



Needs Assessment for the Assignment of a Deacon

The Charge at the Ordination of a Deacon:

“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 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.”

— from *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 543

Dear Parish Family:

Thank you for your interest in the diaconate in the Diocese of Massachusetts and the possibility of having a deacon assigned to your congregation(s). To assist you in beginning this process, we have developed a needs assessment to assist us in the assignment of a deacon. This assessment is intended to help you better understand the ministry of a deacon and develop clarity about the nature of the gifts of diaconal ministry you seek.

The Episcopal Church's understanding of the ministry of the deacon derives from the Greek *diakonos*, meaning one who serves. The Sacred Order of Deacons finds its roots in the New Testament in both Acts and Timothy. Deacons are raised up to respond as servants to both the physical and spiritual needs of the growing community, and to help keep the church connected to God's people in the world.

Deacons are icons of the servant ministry of Christ. They are charged with carrying out their work with a clear eye on the needs of the world and with a heart connecting those needs to the fullest possible response from the whole church. In the words of our former presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, deacons are "holy nags," never letting the rest of us forget the very real and tangible needs of the world. That's why you'll usually find deacons ministering in hands-on, sleeves-rolled-up kinds of work, passionately offered in direct response to the gospel of Jesus.

The bishop seeks foremost to assign deacons to those congregations with a passion for God's mission and/or a desire to seek God's call to mission in their community and beyond. A deacon can enable or assist in a discernment process and, encouraging the ministry of all the baptized, raise up strong lay leadership.

Deacons can also help congregation(s) look for and think systematically about advocacy issues, and call us to attend to injustice(s) in our communities. The length of this assignment is generally a function of the vitality of the ministry proposed (usually not less than one year nor more than three years).

When assigned to a congregation, deacons do not serve the parish in the same manner as priests. By their authority as sacramentalists, priests provide leadership in liturgy and preaching, pastoral care, teaching and administration, all focused on developing the ministry of the laity in the congregation. Deacons, by contrast, are catalysts, serving as a reminder to the congregation to not be insular; and calling us out of the comfort of our community and back out into the world where all are called to live and minister in the name of Jesus.

The liturgical role of the deacon is vitally important in symbolizing the fullest expression of the church possible, but the deacon's work is not primarily liturgical. The deacon's work is to be engaged in gospel ministry in the world and to call the church gathered to go out into the world for the sake of the gospel. It's no accident that when a deacon is present, the prayer book calls upon the deacon to do the dismissal. It's the liturgical way of saying we've gathered as community in Christ, we've been fortified by word and sacrament, we've said our prayers, and now it is time to hit the streets as servants of Jesus, giving what we have to a world in need.

We ask that your full vestry along with your rector/vicar prayerfully discern your vision, goals and anticipated relationship with a deacon before completing and submitting this assessment to me. If you have any questions along the way, please do not hesitate to contact me at 781-708-1327. I will be very happy to meet with you and assist you in this process.

Yours in Christ,

The Ven. Christiaan Beukman
Archdeacon for Deployment and Pastoral Care

Assessment for the Assignment of a Deacon

Church/Collaborative/Deanery:

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

Diaconal Ministry

1. Has a deacon ever been assigned in your church before? Yes___ No___

If yes, please describe how the deacon served in your church/organization.

2. How do you envision the deacon serving with your church?

3. What are the objectives and timeline expectations you hope to accomplish with a deacon?

4. Are there any particular gifts or passions that you are looking for in a deacon (e.g. bilingual, community organizing, leadership development/formation, grant writing, bereavement counseling, youth activities, prison ministry, etc)?

5. Deacon's service is non-stipendiary, however, there are expenses. Some examples include: mileage and parking for functions other than Sunday worship, diocesan-related activities such as retreats, Clergy Day, Deacon's Conference, Diocesan Convention, and other expenses related to diaconal ministries such as continuing education and support of membership in the national deacon's association, etc. Can the parish budget for a Deacon Expense?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, how much per year?

Congregation

1. Describe the church's current outreach and ideas for future outreach ministries, pastoral care, community and diocesan activities and whether these ministries are led by clergy or lay people.

2. Provide a brief profile of the church. Share some of the characteristics of the community in which it exists. What are the challenges you hope to address with the assistance of a deacon?

Rector/ Priest in Charge/Vicar/Director

1. How do you see yourself and the deacon as a ministry team?

2. Are there any crucial issues which you feel should be explored with your wardens, vestry and/or others with the deacon during the interview?

We certify that this assessment is a jointly prepared document with extensive input from vestry members, staff members, members from church committees and/or programs.

Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge _____ Date _____

Warden _____ Date _____

Warden _____ Date _____

Once complete, please return this assessment to: The Ven. Christiaan Beukman, Archdeacon for Deployment and Pastoral Care, Episcopal Diocese of MA, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111 or by e-mail to: cbeukman@diomass.org