in Our Ordained Leaders**

*The Diocese of Pennsylvania seeks to raise up clergy who love God with heart, mind, and soul, and who know and love the person of Jesus Christ and seek to make him known. Those seeking ordination must place Jesus Christ as the center of all they do, say, and feel.*

These are the opening words from the Commission on Ministry to those discerning ordination. They are at the beginning, and in the center of the lives of those in ministry.

The entire document can be found here:

[The qualities we seek in our ordained leaders.](#)

### **Willingness to Serve Under the Authority of the Bishop and with the Rector.**

Diaconal servanthood is a special offering of service, which requires an ability and willingness to serve under authority. Each diocesan Bishop sets guidelines and procedures for the diaconate within her/his diocese. For that reason, the Deacon remains under the direct authority of the Bishop while exercising his/her calling to servanthood and working alongside of a Priest. The Bishop has the authority to assign a Deacon to serve in a parish other than the one that has raised her/him to ordination. Deacons should not expect to serve out their entire ministry in the parish that raised them up for ordination.

## **Personal and Family Life**

Ordination to the diaconate requires a significant investment of personal time and energy. This requires a stable personal and family life.

### **Mentoring following ordination.**

The Bishop or the Bishop's designee, in consultation with the Commission, shall assign each newly ordained Deacon a mentor from the community of Deacons, 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.

## **III. PARISH SERVICE**

Deacons in DIOPA are assigned by the Bishop to serve in a particular faith community, working alongside the Rector or Priest-in-charge.

Service may include several roles:

- Provide leadership to help the parish identify and respond to the needs of the world.
- Develop their individual ministry in service to the poor, weak, sick and lonely.
- The Deacon is not a member of the vestry, but should attend meetings where appropriate and helpful to Diaconal ministry.

### **Non-canonically Resident Deacons**

Upon arriving in the Diocese, the Deacon should meet with the Bishop and ArchDeacon about his/her presence and intended ministry affiliation. Once agreement on ministry and assignment is reached, a Letter of Agreement will be prepared jointly by the Deacon and Rector or Priest-in-charge, taking into consideration the expected Diaconal activities (ministry in the world and within the parish). This letter will be completed upon a Deacon's assignment to a given parish and submitted to the Bishop with a copy to the ArchDeacon. It will be updated annually or as the Deacon's responsibilities change.

### **The Deacon and the Rector or Priest-in-charge**

Each Deacon and his/her Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-charge are to have regularly scheduled meetings. Expectations of these sessions include:

- Developing a relationship that is collegial and mutually pastoral.
- Integrating the Deacon's ministry in the world with the life of the parish.
- Coordinating any shared pastoral responsibilities with the congregation.
- Reflecting together on other shared ministries with the congregation, such as preaching, education, formation and liturgy;
- Developing an annual continuing education plan for the Deacon.
- Finding ways for the Deacon to attend as many retreats, conferences and gatherings as possible, which are important to the continuing formation and spiritual support of clergy; and reflecting regularly on their shared ministry and seeking avenues for working together as effectively as possible for the support for and equipping of God's people for ministry.

### **Annual Letter to the Bishop**

Each Deacon reports annually to the Bishop on the exercise of his/her ministry. The report is due each year on Epiphany Sunday.

The letter is intended to summarize her/his ministry, areas of growth and learning, and/or vision for the future. It should outline your prayer life, and recent theological and spiritual experience and learning. The Deacon should include major milestones and life changes, and any continuing education undertaken in the past year, including experiences and learning in Spiritual Direction.

### **Compensation and Support**

Normally, the Deacon's relationship with the parish is non-stipendiary. However, it is expected that a Deacon who provides Diaconal ministry in a parish (i.e. visiting the sick, teaching, assisting at the Eucharist and carrying out other duties as assigned) be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the exercise of this ministry. Such expenses include travel, mileage, costs of attendance at diocesan convention, Deacons' and clergy retreats, and other meetings at which the Deacon's attendance is expected. It is suggested that travel mileage will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate. The parish and the Deacon should agree upon reimbursement for other expenses or for continuing education. The parish should also provide a discretionary fund for the Deacon's use in the exercise of her/his ministry.

In a few congregations, a Deacon may be employed by the parish for a specific ministry or position not related to his/her ordination (i.e. music director, organist, parish administrator, pastoral care coordinator). Such arrangements have special complications and must be addressed in a separate agreement approved by the Bishop.

Any questions regarding potential benefits should be directed to: [benefitsadmin@diopa.org](mailto:benefitsadmin@diopa.org)

### **Conflict Resolution**

Should disagreements arise in the parish, Deacons, as all other members of the parish staff, are

to follow the advice of their Bishop. The Bishop will mediate disagreements between the Deacon and her/his Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-charge. The ArchDeacon is also available as a resource for conflict resolution.

### **Requirements regarding age**

Based on DIOPA Canons, Formation can begin at age 24, with retirement at age 72. Deacons may serve beyond the age of 72 with the Bishop's guidance and approval.

## **IV. LITURGICAL MINISTRY**

The traditional role of the Deacon in the liturgy is specified in the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer and in the Customary that follows. Although liturgical customs may vary from parish to parish and with different presiders, there are traditional roles normally undertaken by the Deacon.

Liturgical decisions ultimately rest with the Rector or Priest-in-charge.

### **Diaconate Liturgical Customary**

Carrying the Gospel Book, the Deacon walks in front of the presider in the procession. If an acolyte carries the Gospel Book, the Deacon and Priest walk side by side.

The Deacon is always the preferred minister to read the Gospel.

The Prayers of the People are a primary responsibility of the Deacon. At the very least, the Deacon should contribute to the ordering of the intercessions and the presentation of some of the concerns.

A suggested format might include:

- Meeting with a prayer group to compose the intercessions/concerns of the parish and the world;
- Introducing the prayers by announcing the form or page number, or by a bidding such as "Let us pray for the needs of the Church and the World;"
- Reading the names and specific intercessions after a layperson reads the biddings; inviting the congregation to add their own petitions; and paying special attention to world events and community concerns by including them in the prayers.

The Deacon bids and leads the confession.

The Deacon prepares the Table for Communion:

The Deacon places the vessels on the altar and arranges the altar book and other appointments; receives the offering and oblations of bread and wine from the people; and

places the bread on the paten, pours the wine into the chalice and adds the water to the wine. During the Great Thanksgiving the Deacon stands next to the presider, either on the right or the left, depending on their serving function. The Deacon elevates the chalice at the words: "The gifts of God for the people of God."

At the distribution it is appropriate for the Deacon to distribute the consecrated bread from an additional paten or to administer the consecrated wine from the chalice, or to oversee the altar and provide additional elements to the Priests and lay chalice bearers.

The Deacon performs or oversees the ablutions and clearing of the altar.

At the conclusion of the service the Deacon sends the people forth with the Dismissal.

If more than one Deacon is a minister at the Eucharist, it is appropriate that both be at the altar with the presider.

Deacons may preach on a regular though not necessarily frequent basis.

In a Eucharistic service, Deacons vest in a white alb with a seasonal color stole. The dalmatic is the distinctive Diaconal vestment and may be worn at any Eucharist; however, the general rule is that if the presider is not wearing a chasuble then the dalmatic would not be worn. Normally dalmatics are worn during festive celebrations such as high Holy Days, ordinations and other festive occasions.

The appropriate vestments for choir offices, such as Morning or Evening Prayer and other occasions when the Eucharist is not celebrated, is cassock, surplice and stole or tippet.

Priests who take the Deacon's liturgical role in the Eucharist should not vest as Deacons.

While it is appropriate for the Deacon to point out these Diaconal norms, continuing variation from the rubrics should be discussed with the Deacon's Rector or Priest-in-charge. The Bishop remains the chief authority for the liturgy of the Church. The ArchDeacon is available to the Rector or Deacon for liturgical consultation.

Acolytes serve with the Deacon, the term sub-Deacon is not used in the Episcopal Church. In the absence of a Deacon, Priests take on the liturgical role of the Deacon, in the presence of a Deacon Priests do not take on Diaconal duties.

The term "Deacon's Mass" is not used in DIOPA. In extraordinary cases, the Deacon may administer communion from the reserved sacrament to a congregation, only with the express permission of the Bishop and given in advance.

## **Baptism**

Deacons customarily perform certain functions in the rite of Baptism. They may read the prayers for the candidate, assist the Priest/Bishop with preparing the water, hold the prayer book, hold the oil, light and give the candle (the sign of Christ's light in the world) with the words "receive the light of Christ," carry the paschal candle to and from the font, etc. The Deacon may perform the water baptism (but the signing which follows should be done by the Priest). A Deacon presides as the sole officiant at baptism only with the permission of the Bishop (except, of course, in an emergency.)

## **Marriage**

DIOPA Deacons, as with all other clergy, are free to perform weddings. In DIOPA, we are to embrace the Bishop's theology to perform weddings *only* in churches. Of course, Deacons do not offer the Priestly blessing.

Deacons may also serve in an assisting capacity at marriages. It is appropriate for the Deacon, in addition to the usual functions at the Eucharist, to deliver the charge, request the declaration of consent and lead the nuptial prayers.

## **Preaching**

Deacons in DIOPA are licensed to preach by the Bishop. Preaching offers the Deacon an opportunity to proclaim the ministry of servanthood to the people of God and to call the people of God to serve. It is one method of holding before the Church the needs and concerns of the poor, the sick and those who are marginalized. It also gives voice to a Gospel-centered response to concerns that the Deacon encounters in his/her ministry in the world.

Deacons may be asked to preach outside their parish for the purpose of illustrating their ministry or on other topics of a specifically Diaconal nature.

## **Ministration to the Sick**

In the absence of, or at the request of a Priest, it is appropriate for a Deacon to anoint with oil when praying for the sick. In a public liturgy of healing, the Priest should anoint with oil while the Deacon may assist in the laying on of hands and prayers.

## **Blessings**

Deacons may lay hands upon the shoulder or above individual, object or space to be blessed; use plural pronouns such as "we", "us" and "our", acknowledging the Communion of Saints who stand as witnesses, and offer gratitude for the person's gifts of ministry; or ask for Christ's healing love, etc. Words of petition, blessing or healing are often preceded by the word "May" but without the sign of the cross on the forehead. For example, Numbers 6: 24-26.

*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

If appropriate, the Deacon may also sprinkle holy water (already blessed by a Priest), as in receiving the body in a memorial service; or administer healing oil (already blessed by the Bishop) in a healing service, or at the bedside of the sick or dying.

A Deacon may not: Pronounce a blessing on anyone or anything, Bless the waters of baptism, or give the sign of the cross over the candidate for baptism at the words of baptism; give a marriage blessing; bless or dedicate any object designated for use in a consecrated space (e.g., wall hangings, a new Gospel book or vestments) or consecrate a gravesite.

### **The Service of the Deacon during the Bishop's Visitation and in Diocesan Eucharist**

At the pleasure of the Bishop, a Deacon will be present at all Visitations and special services. In addition, there is often a chaplain of the Bishop's choosing. This individual will serve as the Bishop's chaplain, leaving the Deacon to focus on Diaconal duties. When a chaplain is not in attendance, the Deacon is to complete all of the tasks listed herein.

Before each service, a member of the staff will contact the Rector, discuss the service and customary, and let the Rector know who the Deacon will be that day. The staff will then send this information on to the Deacon.

*The chaplain's task is to be entirely attentive to the Bishop and his needs, and therefore make things run smoothly for all.*

#### *What the Deacon will do in all circumstances.*

- Process in with the Gospel book.
- Standing to the left of the Bishop, hold the service book and keep his place.
- If there is no chaplain, take the crozier to the Bishop at the gradual hymn. Stay for his blessing.
- Read the Gospel.
- Bid the confession
- Prepare and clear the table.
- Say the dismissal. You should know beforehand if the dismissal will be said from the altar before the final hymn, or from the back at the end of the final hymn. Ask the Rector what their tradition is.
- Address the congregation briefly introducing the diaconate and your particular ministry. Invite people to meet you following service should they wish to know more.

#### *What the Chaplain will do.*

- Review the "lay of the land," with the Rector. Make decisions about where the Bishop will sit. Where is the baptismal font? Where will people assemble for confirmation? Remind

them that the Bishop, and the confirmands will all stand. The Deacon and the chaplain should both sit near the Bishop. Whoever is holding the crozier needs to be in close proximity.

- Assemble the crozier.
- Process/recess just ahead of the Bishop. The Bishop will follow you to the altar, after the Gospel book is in place, the Bishop will kiss the altar and pray briefly before you lead him to his seat.
- Hold the crozier and mitre when the Bishop is not using them.
- Bring the crozier to the Bishop during the gradual hymn.
- Assist or train acolytes as needed for ablutions.
- Deliver sermon notes to the pulpit.
- Deliver the mitre and crozier for the final blessing.
- Wrap and replace the crozier.
- Be sure that the altar is uncluttered. (No missal stand)

The Bishop may wear a cope during parts of special services (namely Celebration of New Ministry and parish Anniversary services). His custom is:

- He processes into the service wearing the cope, and keeps it on until the sermon.
- At the sermon he removes the cope while he is preaching.
- He puts it back on at the end of the sermon and continues wearing it until the offertory (when there is a Eucharist).
- After saying the offertory sentence he will change into a chasuble.
- He will wear the chasuble until after his post-communion ablutions; when he will change back into his cope.

In general, the chaplain helps the Bishop with the crozier and mitre and in other ways.

In the entrance procession, the chaplain precedes the Bishop.

## V. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERN

### Direction and Guidance of the Bishop and Rector

Deacons exercise their Diaconal ministry as an extension of the Bishop's outreach to serve all people. The Bishop assigns each Deacon to a given parish, in consultation with the Rector, the Deacon and the archDeacon. The details of the relationship are given in Section III of this manual. Any exceptions to the assignment and practice of ministry of Deacons in this diocese are under the authority of the Bishop. Changes in parish assignment or Diaconal focus are arranged with the Bishop through the archDeacon.

### Continuing Education for Deacons

The Continuing Education Committee welcomes applications from clergy, lay professionals, and lay volunteers requesting grants for continuing education programs. Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the beginning of the programs for which support is requested. More information is available at <https://www.diopa.org/continuing-education/>

### **Spiritual Direction**

Every deacon is strongly encouraged to remain active in Spiritual Direction throughout their ministry. As we are non-stipendiary servants, many spiritual directors will make this available to deacons at a very low cost, or for free. Thoughts from Spiritual Direction should be included in the annual letter to the Bishop.

### **Vacancies in the Parish**

When the Rector of a parish retires or resigns, the Deacon will consult with the Bishop and the archDeacon as to the nature of his/her continued service in the parish. It is acceptable for the Deacon to remain in service during the interim period. Reassignment to service at this parish is done in consultation with the Bishop, the new Rector, the Deacon and the archDeacon.

### **The Role of the ArchDeacon**

The ArchDeacon is a Deacon of the diocese who is appointed by, responsible to, and with access to the Bishop(s). The ArchDeacon is unpaid, but with expenses provided.

The ArchDeacon is a liaison between the Bishop and the Deacons advocating for Deacons with the Bishop and in the diocese bringing to the Bishop's attention the needs, concerns, and problems of Deacons collectively and individually communicating the Bishops' wishes and expectations to the Deacons. Also, the ArchDeacon will assist the Bishop by:

- assisting the Bishop in addressing the pastoral needs of Deacons
- helping to arrange opportunities for Deacons' communication with each other and with the Bishop
- assisting the Deacons and the Bishop in arranging and maintaining satisfactory parochial assignments

The ArchDeacon has a role in administration with respect to Deacons, these include

- assisting in putting in place letters of agreement for Deacons
- maintaining records of Deacons and their assignments and ministries, and of aspirants, postulants, and candidates.
- serving as the Bishop's Chaplain at convention, ordinations, and other diocesan liturgies
- arranging visits to parishes to describe Diaconal ministry

- developing ways of identifying aspirants to the diaconate
- educating the diocese about the diaconate
- helping to integrate Deacons into the workings of the diocese
- assisting the director of Diaconal formation in the formation program

### **Titles and Clerical Attire**

The title “Deacon” (abbreviated “Dn”) is encouraged for normal address. When the title, “Rev.” or “Reverend” is used it should stand alone and not include “Deacon” as well.

“Transitional Deacon” is the preferred designation for a person who has been ordained a Deacon who will later be ordained a Priest. The preferred designation for a person who is ordained Deacon, and does not seek the order of Priest, is simply “Deacon.”

Deacons normally wear clerical attire when serving in a liturgical role, when representing the church in an official capacity and at other appropriate times that may include their special ministry in the world.

### **Risk Management**

Deacons are required to meet all the risk management policies of DIOPA, e.g. attendance at the sexual abuse prevention workshops (Safe Church) and anti-racism workshops.

### **Voting in Diocesan Convention**

Deacons have voice and vote at the Diocesan Convention and are seated with the parish/ministry they serve. In a vote by orders, Deacons vote as clergy.

### **Retirement.**

On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months. This term may be renewed.  
TEC Canon 3. III.7.7

**Deacons are Non-Stipendiary.** Deacons are not paid for Diaconal work, but incur expenses of attending diocesan convention, clergy conference, the Deacons’ retreat, continuing education, and other events – which can amount to over \$500 annually. Their letter of agreement should state how the Deacon will be supported.

Deacons are not (except for reimbursement of expenses) compensated for Diaconal work. If a Deacon is compensated by a congregation via salary or stipend for non-Diaconal work, this is to be reflected in a separate agreement and approved by the Bishop.

Discretionary funds provided for Deacons shall be administered in a manner consistent with denominational and diocesan policies.

**Benefits and Pension.** If you are an ordained Episcopal cleric, you automatically participate in the Clergy Pension Plan if you are compensated, regularly employed, expected to work five or more consecutive months for the same Episcopal employer, and your employer pays Assessments to CPF. If your position is expected to last for less than five months, and you have a letter of agreement directing the payment of Assessments by your employer for the services that you will provide, you have the option to participate in the Clergy Pension Plan. Learn more about when participation begins and eligibility.” All pertinent information is available at <https://www.cpg.org/>

**The Deacon’s Time Commitment.** The amount of time the Deacon shall devote to ministry depends on both the Deacon’s gifts and the Priest’s vision for the congregation. A general guideline is to serve approximately thirty five hours per month. A Deacon’s regular work schedule includes working Sundays at the altar, with one Sunday away per month. The Sunday away should be arranged in advance with the Priest. This Sunday allows for Deacon self-care, or other Diocesan work, including serving as Deacon for a Bishop’s visitation. In addition to Sunday services and special liturgical occasions, such as Christmas and Holy Week, the Deacon works in concert with the Priest on social and outreach ministries. All of this should be specified in a covenant between the Deacon and the Priest of the congregation they are serving.

**Practicing a Rule of Life** The Deacon will engage in regular worship and prayer practices, study of Scripture, an annual retreat, and spiritual direction. Tithing as a matter of spiritual wellness, a Deacon is expected to commit to donating a regular financial gift to the church to which he/she is assigned, to a social service ministry of his or her choice, or to a diocesan outreach ministry.

**Clergy Collegiality** Deacons are expected to engage both spiritually and socially with other clergy of the diocese at clergy convention, clergy days, quarterly Deacon gatherings and Bishop’s Day with the Deacons, unless excused by the Bishop.

**Resignation from Ministry.** Release and Removal from the Ordained Ministry of this Church. If any Deacon of The Episcopal Church shall express, in writing, to the Bishop of the Diocese in which such Deacon is canonically resident, an intention to be released and removed from the ordained Ministry of this Church and from the obligations attendant thereto, including those promises made at Ordination in the Declaration required by Article VIII of the Constitution of the General Convention, it shall be the duty of the Bishop to record the matter. The Bishop, being satisfied that the person so declaring is acting voluntarily and for causes which do not affect the person's moral character, and is neither the subject of information concerning an Offense that has been referred to an Intake Officer nor a Respondent in a pending disciplinary matter as

defined in Title IV of these Canons, shall lay the matter before the Standing Committee, and with the advice and consent of a majority of the Standing Committee the Bishop may pronounce that the person is released and removed from the ordained Ministry of this Church and from the obligations attendant thereto, and is deprived of the right to exercise in The Episcopal Church the gifts and spiritual authority as a Minister of God's Word and Sacraments conferred in Ordination. The Bishop shall also declare in pronouncing and recording such action that it was for causes which do not affect the person's moral character, and shall, at the person's request, give a certificate to this effect to the person so released and removed from the ordained Ministry." *TEC Canon 6. III.7.8 – Sec. 8*

### **Retirement For Deacons**

On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months, and this term may be renewed. The Episcopal Church - Canon III.7.7

### **Letter of Agreement-**

The Letter of Agreement which the Deacon has with the Rector and vestry of his/her parish outlines the responsibilities of the Deacon's ministry. It includes:

- A description of the Deacon's special ministry (outreach to the world),
- Principles of parish ministry and a description of how the Deacon will function in the
- Congregation (inreach to the church)
- Responsibilities for committee assignments
- Provision for annual review
- Details of the parish's responsibilities to the Deacon (expense reimbursement, continuing education, discretionary funds, etc.).

A sample document follows.



The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

**LETTER OF AGREEMENT**

Between

The Right Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutierrez

and

The Rev. Deacon \_\_\_\_\_

Whom the Bishop has assigned to

\_\_\_\_\_ Church

PA

effective \_\_\_\_\_

PREFACE: The ministry of the Deacon has its origins in the life and ministry of Christ and in the history of the early Church. It is given shape, meaning and purpose in the words of the Baptismal Covenant. This ministry is made concrete and specific by the words of the ordination service for Deacons:

“God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your Bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. As a Deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. 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. You are to assist the Bishop and Priests in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time.” (BCP p. 543)

Diaconal ministry is understood as one which takes on characteristics of both servanthood and leadership. While the Deacon is bound by vow directly to the Bishop, the Deacon also carries out ministries in close collaboration with the Rector/Vicar and congregation, as well as outside the formal boundaries of the Church.

#### 1. Authority

- 1.1 Deacons serve directly under the authority of the Bishop and are accountable to the Bishop. Their office in congregations reflects and extends their role as agents of the Church, commissioned by the Bishop to make the word of God, the mystery of Christ, known in many different ways and venues.
- 1.2 Deacons serve in accordance with the diocesan customs for the Diaconate.
- 1.3 Rectors/Vicars in Charge preside in their congregations and exercise authority in matters concerning the congregation.

#### 2. Tenure

- 2.1 The Bishop will consult with the Deacon and the Rector/Vicar or other leader exercising oversight before making the assignment, taking into account the particular gifts and travel requirements of the Deacon.
- 2.2 The assignment continues until the Bishop withdraws it, at his discretion.

#### 3. Ministries in the Congregation

- 3.1 The Deacon shall work with Rector/Vicar and the members in the ongoing renewal of the congregation.
- 3.2 The Deacon shall work with the people of the congregation in discerning gifts and developing ministries to those in need. The Deacon shall cultivate sensitivity to the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

#### 4. Liturgy

The Deacon shall perform the full and proper liturgical functions of a Deacon at Sunday, Holy Day Liturgies, and at other liturgies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals as available by mutual agreement with the Rector/Vicar. These functions are laid out in the Book of Common Prayer and include Proclaiming the Gospel, Bidding the Prayers of the People, and the Confession, Assisting at and preparing the Table at the Eucharist, Sending Forth the Eucharistic Visitors, Dismissing the People, Preaching on a regular basis and other

agreed upon functions consistent with his/her call to the order of the Deacon.

5. Participation in Diocesan and Congregational Life

- 5.1 From time to time the Deacon may assist at liturgies elsewhere.
- 5.2 The Deacon will participate, to the fullest extent possible, in diocesan convention, clericus, deanery and other required meetings, in gatherings for Deacons, and in continuing education.
- 5.3 The Deacon shall share in the Councils of the Church.
- 5.4 The Deacon shall participate (or have participated) in all diocesan mandated training experiences.
- 5.5 By agreement with the Rector/Vicar, the Deacon may serve on appropriate committees of the congregation.

6. Work and Leave

- 6.1 The Deacon normally serves the congregation without stipend or fee.
- 6.2 The congregation shall reimburse travel expenses incurred in the course of the Deacon's ministry, including to and from meetings. The expenses shall include public transportation and automobile expenses to be reimbursed at the current IRS rate for business use and out-of-pocket costs for parking fees and tolls.
- 6.3 Deacon's attendance at diocesan convention and other required meetings shall be paid for by the parish.
- 6.4 The congregation may furnish a discretionary fund for the Deacon, funded out of offerings for the poor, other special offerings, and direct donations, to be used for charitable purposes outside the congregation. The fund shall be set up as the Deacons Discretionary Account, using the congregation's tax ID number. The Fund should follow diocesan guidelines, including being subject to annual audit. The Deacon shall make a regular report to the Rector/Vicar on the use of the fund.
- 6.5 The congregation shall furnish an allowance for continuing education in order to comply with the canons of the Church.
- 6.6 The congregation shall furnish vestments for the Deacon's role in congregational liturgies.
- 6.7 The Deacon shall maintain membership in professional organizations and shall subscribe to professional periodicals and buy religious books, all pertaining to work as Deacon, at the Deacon's expense unless the church agrees to provide a professional expense allowance.
- 6.8 The Deacon is eligible for the following periods of leave, if possible taken concurrently with leave from secular work:
  - 6.8.1 Four weeks vacation each year.
  - 6.8.2 Two weeks each year for continuing formation.
  - 6.8.3 Sick leave, as required.
  - 6.8.4 Sabbatical leave from all church duties, normally after each five years of service, after application to the Rector/Vicar and with the consent of the

- Bishop. The typical length of such leave is three months.
- 6.8.5 Such other leave as is required to develop and maintain self-support outside the church.
  - 6.8.6 Such other leave as required by diocesan responsibilities.

## 7. Review

- 7.1 The Deacon will schedule a meeting with the Bishop annually to discuss ministry goals, achievements and problems.
- 7.2 The Deacon will provide an annual letter of review to the Bishop.
- 7.3 This agreement shall be reviewed and if necessary revised every three years. Revision may be initiated at any time by the Bishop or at the request of the Deacon or the Rector/Vicar.
- 7.4 Mutual Ministry Review: The Deacon shall be invited by the Rector/Vicar to participate in any parish/mission Mutual Ministry Review which may occur.

## Termination

- 7.5 This agreement automatically terminates, including withdrawal of the Deacon's assignment to the congregation, if and when the Rector/Vicar leaves this congregation. The Bishop or ArchDeacon in consultation with the Bishop may continue the Deacon's assignment for the interim period. A new letter of Agreement may be in place during the interim. After a new Rector/Vicar has taken office, the Bishop may continue the Deacon's assignment to the congregation, after consultation with the Rector/Vicar and the Deacon. The Rector/Vicar and the Deacon shall then, as soon as possible, establish and sign a new Letter of Agreement, subject to the signed approval of the Bishop. A three-month leave of absence for the Deacon, agreed upon by the Bishop, Rector/Vicar and the Deacon, may be appropriate at any time during the first six months of the new Rector/Vicar's tenure.
- 7.6 The Deacon or the Rector/Vicar may request termination of this agreement, including withdrawal of the Deacon from the congregation, at any time, by giving written notice to the Bishop. The Bishop may act on the request, at his discretion.
- 7.7 The Bishop may terminate this agreement, withdrawing the Deacon from the congregation, at any time and for any reason, by giving notice to the Deacon and the Rector/Vicar.
- 7.8 On such terminations, if desirable, an interval of thirty days shall be granted before the Deacon is withdrawn.
- 7.9 Upon reaching the age of mandatory retirement, the Deacon will meet with the ArchDeacon who will consult with the Bishop to consider possible reassignment.

## 8. Interpretation

If the Deacon and Rector/Vicar are in disagreement concerning the interpretation of this Letter of Agreement, either party may appeal for mediation to the Bishop whose decision shall be final.

LOA Signature Page:

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(Deacon Name)

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Date

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(Senior Warden Name and Church)

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Date

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Rev. (name)  
Archdeacon

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Date

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The Right Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez  
XVI Bishop of Pennsylvania

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Date

This Deacon's Manual has been prepared by the ArchDeacons of the DIOPA and is approved by The Rt. Rev. Daniel G.P. Gutierrez, Bishop of DIOPA.

We have borrowed language from both the Diocese of North Carolina and the Diocese of Oregon.in preparation of this document. We express our gratitude to the Bishops and Deacons of these Diocese.

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