

- ✦ Collegial collaboration is the key to the success of any mission or ministry.
- ✦ The main consideration is always to assist, teach, heal, grow and encourage the people of God to join in the mission of Jesus Christ. Deacons are amongst the Body of Christ to serve.

NOTES

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Exploring Diaconal Ministry — Paper 2

ABOUT DEACONS

This document is meant to be read in conjunction with the booklet, *A New Life in Christ: The Distinctive Ministry of the Deacon* (Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn, 2007)

DEACONS ARE:

- ✦ called by God and ordained by the Bishop to serve a lifetime of commitment to the Church in diaconal ministry;
- ✦ called to be servant leaders in the church, proclaiming the good news of the gospel to the world;
- ✦ advocates for social justice, standing alongside the disadvantaged, oppressed or marginalised;
- ✦ members of the whole Body of Christ and accountable to the diocesan Bishop;
- ✦ people who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances, and their ministry gifting and focus is diverse in nature;
- ✦ called to work within parishes, ministry units, or church agencies, to carry out specialised pastoral, advocacy or teaching ministries in the community;
- ✦ licensed by the diocesan bishop to perform particular ministry roles and tasks.



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- ✦ Deacons are called, tested and trained for full ministry alongside others. Deacons are oriented towards taking the Gospel and the love of Christ into 'the world'. Their ministry is one of outreach.
- ✦ Some deacons have this ministry as a permanent vocation. They belong to the distinctive or permanent diaconate. Other deacons, those to be priested, retain diaconal ministry as an integral part of their priestly vocation once they are ordained as priests.
- ✦ Deacons study together and have fellowship together, sharing stories of mission, worship and ministry.
- ✦ Deacons are collegial associates with bishops and priests in ministry to the whole body of Christ.

THE DEACON'S LICENCE

In addition to those roles and functions proscribed in the ordinal and depending on a deacon's individual gifting aligned to the needs of the people among whom the deacon ministers , the diocesan bishop may license individual deacons and/or give them 'one-off' approval to:

- ✦ exercise their diaconal ministry in an approved workplace, with the marginalised, or in a specific context
- ✦ preach
- ✦ lead worship services
- ✦ conduct funerals
- ✦ baptise
- ✦ conduct marriage services (see next column)
- ✦ act as chaplain to a variety of ministries

- ✦ teach theology at tertiary level
- ✦ act as an envoy of the bishop in specific circumstances
- ✦ be a counsellor
- ✦ act as an official advocate for a particular grouping of marginalised people, on behalf of the diocese
- ✦ undertake any other office or function that the bishop deems fit

Permission to Conduct a Marriage Service

The Bishop of Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn will grant a deacon a licence to celebrate marriage when:

- ✦ Specific permission has been sought from and approved by the bishop in every case where a licensed deacon seeks to celebrate marriage.
- ✦ The need for this licence must be **demonstrably related** to aspects of their specific ministries.

Oversight

- ✦ The bishop determines the scope and particulars of the licence to a specific ministry unit.
- ✦ The deacon and the bishop in consultation with the archdeacon and the relevant leaders of the ministry unit will develop a covenant. This agreement will establish the roles, relationships and obligations of the deacon; it will spell out the ministry support and oversight afforded to the deacon by leaders in the ministry unit.
- ✦ An appropriately licensed deacon may conduct baptisms and/or funerals where they flow through and from the deacon's natural ministry. To conduct a marriage ceremony, an authorised deacon must seek approval from the bishop in every individual case.

AVOIDING ROLE CONFLICT

In all organisations the issue of role conflict may arise.

Deacons need to be aware that they are frequently ministering within a parish environment that is administered by another clergy person. This can only happen with mutual respect for each other's ministry.

Priests need to be aware that deacons have specific roles and ministries to which they are licensed and that the deacons have a duty to perform these functions within given parameters.

To avoid conflict it is wise for all concerned to develop clear lines of communication so that there is no misunderstanding. This is done initially when a covenant is drawn up.

Where a distinctive deacon is working within a parish both priest and deacon need to understand each other's licences and scope of ministry and give each other due professional respect.

If conflict occurs it must be resolved. It is preferable for this to be effected at the personal level but if this is not possible then the diocesan guidelines for overcoming this impasse should be invoked. Key intermediaries here are the archdeacon of deacons and the bishop (or a nominee).

COMMENTS

- ✦ The growth of the distinctive diaconate links closely to the mission of the church to reach out to those 'beyond the pale'. The diaconate is charged with taking the gospel in action to the world, and conversely bringing the world into the church.