

GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

Diocese of Niagara

1 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.



Acts 6: 1-10

Concerning the Order of Deacons

In Holy Scriptures and ancient Christian times, there have been different ministries within the Church. Since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been known in the Church. First, there is the order of Bishops who carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising and uniting the Church. Second, there are the presbyters, or ordained elders, in subsequent times known as Priests. Together with the Bishops, they take part in the preaching of the Word of God and administering the holy sacraments. Third, there are Deacons who in assisting bishops and priests in all of this work, have a special responsibility to minister in Christ's name to "the poor, sick, the suffering and the helpless" (BAS 631). All three orders are "consecrated", "ordained" and "made" according to the ordination liturgies.

The Diaconate is a separate, distinct, and equal order of ordained ministry dedicated primarily to:

- Serving and enabling others to serve those who are in need, oppressed, sick or lonely; and
- holding before the Church the needs of the world, interpreting those needs to the Church, and enabling baptized persons to discern, exercise and collaborate in the ministry of Christ in the world.

Deacons are icons of servanthood (they are servants of the world on behalf of the church), agents of the bishop (pursuing the diocesan vision for ministry in the world), leaders (encouraging baptismal ministry within their parish) and prophets (alerting the church to the needs of the world and calling and enabling our response to those needs).

In Micah 6: 8 the prophet wrote: ***"He has told you O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."***

Terms:

Over the years, those who have chosen, and are committed to, a continuing life as a deacon have been called 'vocational deacons', 'permanent', 'perpetual' and other similar titles. Those ordained as an apprenticeship to their calling to priesthood were called "transitional deacons." The present practice is to refer to both groups as "deacons." Those also called to the order of priests, are "deacons serving with a Bishop's license." Those called to a life of a deacon are "deacons serving with the Bishop's permission." Within this booklet, the word "deacon" applies to those serving with the Bishop's permission.

The Call to Diaconal Ministry

A call to Diaconal Ministry is often individual in nature and comes through an individual's prayerful communication with God. It may arise from the settled Incumbent (Rector or Priest-in-Charge) who believes that a particular individual is a possible candidate; or, most often, in the process of a parish exploring the possibility of raising up a deacon, a number of individuals may be recognized and encouraged to explore their own calling. In this diocese, the call must be recognized by both the parish and the diocese.

Some of the signs of a call are an individual's demonstrated activity in:

- serving and to enable others to serve;
- holding before the Church the needs of the world, interpreting those needs to the Church, being a symbol of and model for and enabler of the servant ministries of the whole baptized community; and
- strong empathy with and advocacy on behalf of those who are marginalized, impoverished, oppressed, sick, and isolated may also indicate a call to the Diaconate.

College of Deacons

As per Canon 3.5, there is a College of Deacons composed of all deacons in good standing and holding a Bishop's permission.

A Director of Deacons shall and a Deputy Director of Deacons may be appointed by the Bishop who shall serve at the Bishop's pleasure and assist the Bishop in the supervision and support of deacons.

A chaplain or chaplains will be appointed by the Bishop to attend to the spiritual or personal needs of members of the College of Deacons as needed.

Purpose of the College

The purpose of the College of Deacons is to provide communal support and encouragement to deacons exercising their ministry throughout the Diocese of Niagara.

The Director and Deputy Director of Deacons, in consultation with College members, may recommend standards and educational opportunities for its members. The College may advise the Bishop on matters she/he may refer to them from time to time.

Anyone interested in learning about the process by which a call to the diaconate is discerned should refer to the diocesan website.

The Diocese of Niagara has set forth the following guidelines for the exercise of diaconal ministry:

The Role of the Deacon

The following summarizes what a deacon *could* do in a parish. It is not meant to describe everything a deacon *would* do. The role of parish traditions and the continuing roles of other lay ministers must be respected. In some parishes Lay Readers or others do almost everything a deacon might do. In other parishes it will be seen that someone else is now doing things that have previously only been done by a priest. Parish education is very important both before and after a deacon is appointed.

It is recommended that deacons take part as needed in the leadership of services – especially on major feast days.

At the Eucharist the Deacon may do the following:

1. proclaim the Gospel;
2. lead and/or organize the Prayers of the People;
3. prepare the altar for the Eucharist;
4. perform the ablutions following the communion;
5. dismiss the people for their service in the world;
6. it has traditionally been the Deacon's privilege to carry the Paschal Candle and sing the Exsultet during the Easter vigil;
7. with the approval of the Rector and under her/his direction the Deacon may assist at baptisms, funerals, and officiate at Morning and Evening Prayer in or out of the church buildings;
8. with the approval of the Rector and under her/his direction the Deacon may administer reserve sacrament using episcopally authorized forms and in accordance with the specific rubrics and conditions therein (not including Sunday worship);
9. such tasks and duties as may be assigned by the Bishop and/or the Incumbent.

In general the rule regarding what deacons can and cannot do is summed up with the phrase "ABC": Deacons *cannot*: **A**bsolve, **B**less or **C**onsecrate.

Deacons may not replace a rector during the Rector's vacation or sabbatical. They cannot replace a rector for Sunday Eucharists and will not be licensed as Deacon-in-charge or Interim Pastor. A parish must secure the leadership of a priest during a rector's vacation or planned absence.

A deacon cannot serve as a churchwarden, lay member of Synod or serve in any other lay position.

Deacons have a special relationship with the Bishop. There are regular gatherings of all the deacons with the Bishop. Each deacon shall meet annually with the Bishop or as directed by the Bishop.

Compensation of Deacons

Deacons are non-stipendiary. However, all deacons may annually submit budget requests for vestry consideration for expenses they incur. Parishes shall be asked to consider reimbursing the following as allowable budgeted expenses:

- mileage and other expenses incidental to the performance of their ministry and diocesan-required conferences, including but not limited to Clergy and Licensed Lay Workers' Days and Conferences, other conferences and continuing education; and
- an annual honorarium of a nominal amount and/or
- any other specific payments as agreed to by the Deacon, the Parish and the Bishop.

The diocese shall cover, up to the level approved in the diocesan budget, the travel expenses of the Director and Deputy Director of Deacons to attend meetings with the Bishop or the diocesan officer with human resources responsibilities.

Continuing Education

Deacons are expected to attend the annual Clergy and Licensed Lay Workers' Conference. The College of Deacons will hold an annual gathering and such other educational sessions as may be appropriate. Deacons are encouraged to participate in continuing education programs and, when parish financial assistance is not available, may apply to the diocese for financial assistance to defray such costs.

Preaching as a Deacon

In their preaching, deacons have a special responsibility to proclaim the diaconal message of Jesus Christ and to motivate the congregation to serve those who are marginalized, impoverished, oppressed, sick, suffering and isolated in the parish as well as in their surrounding communities. Beyond preaching, the Deacon will also find other ways to encourage the congregation in their own baptismal ministries.

Accountability

Deacons are directly accountable to the Bishop and to those with whom the Bishop's ministry is shared. The Incumbent (who may be a Rector, Priest-in-Charge or Interim Pastor) of a parish where a deacon is doing active ministry will have supervisory administrative authority, in the name of the Bishop, over the parish activity of the Deacon.

When a parish profile is created during a vacancy in settled priestly ministry, the Parochial Committee shall describe the role of the Deacon(s) as lived out in that parish at that time. When a new Rector is appointed to a parish, the new Rector, the parish Deacon(s), the Director of Deacons and/or the Deputy Director of Deacons will meet to discuss a continuing role for the Deacon(s) in that parish.

A formal covenant concerning the ministry of the Deacon(s) is expected and will be subject to review not less frequently than once every three years. The diocesan officer with human resources responsibilities is available to assist in developing such covenants. These covenants shall specify the vehicle for not less than quarterly meetings with the Incumbent and the Deacon. The Deacon shall forward to the Director of Deacons, with a copy to the Incumbent and the diocesan human resources officer a one-page Ember Letter, being a summary of the Deacon's activities in the previous year. The letter must be submitted no later than January 31st of each year.

Baptism

A priest or bishop is the normal minister of this sacrament. If the person to be baptized has a special connection with a deacon, the Deacon, with the permission of the priest and with the priest present, may perform the baptism.

When requested to assist at a baptism and with the permission of the supervising rector, the Deacon may do so, recognizing that the Priest performs the sacrament of Baptism.

Weddings

A priest or bishop is the normal minister of this sacrament. It is not normal practice for the Diocese to apply for a marriage license on behalf of a deacon. Such a license may only be obtained with the permission of the Bishop. The authority to officiate at weddings cannot be exercised in the absence of a priest.

Funerals

Parish funerals will normally be conducted by a parish's priests and those deacons holding a Bishop's license. The Deacon may be asked to assist at or to conduct funerals in the absence or unavailability of the Rector.

With the appropriate training and supervision, deacons may conduct funerals. For some of our deacons this is part of their ministry – e.g. nursing homes, homes for the aged, hospices. For other deacons this opportunity may arise through their extended family or community relationships. If a blessing is to take place, a priest must be present.

Pastoral Acts Outside the Parish or Diocese

For pastoral acts outside the diocese, permission must be obtained from the Bishop of Niagara and the Bishop of the diocese and the Rector of the parish in which the ministry will take place. Such permission will only be sought with the knowledge of the diocesan Executive Administrator.

For pastoral acts outside the parish but within the Diocese, permission must be obtained from the Rector of the parish in which the ministry will take place.

Other important tasks for which each deacon is to take responsibility:

- It is expected that the Deacon will be vested for all services in their parish church (or for major feast days) at which they are in attendance.
- It is expected that all deacons will be in attendance (vested) at all ordinations of deacons.
- It is expected that deacons will be asked to perform traditional deacon's roles at Diocesan and Regional services, wherever possible.
- Deacons are required to have a spiritual director. Help in locating a suitable one can be obtained from our Chaplain of Deacons, or other diocesan resource persons.
- It is expected that all deacons will participate at every retreat and educational day if at all possible.
- At the request of the Director of Deacons, deacons may be asked to serve as mentors for candidates to the diaconate.

The proper form of address of a deacon is:

The Reverend Deacon John/Jane Doe

Use of a clerical collar:

It is appropriate for a deacon to wear a clerical collar in the following situations:

1. whenever representing the church or diocese;
2. at the times of worship in the parish; and
3. at formal gatherings – synod, meeting with the Bishop, etc.

THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW MINISTRY OF A DEACON

A service of celebration of the new ministry of a deacon will be held to formally recognize that new beginning and the Deacon's Letter of Permission will again be presented at that time. It is encouraged that other deacons attend this celebration to support their colleague.

THE MOVEMENT OF DEACONS TO NEW PARISHES**Deacons moving due to conflict with incumbent**

1. Notify the Director of Deacons and Bishop. An attempt to reconcile the situation will be made.
2. If this is not successful, the Bishop, the diocesan officer with human resources responsibilities and the Director of Deacons shall attempt to find a placement in another parish willing to accept a deacon. The Parochial Committee of the potential new parish shall be consulted by the Bishop.

Deacons moving for other reasons within the Diocese:

1. If the change is an amicable one required by an employment situation, a change of residence, or for some other reason, the Incumbent should be notified first. After that, the Deacon must contact the Director of Deacons and the diocesan human resources officer.
2. At the point of leaving the parish, the Deacon's Letter of Permission from the Bishop will be withdrawn, and the Deacon cannot act liturgically as a deacon during that time.
3. A face-to-face meeting of the Deacon, Director and/or Deputy Director of Deacons, and the diocesan human resources officer could take place to discuss the issues which arise out of the move.
4. Assuming the Deacon wishes to have the Bishop's permission to function in the new parish, the Deacon shall meet with the Incumbent and the Parochial Committee to see if there is a possibility of this occurring. A program of education for the parish may be necessary, based on the recommendation of the Parochial Committee. The Parochial Committee shall make a recommendation to the Bishop as to whether or not a Bishop's Letter of Permission should be issued in the new parish. The Bishop shall have the final decision as to whether or not to issue a new Letter of Permission.

Deacons leaving the Diocese:

1. It is required that a deacon advise the Bishop, Director and Deputy Director of Deacons and diocesan human resources officer if a move to another diocese is being undertaken.

2. It should be noted that different dioceses may have different requirements for the activities, education, employment, or other factors related to a deacon. There is no guarantee that the Deacon will be able to function within a new diocese.

The Retirement of Deacons

1. A deacon may retire at any time. A deacon wishing to retire should notify the Bishop first. After that the Deacon must contact the Incumbent, Director of Deacons and the diocesan human resources officer.
2. Upon attaining the age of 75, every deacon still holding a Bishop's permission, shall have an annual review of the Deacon's ministry with the Incumbent, the Director of Deacons or his/her designate, and the human resources officer of the diocese or her/his designate. The purpose of the review is to examine the job description and detailing what ministries might be continued, vacated or newly undertaken. As a result of the review, the Director of Deacons and the human resources officer, in consultation with the Incumbent, may make such recommendations as they deem necessary to the Bishop about whether or not the Letter of Permission should remain the same, be varied, or withdrawn.
3. Retired deacons shall remain a member of the College of Deacons, but shall not have the right to vote or stand for any position on behalf of the College. They shall be able to attend the annual dinner with the Bishop. Retired deacons shall only attend clericus meetings to which other retired clergy are invited. Retired deacons shall not attend the annual Clergy and Licensed Lay Workers' Days or Conferences.
4. Retired deacons shall exercise judicious discretion about the wearing of a clergy- collar, normally reserving the wearing of such for occasions and settings in which the Deacon is functioning with the Bishop's permission as a deacon.
5. A retired deacon will maintain and submit to the appropriate diocesan official(s) a current Police Record Check (every three years) or Nexus Card if they are exercising ministry under a Bishop's letter of permission.

CANON 1.1

Composition of Synod

1. The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara shall consist of:
 - (1) The Bishop of the Diocese, who shall be the head of Synod;
 - (2) Any Suffragan or Coadjutor Bishop thereof;
 - (3) The Priests, Deacons and Lay Workers thereof, duly licensed;
 - (4) The Director of Deacons, the Deputy Director of Deacons (if any), and up to three deacons (who have been granted a Bishop's Permission) elected annually by the College of Deacons from among its members; (amended 2015)
 - (5) The Chancellor;
 - (6) The Vice-Chancellor, if any;
 - (7) The Treasurer;
 - (8) The Secretary of Synod; (amended, 1991)
 - (9) The Lay Representatives duly elected in accordance with Canon 4.1(17);
 - (10) Anyone not otherwise designated above who is a member of the Synod Council; (new, 2001)
 - (11) Not more than 10 Lay Representatives who shall be appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese in each year in consultation with the Synod Council, such Lay Representative serving for a one-year term.

2. Lay Workers who are members of Synod shall be considered members of the Order of Laity for purposes of voting.

3. Clergy who receive a pension from the Anglican Church of Canada and who are currently in good standing with the Bishop of Niagara shall be entitled to a seat on the floor of the Synod, and shall have a right to take part in discussion, but shall not be entitled to vote. (*revised, 2015*)

CANON 3.5

College of Deacons

1. There shall be a College of Deacons whose purpose is to provide communal support and encouragement to deacons exercising their ministries throughout the Diocese of Niagara.
2. The diocesan Bishop shall appoint a Director of Deacons and may appoint both a Deputy Director of Deacons and a Chaplain to the College of Deacons. The Director and Deputy Director, if any, shall serve at the Bishop's pleasure and assist the Bishop in the placement and supervision of deacons. The Bishop's Chaplain to the College will function as a pastor to the deacons on behalf of the Bishop.
3. The College of Deacons shall be composed of:
 - (a) all deacons in good standing and holding a Bishop's Permission
 - (b) the Director of Deacons;
 - (c) the Deputy Director of Deacons, if any; and
 - (d) the Bishop's Chaplain to the College of Deacons, if any.
4. There shall be an Executive Council of the College of Deacons whose purpose is to advise and assist the Bishop, Director of Deacons and Deputy Director of Deacons, if any, in seeking and promoting the vitality of diaconal ministries in the Diocese of Niagara.
5. The Executive Council of the College of Deacons shall be composed of:
 - (a) the Director of Deacons, who shall serve as Chair;
 - (b) the Deputy Director of Deacons, if any;
 - (c) three delegates duly elected from the membership of the College of Deacons;
 - (d) the Bishop's Chaplain to the College of Deacons, if any; and
 - (e) the Bishop or his/her designate.

(replaced, 2015)

Purpose of the College

The College of Deacons shall recommend standards and educational opportunities for candidates while supporting and encouraging all Deacons in their ministry. They shall assist the Director in planning an annual retreat/conference and conduct elections for member(s) of Synod. The College shall advise the Bishop on matters she/he may refer to them from time to time.

(new, 2003)

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