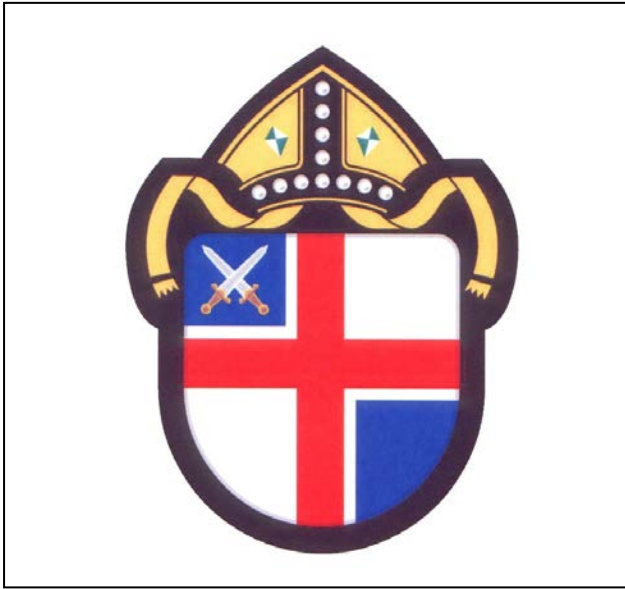


**A Customary for
the Sacred Order of Deacons**



**The Episcopal Diocese
Central Florida**

“My *brother or sister*, 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.

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 interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. 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. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.”

Examination of a Deacon,
Book of Common Prayer, Page 543



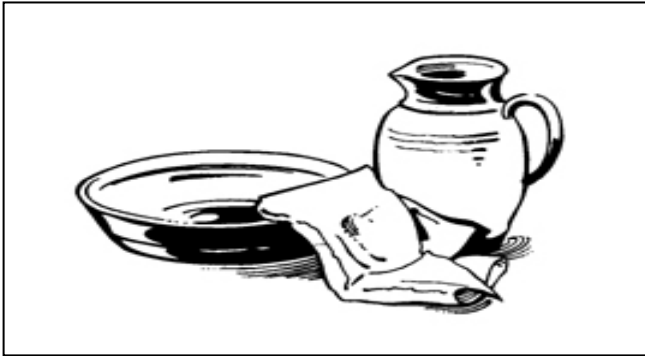
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Vision Statement

“A deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Church to be a model of Christ’s servant ministry for all people. As agents of God’s compassion and reconciling grace, deacons are missionaries to the world and messengers to the Church of the world’s needs, hopes, and concerns. In the Church, deacons call forth, empower and inspire the baptized to respond to these needs. The role of the deacon in liturgy mirrors this role of the deacon in Church and World. Deacons are living symbols of Christ’s presence as they embody Christ’s servant ministry and point to the presence of Christ in those they serve.”

~ Association for Episcopal Deacons



The Diocese of Central Florida gratefully acknowledges the adaptation and use of material previously developed by our sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Atlanta, The Diocese of Western New York, The Diocese of Maine, The Diocese of Kansas and the Association for Episcopal Deacons.

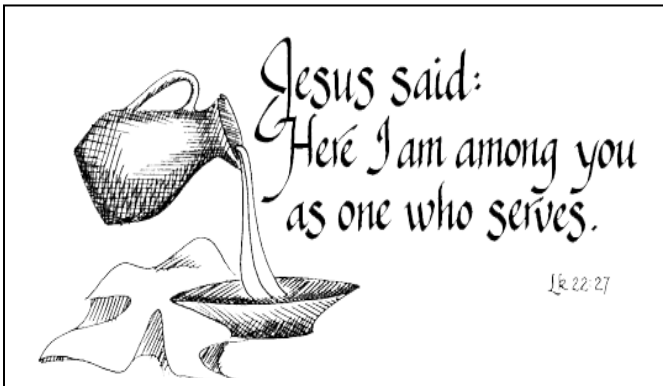
Overview: What is a Deacon?

The understanding of diaconal ministry set forth herein is grounded in four primary sources: the Holy Scriptures, *The Book of Common Prayer (1979; hereafter “BCP”)*, the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida. Each of these sources bears witness to diaconal ministry as service, in the Church and in the world. As servant ministers, Deacons (and those who aspire to ordination to the Diaconate) strive to exemplify a spirit of service to others. And a dedication to helping others enter into the ministry of Christian service. **Ordination to the diaconate is not done to recognize or validate existing ministries. Rather; it is a means of forming ministers of the Gospel called to model the servant ministry of Christ to all the baptized. Deacons are not ordained to do outreach ministry on behalf of the Church but to model servant ministry and to lead all members of the Church into servant ministry.**

Deacons also help interpret the needs and concerns of the world to the Church. Deacons have a visible ministry to the dispossessed,

advocate that ministry, and strengthen servant ministry in the Diocese.

The word deacon derives from the Greek word *Diakonos* meaning servant or minister. The biblical concept of *diakonia* is service; particularly to the poor, sick and oppressed. A deacon's service is a sign or sacrament of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve. Jesus is the model for the servant leadership. A deacon is called to "have one foot in the world and one foot in the church". A deacon's ministry and service is grounded in worship at the Table. From there, their ministry flows into the community. Deacons serve in specific roles in the liturgy; however, their liturgical roles are symbolic of their real ministry in the world. They base that ministry as offering back into the worship at the Table.



Canonical Ordination Process

According to the National Canons for the Episcopal Church, Title 3.6.5f states: Before ordination, each Candidate (for the Diaconate) shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five areas:

1. Academic Studies including The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.
2. Diakonia and the diaconate.
3. Human understanding.
4. Spiritual development and discipline.
5. Practical training and experience.

The process of preparation in the Diocese of Central Florida takes two and one half years. Upon successful completion, a candidate would be ordained at the end of the second year and will continue in his/her training and accountability for six months after ordination.

The process of ordination begins with The Conference on Ministry in the early Fall. Persons who are exploring a sense of call come and meet with the Commission on Ministry (hereafter “COM”) and hear a series of informational sessions regarding the ordination process.

A person is considered officially in the process once a completed application and letter of support from their Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-charge and the vestry are received in the Bishop’s office.

The person is then considered an Aspirant to ministry and will be assigned a COM representative who will be tasked with meeting with the Aspirant’s home church to form,

along with the clergy in charge, a Parish Discernment Committee (hereafter “PDC”).

Upon completion of the PDC, the home parish will recommend that the Aspirant continue to pursue ordination or recommend that the process be stopped. If a PDC recommendation is to stop, the process is immediately ended. (The Episcopal Church raises up leadership in community. If the community of the home parish does not hear the call of the aspirant to ministry and is not willing to support the aspirant, the process is no longer viable.)

If the PDC supports the Aspirant to continue in the ordination process, the Aspirant will typically be invited to the Bishop’s Advisory Commission for Aspirants to Ministry (Hereafter, “BACAM”).

After BACAM, the COM makes a recommendation to the Bishop, who will decide if the aspirant should become a Postulant to ministry.

After successfully meeting the necessary requirements for becoming a Postulant, the Postulant is then considered for becoming a Candidate for ministry.

After the Candidate has completed the necessary requirements, he/she is considered for ordination.

Academic and training preparation for ordination will occur concurrently with the Canonical process.



The Relationship of Deacon and the Bishop

Deacons serve directly under the authority of and at the pleasure of the Bishop. The Bishop may designate a deacon to serve as a parochial deacon or a non-parochial diocesan deacon.

Parochial deacons are charged with serving a particular parish or mission. They work collaboratively with the leadership of the Parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge.

Non-parochial diocesan deacons are charged with actualizing and developing diocesan ministries and initiatives under the guidance and oversight of the Bishop or other designated authority (i.e. Canon to the Ordinary, Canon for Vocation or Archdeacon.)

Parochial Assignments

Deacons shall be assigned to congregations of the diocese by the Bishop in consultation with the Archdeacon, prospective Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, (hereafter to be RVP) and the newly ordained deacon. Before the newly ordained deacon receives his/her placement assignment, his/her sense of God's call to a parish, his/her gifts for ministry and experience are considered.

Parochial deacons serve a particular parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. Upon the beginning of ministry the deacon and parish will execute a Letter of Agreement for Deacons. (See Exhibit A).

This Letter of Agreement must be approved by the Bishop, the deacon and the RVP. This letter will provide clarity of duties as well as a structure for the annual review.

All deacons are required to complete an Annual Report (See Exhibit B). Retired Deacons still serving occasionally, Non-Parochial deacons, deacons who are Canonically Resident in a Diocese other than Central Florida, and deacons 72 years of age or older are required to be re-licensed each year. The licensing year is July 1st of the current year through June 30th of the following year.

The Archdeacon will transmit the Annual Report Request and Forms in the Spring of each year.

The Relationship of the Deacon to the Congregation and Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge

The deacon works as a ministry partner with his/her RVP. The deacon meets regularly with the RVP, including an annual ministry review meeting.

Family members of the deacon are discouraged from serving on the vestry of the parish in which the deacon is engaged in ministry.



The Deacon Speaking to the Church

As a symbol of servant ministry, the deacon brings the concerns and needs of the world to the attention of the church. As a result, deacons are expected to have voice in all decision-making bodies in the Diocese.

The Deacon in the Liturgy

Liturgical service is the launching pad for the deacon. Deacons sacramentally express their mission and ministry in worship and worship fuels their mission on ministry. Thus a deacon's primary liturgical roles as an expression of their ministry are as follows:

1. Deacons proclaim the Gospel to symbolize taking the Good News of God's love to the world.
2. Deacons lead Prayers of the People to reflect bringing the concerns of the world to the church.
3. Deacons set the table to model servanthood.
4. Deacons proclaim the dismissal to symbolize their mission to send the people of God out into the world.

The deacon may have other duties as assigned by the R, V, or P and in agreement with the Bishop.



Liturgical Duties Reserved For Priests and Bishops

There are three liturgical functions that deacons are NOT allowed to perform. These functions are strictly the function of a priest. The operational distinction is that the priest stands in the place of Christ.

1. A deacon may not pronounce absolution. A deacon may ASK for God to forgive someone, but may NOT pronounce it.
2. A deacon may not pronounce blessing. Again, a deacon may ASK for God to bless someone.
3. A deacon may not consecrate the elements for Eucharist.

It is crucial to note that there is no such thing as a “Deacon’s Mass”. There is a provision in BCP for “Communion Under Special Circumstances” (BCP, page 396).

HOWEVER, this is NOT to be employed lightly or routinely. A deacon must have prior approval from the Bishop to conduct this service. It is to be used in only in *special circumstances* with prior consent from the Bishop.

The following are warning signs of the blurring or confusion of liturgical roles:

1. Liturgical duties are listed first in the deacon's letter of agreement.
2. Deacons are expected to lead services at their assigned church on a regular basis, except as a matter of missionary strategy approved by the Bishop.
3. The R, V, or P proposes communion from the reserved sacrament rather than securing a supply priest for vacations or other absences from the parish.
4. The deacon's liturgical duties take time away from the deacon's servant ministry in the world.



Non-Parochial Diocesan Assignments

Non-Parochial Diocesan assignments are made by the Bishop, in consultation with the Archdeacon and the deacon in question.

Upon the Bishop's request, the deacon may provide a detailed description of the ministry to which he/she will be engaged as well as the contact information for the person to whom the deacon will be accountable in the context of such ministry. (i.e. Supervisor of hospital or prison chaplaincy, social service agency, etc.)

The effectiveness of this ministry will be reviewed annually by the Bishop, Archdeacon and deacon.

Non-Parochial deacons are required to submit an annual report detailing their ministry for the previous year.

Placement Protocol

The deacon is expected to prayerfully discern where he/she feels that God is calling them to serve. When he/she feels he/she has heard God's voice speaking to him/her; he/she is to contact the R, V, P, and ask if he/she would be amenable to the assignment. If so, then the deacon is to submit in writing to the Archdeacon and the Bishop requesting formal assignment to that ministry. The Bishop will either affirm or deny the placement request.

Resignation/Reassignment Protocol

At a time when the deacon desires to resign or step down from his/her current assignment, he/she must first contact the Bishop in writing to request permission. After receiving Bishop's permission the deacon will write a detailed letter outlining his/her decision. This letter will be sent to the Bishop, Archdeacon, R, V, or P, and the Senior Warden of the Vestry if it is a parochial assignment. The letter is then shared with the Vestry.

The deacon will then work with the R, V, or P to establish a resignation plan to include, but not limited to, the final date of service, the announcement to the congregation, the surrendering of keys, the relinquishment of duties and the termination of discretionary accounts. (Discretionary accounts will be addressed more fully further in this customary.)



Conflict Resolution for the Deacon

DIOCESAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY For the Vocational Diaconate *(rev. 11/2014)*

The Diocese recognizes that occasional conflicts may arise between a priest and a deacon assigned to a parish/mission. The following guidelines offer a means of dealing with this difficulty in a way that will hopefully lead to openness, honesty and healing.

The Archdeacon will be informed of the conflict and serve as mediator.

NOTE:

Open and honest communication between the priest and deacon is of utmost importance.

Procedure:

- 1) Should a conflict begin to emerge between priest and deacon, the two parties will meet and discuss the issues related to this disagreement.
- 2) If common agreement cannot be reached, either party may request a joint meeting with the Archdeacon and/or Canon to the Ordinary.
- 3) If the relationship cannot be restored, a change of assignment will be considered.
- 4) Appropriate closure with the parish is encouraged, prior to a change in assignment.

- 5) The deacon will take the utmost care to minimize conflict in the congregation.

Time-frame:

Steps 1 through 4 may take place over a period of 3-4 months, during which time the goal will be resolution of the difficulty. Resolution may involve re-negotiation of the terms of the Letter of Agreement with its attachment; the Archdeacon may assist in this process.

Re-assignment:

If resolution in the involved parish cannot be made, a re-assignment for the deacon will be considered. It is suggested that the deacon take some time before immediately entering into a relationship with a new parish. When reassignment is appropriate, it will be negotiated with the Archdeacon, who will keep the Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary apprised of the process. The priest of the new parish, who has agreed to receive the deacon, will request that the deacon be assigned to his/her parish by writing to the Bishop and copied to the Archdeacon. The Bishop may, at this point re-assign the deacon. A Service of Celebration of a Deacon's New Ministry will be scheduled and the deacon will be installed in the parish.

The Bishop's involvement: A deacon is assigned to a given parish by the Bishop; the deacon may meet with the Bishop to discuss his/her concerns.

The Deacon and Continuing Education

Any deacon serving in the Diocese of Central Florida is required to successfully complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. The continuing education hours will be reported each year in the annual report.

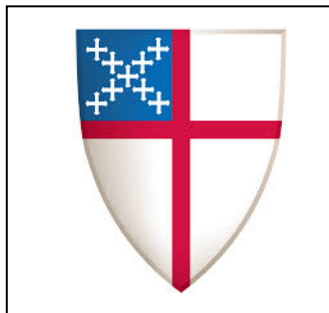
The Deacon and Clerical Clothes

The deacon is expected to wear clerical clothing whenever he/she is performing in a liturgical function.

The Deacon and Forms of Address

The proper title of form of address for a deacon is “Deacon” before the first or last name of a deacon. For example “Deacon Joe” or “Deacon Smith”. They may also use the title “The Reverend”.

An Archdeacon is addressed in a like manner; the word “Archdeacon” before his/her first or last name. The title of the Archdeacon is “The Venerable”.



The Deacon and Discretionary Funds

The deacon is not required to be given a discretionary account. In a church that allows the deacon a discretionary account, it is important to note that the discretionary account is established and owned by the Church, not the deacon. It must remain in compliance with standards and practices required by the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Central Florida. Discretionary accounts are to be used to alleviate suffering of the poor, not to pay church professional or ministry expenses. All statements and information pertaining to the account are sent directly to the church. All account information, including checks, is to be maintained by the church. It is strongly suggested that a check require two signatures for validation. Further, the account is to be audited annually.

Exhibit A, Deacon Letter of Agreement

DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA LETTER OF AGREEMENT

FOR

DEACON: _____

DATE: _____

The Rt. Reverend Gregory O. Brewer, Bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida, hereby assigns the Reverend

_____, Deacon, to serve at _____ Episcopal Church, under the immediate supervision of the Reverend _____.

The assignment of this deacon to this parish has been made by the Bishop, in consultation with the Deacon, Archdeacon, Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, and the Vestry of the parish.

This agreement is entered into with the understanding that a change in assignment may be considered and reviewed at the request of the Deacon, Vicar, Rector or priest-in-charge, Bishop or Archdeacon.

Both the deacon and parish agree to abide by the deacons' guidelines as they are now currently in effect. I agree to take at least 12 hours of continuing education each year, as required by the diocesan Continuing Education Policy.

Signed:

Deacon

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge

Senior Warden

Archdeacon

Bishop

ATTACHMENT TO THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Memorandum of the understanding between _____, Deacon and the
Wardens and Vestry of _____
Episcopal Church in _____, FL

JOB DESCRIPTION

Please list the primary areas of responsibility of the deacon:
Within the parish:

Outreach:

(use the reverse side of this form if necessary)

1. Terms of agreement July 1 of the current year until June 30 of the next year:

2. Work schedule/anticipated hours/days per week:

3. Vacation Period:

Other understandings:

5. An evaluation meeting will be held each year with the Rector/Vicar.

In order to support the deacon in the exercise of his/her ministry, the following reimbursement will be provided by the parish: (**NOTE:** not all deacons are reimbursed in all of the following ways. Please complete only those lines that reflect the practice currently being followed in the parish.)

6. Annual reimbursement

- 6.1 Automobile allowance: \$
- 6.2 Diocesan Convention: \$
- 6.3 Continuing Education: \$
- 6.4 Clergy/spouse conference: \$
- 6.5 Clergy conference: \$
- 6.6 Deacons' Retreat: \$
- 6.7 Insurance:
 - 6.7A Life insurance:
 - 6.7B Medical:
 - 6.7C Dental:
- 6.8 Contribution to Discretionary Fund: \$
- 6.9 Other reimbursement (state type):
 - TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT: \$

Exhibit B, Deacon Annual Report

Diocese of Central Florida Annual Report

For all Active Deacons, Retired Deacons, Non-Parochial Deacons, Deacons who are Canonically Resident in a Diocese other than Central Florida, and Deacons 72 years of age or older.

**Please return completed report to:
The Ven. Kristi Alday
1017 East Robinson Street, Orlando, Florida 32801**

Or Via Email: kalday@cfdiocese.org

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____

Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Diocese of Canonical Residence: _____

Retired: Yes or No

Currently Serving (parish/institution and city) _____

12 Hours of Continuing Education

Brief description of ministry (or causes/reasons which have prevented exercise of the same) – add additional sheets if necessary:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Note: By signing this form you certify that the information is correct and (where appropriate) are applying for a renewal of your license to function as a deacon in the Diocese of Central Florida and/or wish to remain in your present tenure. Also, please note, a physical license will be sent to those who are 72 years of age and over and still serving, and to those who are not canonically resident and assigned to a church. If you are NOT in this group, please make a copy of this report as you will NOT receive a physical license.

I strongly suggest that you meet with your Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge and review your ministry with them.



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Acts 2:42

Deacon Customary for the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida

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(407) 423-3567

Website: www.cfdiocese.org/ics/