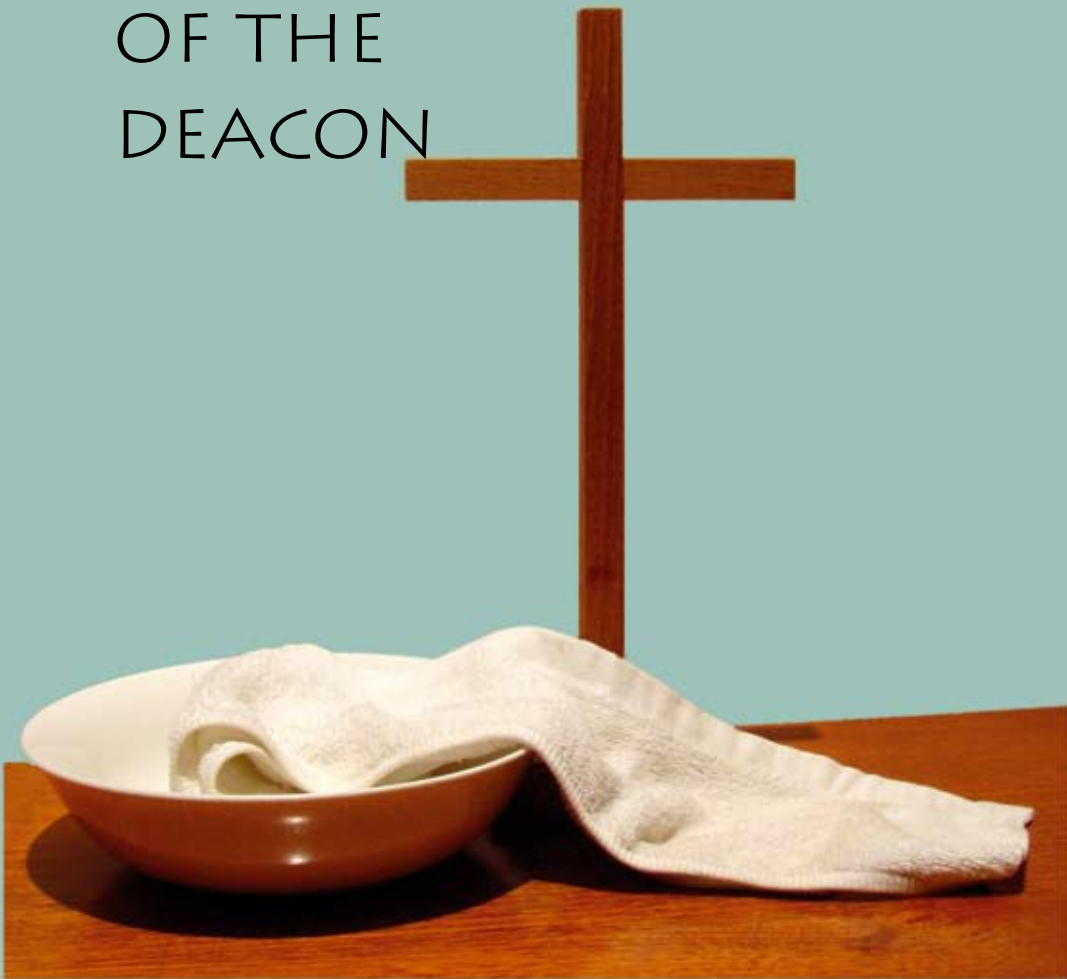


A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST:
THE DISTINCTIVE
MINISTRY
OF THE
DEACON



what it means to be a deacon in the diocese of canberra & goulburn



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA
DIOCESE OF CANBERRA & GOULBURN

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A New Life in Christ

the distinctive ministry of the deacon

Holy Orders in the Anglican Church

It would be difficult for anyone to give an account of what it means to be a deacon in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn without first addressing the issue of Holy Orders. In particular asking the question: Why has the Church taken one of the Holy Orders, that of deacon, and restored it to a distinctive and permanent order?

The short answer is that the ministry of deacons in the Anglican Church has a long history dating back to Biblical times. The deacon in the early church was a permanent order. It is only in more recent times that the order has been used as a transitional order, i.e. a period of training or preparation for the priesthood. If you examine the liturgy for ordination in 'A Prayer Book for Australia' (pages 785 & 793) and compare the challenge to the deacon and the challenge to the priest you will notice distinctive differences in emphasis.

Why ordain deacons at all? Why not join deacon and priest into one order? There are those who argue for this and those who argue that, in effect, bishop and priest come out of the same 'stable,' but the deacon has a different reason for being. Bishops oversee and delegate to priests their Episcopal authority to gather, teach and nurture the community of Christ. Whereas the Bishop authorises the deacon to assist the bishop to focus the church and the world on issues of justice, mercy and compassion. Deacons are not assistant clergy. They are emissaries of the bishop and servant leaders in the 'diakonia' of Christ. They carry out a distinctive ministry to the world and to the church. They work in many different fields and may often be found outside the mainstream of the church, at the edges and in the ditches of society.

Rethinking the role of the diaconate in the contemporary church has meant rethinking and re-framing the roles of everyone who is baptised into the church of God. Thus Baptism is the primary calling to ministry.

If you wish to read more about these issues, you are invited to follow up the articles listed in the appendix of this booklet.

Why renew the diaconate?

In summary the reasons are:

- To recover the 'diakonia' of the whole body of Christ;
- to clarify what it means to be a member of God's church today;
- to bring about change in the culture of the Church, refocussing it towards Christ's mission;
- to bring into sharp focus our current ways of doing and being;
- the fundamental declaration in our Constitution commits us to a threefold order of ordained ministry;
- each order is understood out of reference to the other. A strong priesthood and episcopate needs a strong diaconate.

What does the renewed diaconate offer?

By recovering the distinctive role of deacon on a more permanent basis, this Diocese sees opportunities to:

- imaginatively explore new possibilities for ministry;
- develop a clearer vision for the ministry of all believers;
- develop a clearer understanding of what it means to be bishop, priest, or deacon within the context of a ministry belonging to all baptised believers; and
- use deacons as signposts for a renewed outward-focussing Church.



What does the renewed diaconate look like?

Images and metaphors

There are many images that are used to give some idea of the role and being of a deacon:

go-between	servant leader	bridge to the world
prophet	fellow-traveller	evangelist
intercessor	apologist	teacher
pioneer	messenger, envoy	herald
adviser	healer	advocate
	enabler	

All of these metaphors encapsulate the role of deacon. These ways of being and doing are not exclusive to the deacon; they are shared with everyone else in the church.

What do the deacons in this Diocese do?

The ministry of deacon in this diocese is as varied as the number of deacons. Some possibilities for ministry include the following:

Chaplain

A number of deacons in the Diocese have roles that include aspects of chaplaincy. Their ministry is centred on local nursing homes, aged-care facilities or hospital chaplaincy units. They operate from a home base church but spend most of their time equipping others for ministry at the margins of society, away from the gathered church. They care for the poor, the sick, the lonely, the outcast, and the marginalised and bring their concerns to the attention of the local church.

Deacon in the Parish

Deacons usually are licensed to a local parish as part of their ministry responsibility. Within the liturgy, they represent the church scattered, bringing the hurts of the world to the attention of the church. Some of these deacons will have a specific ministry to special groups (e.g. children's ministry; developing and leading pastoral care groups; leading parish home and hospital visiting

teams; working with mental health patients.) In all of these activities, they work in association with the rector of the parish.

Diocesan Deacon

Several of the deacons operate at the diocesan level.

One is the Archdeacon of the Diaconate whose major role is to oversee the work and life of the deacons as a representative of the bishop. The Archdeacon represents the needs of the poor and marginalised to the wider church.

Several others are located at St Mark's National Theological Centre and have responsibility for assisting the Archdeacon and the Bishop in post-ordination formation processes and in teaching subjects ranging from Biblical Studies, Liturgy, Theology and Worship to Diaconate Studies. All of these deacons work to support, encourage and equip the work of others for ministry in the church of God.

Where do we need more deacons?

The church needs deacons in ministry leadership, in education, in parish ministry and in prophetic and advocacy work.

We need advocates and prophets. There are some people with these gifts, working to bring justice to all levels of governance in church and society. They often work at the margins, critically questioning unjust structures. They are prepared to be unconventional and challenging. They are prepared to break new ground, to be a 'burr under the saddle' of those in authority.

We need deacons with gifts, knowledge and a passion for the environment, nursing, education, working with children, Aboriginal society, and more.

The Diocese is concerned with issues such as poverty, the environment, justice, the needs of marginalised groups, and the reconciliation of Aboriginal people and later migrants to the rest of Australian society.

There are many members of the church ministering in these areas in the Diocese. Of these, some may have the call to the diaconate but are not sure what it means for them.

Ordination to the Diaconate

Paths to ordination

There are several paths to ordination in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Set out below are the details of the initial discernment process, and the different ‘tracks’ to ordination.

Discernment and Admission to Candidature—a process

1. At the invitation of the Bishop the deacon enquirer will enter an intentional process of discernment while being mentored by an ordained deacon of the Diocese. This mentoring process will continue throughout the enquirer’s candidature.
2. Upon successful completion of the discernment process, the recommendation of the Archdeacon to the Diaconate, and the enquirer’s Rector, the enquirer may enter the selection process. This process includes:
 - i. an interview and recommendation of the Examining Chaplains to the Bishop;
 - ii. the Bishop’s invitation to the Selection Panel;
 - iii. the affirmation of the calling of the enquirer as Category 1 (approved without reservations) or 2 (approved subject to various requirements and conditions);
 - iv. the approval of the Bishop to enter the formation process and to continue discernment as a candidate.
3. Admission to candidature and continuing discernment is no guarantee of ordination, rather, it acknowledges that there is evidence of a calling which needs to be explored by both the candidate and the church.

Candidature

Following admission to candidature and in consultation with the Bishop, the candidate undertakes one of the following three tracks for the theological formation and training:

Track 1 Completed theology studies

Candidates who have completed, at a minimum, a *University Certificate in Theology*, or a *Graduate Diploma of Theology* undertake two(2) years of formation by completing the *St Mark's Diploma of Anglican Orders* in Intensive Mode or its equivalent. Ordination to the diaconate may occur at the discretion of the Bishop, and in consultation with the Archdeacon to the Diaconate, at the end of the first year, providing completion of the Diploma is assured.

Track 2 No theology study completed

Candidates without formal theological education will be required to complete either the *University Certificate in Theology* with a focus on diaconal studies, or the *Graduate Diploma of Theology* with a focus on diaconal studies; plus the two(2) year *Diploma of Anglican Orders*—the *Diploma of Anglican Orders* may be undertaken concurrently with formal theology studies. Ordination to the diaconate may occur at the discretion of the Bishop, and in consultation with the Archdeacon to the Diaconate, following the completion of **all** minimum study requirements, and after the completion of one (1) year of the Anglican Orders program, providing completion of the Diploma is assured.

Track 3 Special Circumstances

Track 3 candidates are the exception not the rule. A candidate who is deemed by the Bishop and the Archdeacon to the Diaconate as not able to meet the entry requirements for formal theological education will be required to undertake the following:

1. attend eight *College of Deacons'* gatherings, to participate actively, and show evidence of theological reflection in this forum
2. complete the two (2) year *St Mark's Diploma of Anglican Orders* program.

Ordination to the diaconate may occur at the discretion of the Bishop, and in consultation with the Archdeacon to the Diaconate, following the completion of one (1) year of the Diploma and attendance at four (4) *College of Deacons'* gatherings, as long as completion of the Diploma and attendance at the remaining four college of deacons gatherings is assured. It is our practice

that, until completion of the Diploma and the reflections from the balance of the gatherings, the 'Track 3' deacon's Licence will be restricted to the local parish and the ministry unit to which they are attached.

In the case of 'Track 3' candidates it is essential that they show a basic ability to reflect theologically on their ministry. Training and development is structured along these lines.

1. The deacons gatherings are structured with time for instruction, group participation, group and individual reflection, and worship that models the deacon's role in the liturgy. Separate meeting times for 'Track 3' candidates may occur before or after the gathering.
2. 'Track 3' candidates will submit a reflection on the gathering discussing:
 - i. what they felt the weekend was about;
 - ii. where they may have seen God's work happening as part of the weekend;
 - iii. what particularly was awakened in them from their inner self (i.e. their 'being');
 - iv. one thing that they learnt that really stood out to them.

This may be submitted in any one of a variety of media forms from written to a verbal account given to the Archdeacon or her nominee.

3. The mentoring program for deacons will continue from initial discernment through to ordination and beyond.
4. At the end or during the 'Track 3' candidature, the Archdeacon to the Diaconate will recommend to the Bishop:
 - i. that ordination should proceed; or
 - ii. that the candidate requires further mentoring to solve particular problems or address particular issues; or
 - iii. that candidature be terminated.

Age at time of ordination

There has been much discussion over recent years as to the appropriate age the diocese should cease accepting candidates for ordination to the diaconate.

Some dioceses have no fixed boundaries, but rather look at many different factors, others have a clear cut-off.

As a general guideline, it is considered appropriate to invest in the candidate if they have the possibility of 10 years of ministry ahead of them. This will, to some extent, depend on present health, physical and mental abilities, and numerous other factors. As a general guideline the cut-off age at time of ordination is set at 60 for the diaconate, subject to the above factors and individual circumstances.

Ministry Formation and Continuing Development

Ministry formation in the Diocese

The ministry formation program for the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn is administered by St Mark's National Theological Centre at Barton. The program is two (2) years in duration, and the formation group meets regularly on Fridays during the semester. There is also an intensive program for those unable to be part of the Friday program. The formation program combines theological reflection, individual discernment, and practical training to ensure that as deacons and priests we are well formed for the challenges involved in ministry in the 21st century. It is a requirement for ordination that all candidates, whether for deacon or priest, must complete the *Diploma of Anglican Orders* through St Mark's.

Post-Ordination Formation

It is a requirement of the Bishop that all clergy attend peer group meetings, training days, retreat days, clergy conferences and similar activities. For deacons this means attendance at:

- two (2) or three (3) peer-group meetings a year. Peer groups are organised on a geographical basis. At present we have a northern group involving Canberra, Goulburn and Queanbeyan, and a southern group taking in deacons from Wagga Wagga, Harden, Tumut, Cooma and surrounding districts.
- the one-day and the annual clergy conference organised by the Diocesan Ministry Development Team. As most deacons are non-stipendiary some may not be able to afford the money or the time

away from their paid employment to attend. Assistance is available through the Archdeacon.

- the annual meeting of deacons with the Bishop which usually takes place on the second Friday in November from around 10 am to 2 pm at the Bishop's residence. The program is one of sharing, envisioning, worshipping together and enjoying the fellowship of a good meal.
- the annual Deacons' School held over two (2) days at various locations. There is a three year syllabus covering aspects of biblical, theological and liturgical study.

Oversight, Management and Organisation

Covenants

Like all clergy, deacons are expected to develop a covenant through a process that involves conversations between and among the deacon, the Bishop, the Archdeacon, the ministering community of faith, and the rector of a parish or the head of a church agency (e.g. an Aged Care facility; an Anglicare agency).

Deacons may also explore ways of involving the secular organisations, in which they may express their daily ministries, in the covenantal process.

The Archdeacon and the head of the ministry unit (parish priest or director) have a role in supporting, encouraging and developing the ministry of the deacons in a specific location. The local role of the mentor is to assist deacons in self-appraisal of their ministry and support them in their liturgical and ministerial lives.

Health and Well-being

Most people in ministry work under extreme pressure. Making time for recovery and re-energising is important. All deacons should engage the services of a spiritual adviser to keep them on an even keel. Over-commitment is common among clergy; regular review of commitments with an appointed mentor helps keep priorities balanced.

Family, exercise, work and play are all important.

Assistance is available through the Bishop, or through those appointed by him, for clergy experiencing extreme stress or personal difficulties.

Remuneration

Everyone needs financial support. Some are blessed with an independent income, a supporting spouse or a paid ministry position. Most deacons have a covenant arrangement with their base communities of faith regarding financial support.

In a pluralistic approach to ministry, innovative approaches to financial support must be developed. Some parishes and church agencies pay out-of-pocket expenses to deacons. Some provide transport assistance in the form of a subsidy or a motor-vehicle on loan. From time to time both state and federal government agencies offer funds for special projects to the marginalised.

The *College of Deacons* has a small budget. The funds are for the support, development and education of the Diaconate. It provides for a vehicle, mainly for the use of the Archdeacon, and development activities.

The *College of Deacons* has a small amount of money raised in various ways from among ourselves. The Archdeacon has access to these funds to assist deacons in need.

The deacon in liturgy

Liturgical practice in the Diocese is varied but generally follows the rubrics of *A Prayer Book for Australia*. The prayer book records definite liturgical roles for bishops, priests and deacons. If a deacon is not present, a priest or an authorised lay person may stand in for the deacon.

As a distinctive order, deacons are encouraged to play their role in all aspects of the liturgical life of the church community. Actual practice depends on local circumstances, however, if you read the rubrics of the prayer book, you will see that the following areas are 'diaconal':

- the call to repentance (prophetic role);
- the reading of the Gospel; (heraldic role)
- serving at table (servant role);
- the dismissal (Go in Peace...mission role).

Any perceived difficulties in this area are worked out between the deacon and priest with the assistance of the Archdeacon, if needed.

A final word

The grace of orders enables us to fulfil the tasks that would otherwise be impossible, including the changing commitments that impact both on our own family and the other members of the church. The community of faith has placed their faith and trust in the ordinand to be a faithful servant leader and a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

Ordination involves family and community transforming old relationships into new ones. It brings shared pain and shared joy. Ordination is a call to faithfulness and accountability through which we pray we might also grow in holiness of life as imitators of Christ.



Appendices

Appendix 1: The Nature of the Diaconate: A Reflection

by Peter Pocock, Deacon

A few short years ago I penned these words as part of a Maundy Thursday sermon. Picture a small white towel placed on the pulpit for all to see:

It seems such a small deed: he took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself and poured water into a basin; he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that he tied around his waist. It was unheard of in Jesus' time for the master to do such a thing; to take on the role of a servant and to minister to each of his disciples by washing their feet. This one humble act was on the edge—a radical act—presenting by example a model for discipleship of humility and service, while retaining the role of leader and teacher, i.e. leading by example.

He took off his outer garment, shed his protective robes, and became vulnerable, while surrounding and wrapping himself in the tools of his ministry—people, water, a basin and a towel. He risked ridicule, and he got his hands dirty while revealing new life, new possibilities. In loud silence he said to his disciples: 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me' – 'Unless you wash their feet you have no share with them.'

He turned our eyes to compassion instead of survival, to serving the rejected, the downtrodden and the oppressed, rather than sitting comfortably in our pews. He asks: 'Do you have the courage to have a share with them? Are you prepared to pick up a towel, to humbly wash the feet of those who are different to you in any way?' Jesus is calling us to take a risk, to dare to be different, to dare to look outwards instead of inwards, to dare to walk a road that is on the edge, to dare to pick up that little white towel and say: 'Here I am, use me. Let me wash your feet.'

There is an infinite supply of towels—Jesus had but one—there is one for each of us. For every towel that is left, a pair of feet

remain unwashed. For every towel taken up, someone receives nurturing, healing, caring and love, and someone is brought closer to God. Are we willing to take the risk to follow Jesus? Are we ready to wash the feet of Jesus? “For as you do to the least of these, you do also to me.”

It is in the diaconate that the cross and the towel meet – this radical expression of Christ’s servant leadership is lived out in the life and work of the modern deacon. Archdeacon Ormond Plater of the Diocese of Louisiana once said that “...deacons should be loud and objectionable... interpreting the needs of the World to the Church... and attending to the Church scattered...” By ‘loud and objectionable’ Deacon Plater implies that, amongst other things, the deacon is to be the persistent conscience of the church—bringing the aches and pains of the world into the church, reminding the church of its mission in the world, and taking the church to the world through leadership, example and service.

The deacon as an ambassador of the Bishop, is the dispenser of the towels to the church gathered, challenging each by example to pick up a towel, modelling Jesus’ ministry to the church scattered—to the poor, the sick, the outcast, the rejected, the downtrodden and the oppressed—and fostering new life, faith and repentance with the transforming example of Christ’s ministry.

In the ‘Ordinal for the Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating Deacons’ within the Anglican Church of Australia the deacon is called to:

- serve God in the world, setting forth Christ’s kingdom through the power of the Spirit...
- be an ambassador of Christ, proclaiming the good news of God’s love
- express the transforming love of Jesus by word and example, modelling their life according to the word of God
- bring others to faith and repentance
- pray and work for peace and justice, and to facilitate others in the ways of justice, mercy, and humility before God

- strengthen the faithful, teach the young, search out the careless and indifferent
- minister to the sick and the needy, the oppressed and all that are in trouble
- study, teach and reflect on the scriptures
- put away all that does not lead to holiness of life, and to be faithful in prayer

The deacon as servant leader equips the church gathered to express its diakonia to the world. The compassionate church must tie a towel around its waist, get down on its knees and wash the feet of the world; in doing so we wash the feet of Jesus. The deacon in partnership with the laity is a living expression of the diaconal role of church to the world.

In loud silence Jesus is saying to us:

‘Unless I wash you, you have no share with me’

‘Unless you wash their feet you have no share with them.’



Appendix 2: What does it mean to be a deacon in this diocese? —a personal perspective

by Graham Lindsay, Deacon

on being

I am a deacon, having served ten years in the order of deacons in the Anglican Church of Australia in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Following a discernment process that took almost two years and theological education and ministry formation which is ongoing, I have gradually developed an understanding of diaconal calling that is based on three main principles:

- I am called to **be** a deacon (ontological principle);
- A deacon is a person on a mission from the church (Body of Christ) into the world;
- A deacon is a visible sign of what the whole body of Christ (the church) is called to be (a servant of God and God's people).

As a result of employing these principles, I hold to the following understandings and concepts:

- Deacons are members of the ordained clergy with a specific set of giftings that are largely complementary to those of presbyterial ministers (bishops and priests) and thus have roles in all the liturgical and ministerial activities of the church within their specific giftings.
- Whereas priests primarily function in *koinonia* (seen as creating community, nurturing, edifying and teaching the gathered people), deacons primarily carry out their function in *diakonia* (seen as servant leadership, taking the word and its concomitants of justice, peace, love and mercy to the world in general and the marginalised in particular.)
- The deacon's role and function within the gathered church body is to bring to the church gathered the needs of the world, to lead them into prayer and to focus their attention on the call of the Gospel.
- Deacons are not subordinate or subject to other orders in the church; they are licensed by the Bishop as clergy with specific gifts

and leadership responsibilities as part of their being and according to the vows they take.

- The tasks, projects and ‘ministries’ that deacons may undertake are so many and varied that it is impossible to specify or categorise deacons by the tasks they do. In fact, the tasks and functional roles of deacons will change over time according to need, giftings and call. In summary, ‘being’ will not change, but ‘doing’ will.

There is a tendency within the church to define a deacon by what he/she can/cannot do, rather than by what God calls them to be. This is frequently evident in the restrictions some dioceses place on the diaconate which has a tendency to subordinate them to a lesser role. In this diocese, that is not the case. Bishops, priests and deacons are called to be like Christ. The deacon is an emissary of the Bishop expressing the diakonia of the whole church through a ministry that is based on the diakonia of Christ—a ministry that is collaborative, authentic, and empowering. Deacons are called to be disciples of Christ and servants of God while exercising their gifts in ministry to the church and to the world. They are ordained to Word and Service, i.e. to proclaim the Gospel both in word and deed, to equip the church gathered to take the living Gospel to the church scattered.

The Deacon is not an auxiliary or subordinate office for the support of the priest, they are not assistant clergy. Rather they are sent by the Bishop into specific ministry situations as advocate, messenger, herald, agent, and servant leader, equipping the laity to express their diakonia through Christlike service. Christ is to be the model for both priests and deacons. The deacon primarily focuses the Church on Christ as servant leader, the towel wrapped around his waist, washing the feet of those around him. This role is not one of menial service, but one of example, serving God and the church scattered; whereas the priest focuses on Christ as priest and spiritual leader, as reflected perhaps by the sermon on the mount where we find the teaching, gathering, edifying, nurturing role of the Good Shepherd.

Deacons and priests work together, alongside, in communion, in partnership, in association, in collaboration, in tandem, in sync. and in Christ with

each other. Their differing spheres of leadership are complementary and interdependent not supplementary to one another.

Ordination to deacon—not a reward for service

One member of another denominational church, has described the ordination of deacons as something that would

“help to give recognition to the service of certain part or full time church workers who are engaged in a form of pastoral ministry, but not in the ministry of word and sacrament. In addition it would provide direction and motivation for students in the diaconal program”

In the Anglican Church, Holy Orders are not a reward or recognition for services rendered; that can be accomplished through expressions of thanks.

Only when the church has clearly established *what it means to be a deacon and what it means to be a priest in service to God and God’s people*, only then can the church, the body of Christ, assist disciples to discern their calling to that order of ministry. To be ordained as a priest or a deacon, one must have been through a process of discernment of calling. This can only be achieved in the context of the church as the body of Christ.

Only one reason to renew or establish a diaconate

From my perspective, there is only one legitimate reason for renewing or establishing the diaconate as a distinctive order of ministry—so that an active, authoritative diaconate becomes a visible sign of what the whole body of Christ (the church) is called to be (a servant of God and God’s people), and thus leads to the whole church regaining its role as servants of God and of each other in mission. **All** are required to fulfil their diaconal calling as well as their priestly calling. A vibrant diaconate points outwards, into the world, where the Word calls us to serve and to spread the Gospel.

Function

A fixed, prescribed list of functions will not allow for innovation, emerging needs and new ministries. Based on the challenges made to deacons by the

bishop at ordination, broad areas of ministry direction and personal development are indicated.

In my observation of the operation of the diaconate in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, I have noticed several important practical points with regard to function:

- The bishop licenses each deacon to a 'ministry unit'—parish, chaplaincy, church agency. The license is specific as to the authority of the deacon and the range of functions he or she will undertake. Like all clergy, deacons are expected to be self-starters under the authority of and responsible to the Church as a whole.
- Each member of the clergy (and that includes all deacons) are required to have a covenant. The covenant is an agreed statement of function and relationships between and among the bishop, the deacon and the people of the ministry unit or parish/church. This statement sets out the nature and scope of the ministry, how it is to be funded and supported, mutual obligations and how it is to be monitored. This means that functional tasks are negotiated and determined locally according to current and/or emerging needs. The covenant may be re-negotiated in the light of emerging or changing circumstances at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.
- The liturgical function of a deacon is in large part determined by the Anglican prayer book. Nevertheless, the prime areas of diaconal liturgical symbolism are the call to prayer of the faithful, calling people to confession, the reading of the Gospel (signifying the call to service in the world on Christ's mission), service at the Eucharist (the symbolism of the towel and bowl) and sending people out to serve.
- Both function and being require oversight and pastoral care. All clergy are responsible to the bishop or his appointees. Every clergy person has someone appointed as his or her 'supervisor', that is, someone who has mainly a mentoring but also a pastoral oversight of their ministry. Three examples: I am licensed to St Mark's National Theological Centre, my supervisor is the Director of St Mark's; a

colleague is licensed as a chaplain to a nursing home, his supervisor is the Archdeacon of Deacons; another colleague is licensed as a school chaplain within a parish, her supervisor is the rector of the parish to which she is licensed.

things to resist

There are two great temptations with regard to deacons and both are linked.

The first is to turn them into assistants of the presbyter. The bishop of Canberra and Goulburn has established the office of Archdeacon of Deacons to ensure that deacons are supported in the establishment of their ministry scope and function and that they do not become menial servants of other clergy or hindered in being involved in the ministries to which they are called.

The second temptation is to encourage deacons to seek ordination as priests/presbyters. The evidence of pressure to become priests is evident when you talk to deacons and listen to their stories.

Canberra & Goulburn Diocese has implemented a process of formation and ongoing education for deacons that, in addition to our diocese's legislation through Synod, is helping to keep this second temptation at bay.

These temptations are more likely to be implemented in areas where it is difficult to get ordained priests/presbyters to lead parishes, mostly in rural areas.

advocates

One area of function where I see deacons taking a more active role in the future is that of advocacy, especially in the areas of justice, environment, poverty, young people, refugees, Aboriginal people and other marginalised groups. Some of these deacons will be 'deacons in the workplace'; some will be licensed to organisations like Anglicare; they may have legal or para-legal skills and training.

full and equal order

In order to help all clergy to feel equal they must be treated with equal respect and included in the full range of clergy and church activities. For example,

all licensed deacons are expected (like all other clergy) to attend the annual Clergy Conference in the diocese as well as the Synod of the Diocese. All deacons are called to take their part (according to gifting and call) in the 'councils and organisations of the church' and in its major ceremonies. This is not always the practice in other dioceses.

Education and Formation

I believe that each deacon should be able to adequately explain themselves in basic theological terms to anyone who asks. I don't mean a heap of jargon but I do mean from both a biblical and theological basis. Essentially they need to be able to answer the question, "Who are you being?" or perhaps, "How are you called to be?"

There are many practical problems with ensuring that deacon candidates are adequately educated both theologically and in ministry practice. Most are working full-time or are semi-retired with minimal income. They are scattered geographically. It takes innovation and persistence to gather them together for formation and education. Post-ordination development and pastoral care become very important and must be built into the annual cycle of events.

Authorisation

In my understanding, an ordained person is authorised by the nature of their ordination and the vows to which they are therefore committed under God. In our tradition this is underlined by a licence from the bishop that spells out what the said ordination binds the person to with regard to purposes, scope, location and accountability. In detail, my authorisation states,

"I do hereby license you to perform the functions of **Lecturer in Diaconate Studies and Honorary Deacon to the chapel within St Mark's National Theological Centre, and with special responsibility to the Diaconate** within my Diocese and Jurisdiction and for the purpose only of performing those functions, to preach the Word of God, read the Common Prayers and perform other ecclesiastical duties according to the Book of Common Prayer and A Prayer Book of Australia or as otherwise authorised by lawful authority, you having previously taken the

Oath and made and subscribed the Declarations that are required by law to be taken, made and subscribed”.

Honorary Deacon simply means ‘un-waged’ for that function. The practicalities of this authorisation are spelled out in the Diocesan Synod’s legislation and administrative papers.

This authorisation subjects me to the disciplines and accountabilities of the church as a whole; but it also frees me to operate within its scope as creatively as I can, taking personal responsibility for my ministry and making best use of the resources available to me.

Support and collaboration

the bishop, it’s always the bishop!

Research I conducted in 1997 into the diaconate in Northern America, where many deacons are paid, ‘moveable’ clergy, seemed to suggest that the ability of the diaconate to flourish and to fulfil its primary purpose of helping the people of God to regain their own diaconal calling depends greatly on the leadership and structure of the wider communion of that particular church. In Episcopal churches, if the bishop did not believe in a vocational diaconate it did not flourish; where the bishop was an advocate for the diaconate, it did flourish and had effective ministry.

The role of the diocesan bishop in maintaining the integrity of the order of deacons requires active promotion and support. Inaction or neutrality delivers the same result as actively de-constructing the diaconate. I believe that this is also the case in the Australian Anglican Church.

For deacons to be effective in their calling the order of deacons must be supported and championed by the leadership and structure of the church. Not only supported and championed but treated as an equal order of ministerial function in that church—equal in respect, equal in thought, word and deed. For this to occur the same must be done for priests. The two orders must be clearly defined in terms of their specific callings (not their differing functions or giftings—are not these all equal in the sight of God?). If the church ‘creates’ holy orders, then it is incumbent upon the church to ensure that the definition of those orders meets Christ-centred criteria. The role/function/person

of priest is primarily ontologically different from the role/function/person of deacon. Like God in Trinity, they work together perichoretically, in and around each other with the same God, the same mission but with slightly different modes of operation, sharing and feeding off each other's energy and gifts in tune with leadership of Jesus Christ.

Graham Lindsay
Deacon
6 August 2007



Deacons from dioceses across Australia share stories at the bi-annual conference of the Australian Anglican Diaconal Association. This photo was taken in 2006. The conference was held in Brisbane.

Appendix 3: Diaconate Selected Bibliography

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