

Discussion Paper regarding competencies for Deacons in the Anglican Church of Canada. THIS IS A DRAFT COPY ONLY.

*This paper contains suggested competencies for Deacons of the Anglican Church in Canada. It also includes suggestions for specific competencies in various areas of training. **Note:** The competencies listed below, would need to be demonstrated to a duly constituted group of lay and ordained people, both deacons and priests, who have been trained and are able to discern whether or not the candidate meets these requirements. Obviously how this is done, will vary from Diocese to Diocese.*

General Statement about the Diaconate

At the heart of the diaconate is a servant community living and proclaiming the Gospel in the world. The deacon's presence, bringing the needs, concerns and hopes of the world to the church, is a living reminder of the community's call to servanthood. A deacon is to enable the church to be justice makers, truth tellers, advocates and reconcilers in the world. At the heart of the diaconate is a person called to be an agent for hope, a change agent, a groundbreaking prophet; all these states of being are part of a deacon's DNA.

After training and prior to ordination to the diaconate the candidate will be expected to:

- Manifest a personal spirituality, which demonstrates an integration of body, mind, and spirit working towards wholeness. This spiritual maturity is not only demonstrated in regular participation in the liturgical life of the community, but also in an explicit commitment to spiritual growth, and a disciplined life of prayer.
- Have a healthy attitude towards his/her own personal care, as well as a commitment to forming a support system, which meets regularly with the candidate for prayer, reflection and discussion of ministry, and self care.
- Have an ability to reflect critically and creatively on his/her spiritual, theological and behavioural assumptions, as well as her/his own ministry practice.

Demonstrate competency in the scriptures and church history. In order to demonstrate that competency, the candidate must have:

- a basic knowledge of the content of the scriptures including the Apocrypha.
- the ability to set scriptural texts in their historical context.
- a basic knowledge with resources for scriptural exegesis.
- a basic knowledge with the development of the Christian church in North America in general, and the Anglican Communion in particular.
- a basic knowledge of the history and development of the Anglican Church in Canada.

Demonstrate:

- a basic knowledge of Christian theology especially as it relates to baptismal and diaconal ministry.

This will require:

- a basic knowledge of the primary themes of Christian theology, i.e., the Trinity, the person and work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, Christian hope, and the mission and ministry of the church.
- an ability to clearly articulate a personal confession of faith.
- an ability to interpret the baptismal covenant.
- an ability to articulate a theology of the diaconate in relation to the ministry of all the baptized, and to the ministry of the ordained.

Demonstrate a competency in the area of ethical decision-making.

This will require:

- basic knowledge of the theological processes of ethical decision-making.
- an ability to relate the processes of ethical decision-making to ethical questions in the family, congregation, workplace, community, and society at large.

Demonstrate a competency in Christian worship with a special focus on the deacon in the liturgy.

This will require:

- basic knowledge with the structures and general history of Christian worship.
- an understanding of and ability to exercise diaconal liturgical roles and an ability and commitment to involve and equip others in these roles.
- an ability to plan and lead services within the worship tradition of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Demonstrate one or more identifiable area(s) of diaconal ministry, (e.g. workplace ministries, outreach ministries, social advocacy ministries, environmental advocacy ministries etc.)

This will require that a candidate:

- have skills in the area of administration, small group work and community organization relevant to the exercise of her/his identified diaconal ministry
- have skills in the area of empowering and equipping others.
- be familiar with the issues relating to his/her area(s) of diaconal ministry and be able to articulate those issues to the church.
- be familiar with the resources available which would assist the deacon in carrying out his/her chosen area(s) of ministry
- have an ability to exercise the skills requisite to the identified ministry.

Components of Diaconal Training

A candidate seeking ordination to the diaconate is expected to have successfully completed a programme of theological study acceptable to the Bishop of the candidate's Diocese. Some suggested courses of study are:

- the Education For Ministry course,
- the Montreal Diocesan College's Reading and Tutorial Course in Theology,
- the Thorneloe Associate in Theology Diploma,
- the Renison Institute of Ministry Licentiate in Discipleship Studies,
- the Canterbury College courses for the Community of Deacons,
- the Atlantic School of Theology's Certificate Program in Theological Studies,
- the Queen's College's Diploma in Ministry,
- the Centre for Christian Studies
- the introductory year for the Bachelor or Masters degree in theology at an approved theological school, such as VST, Wycliffe, Trinity or Emmanuel St. Chad.
- or equivalent certification in theological studies.

After completing this required theology course, a candidate in diaconal formation will:

- have extensive knowledge of the Holy Scriptures
- be able to outline the history of the biblical record, and identify the historical, social, and geographic context of the Bible
- be aware of the process of canonization of scripture, including the reasons for the development of the Canon
- have a basic knowledge of various approaches to scriptural interpretation, and be able to identify and defend his/her approach in the context of his/her tradition
- be able to identify and use exegetical tools, and be knowledgeable about Biblical scholarship
- be able to identify prophetic and servanthood themes in scripture, and relate those themes, in preaching and daily ministry, to the needs of the world and the church's response to those needs
- have a basic knowledge of significant differences in the themes and approaches in the four Gospels, and know how to model the message of the Gospels in his/her servant and liturgical ministries
- be able to articulate basic historical periods of the Christian faith, from its origins through to today
- be well grounded in the development of the Anglican tradition and liturgy
- have a clear understanding and appreciation of the traditions of other Christian communions and world religions, since ministry to the poor and the oppressed is inherently ecumenical, and indeed interfaith
- have a basic knowledge of the spiritual formation in the church
- be aware of major figures and spiritual classics through the centuries
- have an understanding of sacramental theology
- have an understanding of the development of Trinitarian theology and Christology

Core Programme

It is suggested that each diocese be responsible to provide a course of study in each of the following areas. The nature of the course of study would be at the discretion of the Diocese and might, for example, be, in one case a weekend, and in another case be a series of 2-3 hour sessions over a period of 4-6 weeks, or some other construct entirely.

Diaconal Studies

A course of study that will review the history and development of the diaconate, looking at the first centuries of the church, and the changes seen in this and other denominations from that time to the present. The course will also explore the various areas of diaconal ministry, the call of all Christians to serve others and the role of the diaconate in that call, how to look at issues for the application of Christian belief and assistance, seeing the deacon as a bridge between the church and the world.

Foundational Theology

A course of study in "Foundational Theology" which is an introduction to theological method, with a focus upon critical thinking skills, and the basic touchstone topics of Christian theology: Trinity, Christology, and salvation. The approach will be both historical and systematic, so that participants encounter the main streams of thought in Western Christianity, ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary. Significant attention will be given to the development of the Nicene Creed and its explication at the Council of Chalcedon. This course will be particularly attentive to the relevance of this material for diaconal ministry, oriented toward preaching and pastoral situations.

Anglican Theology and Identity

A course of study in Anglican theology which is theology that belongs to the whole church, but has a particular character that is rooted in its historical development. This course, therefore, seeks to elucidate the nature of Anglicanism through investigation of works by Anglican theologians and discussion of Anglican history. It will address the nature of Anglican understandings of the church, orders, and sacraments. Canadian Anglican history will be a significant part of the course, as will the Anglican Covenant and contemporary expressions of Anglicanism worldwide.

Spiritual Formation

A course of study, which outlines and considers the formation of a rule of life, which may include:

- a daily office;
- regular involvement in public worship;
- regular reading, meditation, and personal prayer;
- being under spiritual direction on a regular basis.

A deacon will need to demonstrate the ability and willingness to help other persons form and nurture their own spiritual growth, through support and study groups. ***Most of all, this area of study should help a deacon learn to balance his/her secular vocation, ministry, and family in a spiritually healthy manner.***

Equipping others for ministry

A course of study, which will assist the deacon to form, educate, and support the people of God for the ministries to which they are called at baptism. This will require an ability to recruit, motivate, and inspire lay participation. The Deacon will need skills in effective communication, in implementation and evaluation of projects, recruiting and caring for volunteers, and in facilitating group process, and in facilitating group process. Time will also be spent on looking at the various organizational structures of our church, so that the deacon will know what resources are available to them. Since a deacon's ministry of evangelism is primarily a ministry of service to the world, we ought to seek to form deacons who, in their public ministry, serve as spokespersons for the apostolic faith, by working to alleviate poverty, misery, and ignorance, and by actively seeking peace and justice and by empowering others to do the same.

Social Issues and Ethical Decision Making

A course of study which will develop a sensitivity to cultural contexts for ministry, to diverse ethnic, social, gender, and economic situations, and particular situations within the church/world continuum. The deacon needs to demonstrate an awareness of contemporary social issues, a desire to wrestle with, and to enable others to wrestle with, ethical issues, and an ability to reflect theologically on moral, and ethical dilemmas. A growing awareness and appreciation of the diversity in the community will require flexibility, openness, and a pastoral response. The deacon needs to be aware of how institutional change can be implemented as she/he advocates on behalf of others. The deacon needs to have the skills necessary to become an instrument of change in the world. This course will include experiential group work using case studies that will allow participants to have practical input in the area of ethical decision-making.

Diaconal Role in Liturgy and Homiletics

A course of study which, will introduce the candidate to liturgy, and homiletics, with particular attention to the deacon's role. The course ought to include both theory and practice and follow the liturgical year, demonstrating the liturgical role of the deacon throughout. It will include instruction in the taking of reserve sacrament to the sick, and the preparation and leadership of non-sacramental worship for a variety of contexts. The deacon brings the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world to the Church. This is exemplified by the deacon's role in the liturgies of the Church, as outlined in the rubrics. Primary to this area of instruction is the history, theology, and use of the church's principal liturgical books, with particular attention to the deacon's traditional functions in all the liturgies of the Church.

Leadership and Communication Skills

One course, which will help the candidate develop leadership skills with particular emphasis on how those skills, might be used in a Parish. This weekend will also teach basic communication skills for use with groups and individuals. It will also teach candidates the dynamics of group life, how to sell an idea or project, how to deal with opposition, manage conflict and set boundaries. There will also be sessions about managing time and stress, problem solving, setting goals and articulating a vision. There should be opportunity for candidates to practice these skills during the course of study. Candidates need the skills to both see the bigger picture and to make decisions under fire. They must come to understand that leadership is not about personality but about presence, and the capacity to foster collective action.

Other issues to be considered are:

The need for CPE, does every deacon require it, or only those who will work in the particular fields normally associated with its use?

The need for a National evaluative process that will decide if a candidate for ordination has met the criteria listed above.

This paper was prepared by the Board of Directors of Anglican Association of Deacons in Canada – Association anglicane des diacres au Canada (AADC). The Board wishes to thank The Reverend Deacon Christine Ross and The Reverend Deacon Heather MacEachern for their work in putting this discussion paper together.

Some of the material was cribbed from the Standards that the North American Association for the Diaconate worked on in the past, but did not necessarily adopt, and is used with permission. Other material was taken from various Canadian diaconal programmes/guidelines and is used with permission.

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