

## Statement on the Diaconate and Practices for a Restored Diaconate

The following material comprises both a statement on the theology and ministry of deacons, and a series of practices to assist the Anglican Church of Canada in our continued restoration of a thriving diaconate. They have been prepared by a working group established by Anglican Deacons Canada (ADC), and monitored by the Faith, Worship and Ministry Coordinating Committee of General Synod. Both have been subject to wide consultation with deacons, directors of deacons, bishops, Indigenous leaders, theological educators, and ecumenical partners. Feedback received from these groups has been incorporated into the document.

Why does this matter at this time? The recovery of a robust diaconate promises renewed relevance for the Church in a fractured world. As the Church reclaims its outward-facing missional identity, deacons will ignite and mobilize the People of God to fulfill their baptismal ministry not only in the praise of God, but in service of the world.

### Regarding the Statement

In 2022, ADC sponsored a national survey of Anglican deacons, which revealed significant diversity between and within dioceses respecting both the function and understanding of the diaconate. Many expressed a desire for greater consistency. This statement is presented for *adoption* by General Synod as a shared theological basis for local decisions concerning such matters as discernment, formation, placement, ministry descriptions, accountability and compensation.

### Regarding the Practices

Throughout its work, the writing group has been acutely aware of the importance of context in the practice of ministry. What may be possible or desirable in one diocese may be impossible or undesirable in another. We have taken the position that what matters is that we proceed from a common understanding of what the diaconate is: in other words, we may choose to do things differently, but we do so for the same reasons.

Early on, we adopted the language of “best practices” to describe this work. This is language which has fallen into disfavour in some other sectors, since it can convey a certainty which is not warranted in times of plurality, change and transition (such as our own). At the same time, no matter how well we are doing, or constrained we may be, the Church is always being called to look beyond its grasp. Therefore, we have opted to aim high, with the proviso that every diocese will adopt or adapt these practices as is feasible or advisable in their own circumstances. For the most part, the practices are framed as aspirational statements, and every effort has been made to eliminate “should” language.

This is a living document subject to ongoing testing, implementation, review and advisable change. General Synod will be asked to *commend* it to the Church.

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## Statement on the Diaconate

Deacons, with bishops and presbyters, belong to the threefold order of ministry which characterizes the Anglican Communion and much of the wider Church. The diaconate emerged alongside the episcopate and presbyterate as one of three distinct modes of ministry, each rooted in its own biblical imperatives for faithfulness to the will and nature of God.

The breadth of the Church's ministry and mission has been well captured by the "Five Marks of Mission," adopted and widely used within the Anglican Communion.<sup>1</sup> These range from (1) proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom, and (2) teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers; to the particularly diaconal roles of (3) responding to human need by loving service; (4) transforming unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind, and pursuing peace and reconciliation, and (5) safeguarding the integrity of creation, and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth.

This work is rooted in the *missio Dei*: God's merciful sending of the eternal Word into the world to bring redemption, and in the charge shared by Christ with his followers: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20.21). The accomplishment of this mission includes *episcopé* (leadership and oversight), *koinonia* (the building up of the community of faith), and *diakonia* – the ministry to which deacons give particular leadership.

This ministry of *diakonia* is entrusted to the whole Church, and is rooted in the very nature of God and the example of Jesus Christ. The covenant between God and the people based in the Law of Moses reveals a God of mercy, who shows and demands special care for the poor, the marginalized, the weak, the bereaved, and the foreigner. This concern continues to find expression in the psalms and in the preaching of the prophets, who repeatedly call the people back to this vision of a society where the weakest are honoured and protected (Isaiah 42.1-4). Similarly, Jesus befriended those on the edges of society, preaching good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the year of the Lord's favour (Isaiah 61.1-4, Luke 4.16-21). The Church's diaconal calling is thus a direct expression of the fundamental mission of God to our world.

All Christians are baptized into Christ's *diakonia*. Some are called, equipped, and ordained as deacons to serve as living symbols of Christ's own *diakonia*. They are to show what it is to be the light of Christ where there is darkness, to recognize and respond to injustice and need, to organize and distribute resources for their remedy, to bring the brokenness and hunger of the world to the attention of the faithful for prayer and healing, and to invite the whole People of God into the service of the gospel for the sake of the world.<sup>2</sup> This is the consecrated, ancient and proper work of deacons.

Over the centuries, however, as the boundaries of the western Church overlapped increasingly with those of mainstream society, the focus of diaconal ministry began to shift inward toward the Church's internal needs and life. The diaconate was eventually reduced to an explicitly inferior and temporary status, oriented

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. *The Iona Report: The Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada*. (Adopted by the General Synod 2016 at Toronto: 2016), pp. 17-18.

to the perfecting of skills for presbyteral ministry.<sup>3</sup> This is evident in the ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer (1962), which presents deacons in an assisting role in worship, with limited authority to preach, and a ministry directed primarily to the care of children, and those who are poor or indigent.

This began to change in the late 1960s, when the Lambeth Conference of Bishops called for a renewal of the diaconate within the Anglican Communion. This included the removal of references to the inferiority of the diaconate in our prayer books and, in the case of the Anglican Church of Canada, a recognition of the formidable work of deaconesses in ministering to northern and remote or other marginalized communities. Since that time, the Church's understanding of the diaconate has evolved through various "waves"<sup>4</sup> as it continues to adapt to our changing world and Church.

In recent years, we have experienced global shifts towards secularity, changes in societal values, and diversity in religious belief and practice, along with a growing distrust in institutional religion, and a resultant reduction in the Church's reach and influence. Together these factors underscore both the opportunity and the urgent need for the Church to seek to understand and renew its active participation in God's mission in the world outside its doors. An ecumenical renewal of our ecclesiology has highlighted the responsibility of all the baptized to strengthen the Church's capacity to witness and serve on the edge of the dominant culture. Many Christian denominations, including our full communion partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), are rediscovering the diaconate as an order particularly suited to help the Church meet this sacred challenge.

So far from being an inferior order of apprenticeship for the presbyterate, the diaconate is recovering its origins as a full, equal, and distinct order of ministry: full, because deacons are in their own right "ministers of Jesus Christ;" equal, because what they do is of equal importance to presbyteral and episcopal ministry; and distinct, because of the marked difference in the focus of their ministry.

More than any other order of ministry, deacons inhabit the uncomfortable intersection between the worshipping Church, and the world it is called to serve:

To the world, deacons represent the Church. They are emissaries, giving witness to gospel hope, embodying Christ's compassion, solidarity, and protest. Deacons are particularly oriented to the needs of those who are most vulnerable or at greatest risk, especially the poor, the sick, the disempowered, and those at the mercy of systemic inequities.

To the Church, deacons interpret the needs, concerns and hopes of the world and its creatures. They are emissaries, who call and assist the Church to minister faithfully to those who hunger and thirst for

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<sup>3</sup> Various formulations of the Anglican ordinal are based on the English BCP (1662), which includes a prayer that the new deacons "may so well behave themselves in this inferior office, that they may be found worthy to be called unto the higher ministries in thy Church." Our own BCP (1962) retains a rubric that deacons should prove themselves "sufficiently experienced in the things belonging to the Ministry" that they may be admitted to the Priesthood. The Lambeth Conference of 1968 called for the removal of any reference to the diaconate as an "inferior" office.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Susanne Watson Epting, *Unexpected Consequences: The Diaconate Reviewed* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015). Epting coined the term "waves of the diaconate" to describe our evolving experience of the renewal of diaconal ministry and diaconate. She also served as a reviewer of this material.

righteousness, and bring to the Church words of encouragement, practical wisdom and rebuke. Deacons participate in the councils of the Church in order to advance its diaconal ministry.

Deacons exercise their ministry directly under the authority of their bishop, who may commission them to assist or represent the bishop in matters of wider concern to the Church and world. The bishop may also assign deacons to a parish or parishes, in whose life and worship they participate while mobilizing the gathered community's diaconal ministry. Within the parish, deacons function under the authority delegated by the bishop to the local incumbent.

The roles assigned to deacons within the liturgy reflect their ministry in the world as heralds and servants. These typically include proclaiming the gospel, preaching, leading the prayers of the people, attending the altar (setting and clearing the holy table), administering the wine or, if necessary, the bread, and sending the gathered community back into the world.

This renewed theology of the diaconate is reflected in changing ordination rites, which situate all ordained ministry within the context of baptism and the ministry of the whole people of God. Deacons are to equip the saints for this ministry. They are selected for their compelling manifestation of the distinctive gifts needed to inspire and mobilize the faithful to fulfil the fundamental mission of God to the world. They remind us who and whose we are.

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## Practices for a Restored Diaconate: Guidelines for Consideration and Implementation

*The importance of context in the practice of ministry cannot be overstated. Culture, ethnicity, language, size, affluence, past history, and geography all factor into what is possible and desirable in a given context. The following “best practices” describe ideals for which the Church may strive, but which will necessarily be subject to adaptation in different situations. We have taken the position that what matters most is that we proceed from a common understanding of what the diaconate is: in other words, we may choose to do things differently, but we do so for the same reasons. We also expect that experience will be our best teacher, calling us in due course to revisit and revise these practices as necessary.*

### Table of Contents

<b>Discernment.....</b>	<b>p. 6</b>
<b>Education, Formation and Training .....</b>	<b>9</b>
• General Principles.....	9
• The Focus of Training and Formation .....	10
• The Delivery of Education, Training and Formation .....	13
<b>Licensing, Deployment, The Deacon in the World, Compensation, Councils of the Church and Transitions.....</b>	<b>16</b>
• Licensing and Letters of Permission .....	16
• Deployment .....	17
• The Deacon in the World: Nomenclature, Vesture & Representation .....	18
• Compensation .....	19
• Councils of the Church .....	20
• Transitions.....	20
<b>The Deacon’s Role in the Liturgy.....</b>	<b>22</b>
• General Principles.....	22
• Part 1: Roles Intrinsically Related to the Diaconal Calling by their Meaning and Logic .....	22
• Part 2: Roles which may be Appropriately Assigned to a Deacon, Although Not Explicitly Diaconal.....	24
• Part 3: Liturgical Roles to be Avoided .....	26
• Part 4: The Difficult Question of Weddings .....	26

## Practices for a Restored Diaconate: Discernment

### Contextual Note

*The discernment of vocation can take many forms, and is almost always culturally conditioned. What follows is meant to be spacious enough to accommodate many starting points. The Anglican Church is especially cognizant of Indigenous ways of knowing, and commends the excellent material concerning selection for ordination found in “The Covenant and Our Way of Life,” Appendix 2.<sup>5</sup>*

1. The discernment of an individual’s vocation to ordained diaconal ministry begins in the context of protecting and celebrating the calling of all baptized Christians to exemplify Christ’s *diakonia*. Enquirers and discernment teams are assured that it is not necessary to be selected for ordination in order to provide God-given, essential and meaningful ministry in the Church or God’s world.
2. The Church is intentional in its efforts to recruit promising candidates for the diaconate.

### Comment

*The work of discernment seeks to verify a sense of divine call shared by the candidate and Church alike, to assess the character of the candidate, and to identify their charisms or gifts (as seen in light of the needs of the Church and God’s world). It requires wisdom, sensitivity, good judgment, and willingness to wait upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It isn’t a job interview.*

3. Until parishes and dioceses have wide experience and a clear understanding of the theology and ministry of a restored diaconate, education and counsel about the distinctiveness of the diaconate should be made available to the Church as a whole, and especially to those involved in the work of discernment.

### Comment

*The restoration of the diaconate as a full, equal and distinct order of ministry is a work in progress. For many Anglicans, priesthood is the only model of ordained ministry they have experienced, and this can easily colour and misdirect their expectations of a prospective deacon.*

4. Worshipping communities are encouraged to identify persons in their midst who exemplify *diakonia*, and to invite them to enter a process of mutual discernment concerning the possibility of ordination as deacons.

### Comment

*Vocation is the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church. In so far as deacons are called to represent to the Church a credible and persuasive example of *diakonia*, the Church is in a good position to identify those individuals capable of such representation. The work of discernment is carried out on behalf of the whole Church: deacons who are called by their local congregation may in due course be asked to serve in a different parish.*

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<sup>5</sup> Indigenous Ministries, Anglican Church of Canada. *chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfindmkaj/https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/SC-covenant-owl\_single.pdf*. February 2022.

5. The process of discernment may also be initiated in response to an individual's sense of call.
6. Discernment focuses upon the character and personal maturity of the enquirer, their passion for *diakonia*, including an existing and exemplary diaconal ministry, and the desire and capacity to mobilize the Church to be diaconal.

**Comment**

*Personal maturity can be exhibited by persons of any age. The addition of younger deacons to our complement of clergy is desirable, and may require the Church to make accommodations in its demands and expectations appropriate to the season in a person's life.*

7. Discernment for diaconal vocation reflects the distinctiveness of the order.

**Comment**

*Some aspects of the process and content of discernment may be the same for deacons and presbyters, but the discernment of diaconal vocation will focus upon particular skills, knowledge and passions that are oriented to engagement with the world.*

8. Discernment groups make use of The Iona Report (2016) – or its subsequent revisions – as a framework for determining suitability and readiness for postulancy and ordination.

**Comment**

*The Iona Report outlines competencies expected of inquirers, ordinands and seasoned deacons. It was commended to the Anglican Church of Canada by General Synod in 2016.*

9. An experienced deacon or, at the very least, someone thoroughly acquainted with the restored diaconate, should be included in parish discernment groups as a mentor.
10. The work of discernment belongs to the whole Church, including the enquirer, their worshipping community and the diocese. This work continues and widens as the enquirer progresses in gaining the competencies required for ordination, and may involve fieldwork supervisors, diocesan vocation officers, and others.

**Comment**

*Even though some deacons will minister in the parish which first identified their diaconal vocation, deacons are ordained for the whole Church of God, and their vocation needs to be ratified by persons beyond the local congregation.*

11. More than one person can be called to ordained diaconal ministry in a single worshipping community.

**Comment**

*Apart from the fact that there is plenty of work to be done, the engagement of more than one deacon ensures that the community is exposed to a diversity of diaconal practice.*

12. Prospective deacons are not normally sent to ACPO. Formal opportunities for the wider Church to assess diaconal vocation are created by dioceses or provinces.

**Comment**

*ACPO is not currently equipped to distinguish between presbyteral and diaconal vocation. The Church needs to develop tools and processes focused on the specific calling of deacons, if it is to take the distinctive nature of the diaconate seriously.*

13. It is desirable that dioceses arrange for a psychological assessment of candidates.
14. Parishes or communities planning to engage a deacon enter into a collective process of discernment in order to articulate their own aspirations concerning diaconal ministry and how they believe a deacon could assist them. This work is a prerequisite for entering into a ministry covenant with a deacon.

**Comment**

*It is important that deacons are anchored in a worshiping community that welcomes their leadership and understands its implications for their common life.*



## Practices for a Restored Diaconate Education, Formation and Training

### General Principles

1. Preparation for ministry as a deacon is intentional and is comparable in scope and depth to that for presbyters.

#### Comment

*Deacons will normally have achieved the same level of education or qualification in their field of competence as other providers in their field. As clergy representing the Church to the world, deacons must be theologically competent, historically informed, and biblically literate. If deacons are truly to serve and be seen as a full, equal and distinct order of ministry, they must be credible and competent ambassadors of Christ's compassion.*

2. The Church aspires to the highest level of diaconal competence possible, while recognizing that the scope and depth of formation will be shaped by the size and character of the diocese in which the deacon is to serve.

#### Comment

*Many dioceses are rural and under-resourced, and all are unique in their needs and expectations. Already the Church has learned to adapt its models of formation for presbyters to take account of this reality. The same will be true for deacons. Our goal is to aspire to the best and most appropriate preparation possible for deacons in their local context.*

3. Preparation includes training, education, and formation: *education* equips the enquirer with necessary knowledge; *training* is oriented to the honing of practical skills, such as liturgical leadership or change management; *formation* refers to the transformation of the enquirer, and the shaping of a strong diaconal identity. This triad is sometimes referred to as “head, hands, and heart.”
4. Formation and training are oriented to the development of practical competencies in diaconal ministry.

#### Comment

*Much professional education focuses on the achievement of standards – a defined level of education attested by a diploma, indicating what a person should know and be able to do. By contrast, a competency describes knowledge, skills, and abilities by which a person can show that they are qualified for a function or profession. This is the approach taken by the Iona Report (2016), and has the advantage of allowing for wide application across different cultural, ecclesial and social contexts. In this regard, the Iona Report is a living document, subject to constant review and revision by the Church.*

5. The training and formation of deacons takes account of the distinctiveness of their vocation, and the particular skills and perspectives that belong to *diakonia*, wherever it is exercised.

**Comment**

*With respect to preparing enquirers for leadership in the Church, many seminaries or theological colleges focus primarily on the training and formation appropriate to presbyters, not deacons. Diaconal enquirers may need to be directed to other models of preparation for their ministry.*

6. Diaconal aspirants have opportunities to study and learn in the company of other deacons, in addition to learning alongside presbyteral aspirants.

**Comment**

*Deacons often feel isolated, particularly when their ministry is not well understood. Regular meetings with other deacons, both before and after ordination, affords support, collegiality, and ongoing diaconal formation. At the same time, shared coursework, retreats, and mentorship opportunities with presbyteral candidates can create a richer learning environment, allowing students to better understand the commonalities and distinctiveness of their ministries. By exposing both deacons and presbyters to each other's areas of focus early on, we can bridge potential divides and leverage the unique strengths of each order to cultivate effective team ministry.*

7. Deacons and the Church are best served when training and formation engage people and places outside the enquirer's own parish or diocese.

**Comment**

*Learners' experience is greatly enhanced by engaging with views, perspectives and cultural assumptions other than their own.*

8. Deacons are expected to be life-long learners.

**Comment**

*All Christians are called to lifelong learning. The world and the Church are constantly evolving, and deacons need to remain knowledgeable, relevant, and adaptable throughout their ministry. This allows them to continue to grow in their faith, address emerging issues, and remain effective servants (Proverbs 18.15).*

9. The Church invests financially in the training and formation of deacons in the same way it supports the training and formation of priests. Deacons have access to continuing education funds.

## The Focus of Training and Formation

*The following are components of a comprehensive program of education, training and formation.*

1. **Knowledge**

Deacons acquire a solid theological foundation, encompassing Scripture, theology, church history, Anglican studies, liturgy, and exposure to other faith traditions.

**Comment**

*A strong theological grounding equips deacons to articulate faith, understand tradition, and navigate ministry challenges. Deacons are servants of the Word (Acts 6.4) and stewards of the Church's heritage*

*Practices for a Restored Diaconate - Education, training and formation*

*alongside presbyters and bishops. Deepening theological knowledge allows them to faithfully interpret scripture (2 Timothy 2.15), explain complex doctrines, and address contemporary issues from a well-informed perspective.*

## 2. Social Justice and Equipping the Church for Diakonia

Deacons acquire a deep understanding of social justice issues, and demonstrate a passion and capacity for serving marginalized communities. They gain skills for equipping the Church to identify and respond to such issues.

### Comment

*Deacons, along with all Christians, are called to advocate for the vulnerable and to champion social justice, reflecting the Church's mission to the world. Preparation for this work may include education in systems analysis, change theory, government relations, community development, conflict management and resolution, reconciliation, and more. In Canada, every deacon needs to be thoroughly versed in the history of colonialism, and the work of truth-telling, healing, and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Deacons use their knowledge and experience to marshall the Church's commitment to diakonia.*

## 3. Ecumenical & Inter-religious Exposure and Appreciation

Prospective deacons acquaint themselves with other Christian denominations, particularly with regard to their theology and practice of *diakonia*. They also seek exposure to other faith traditions, especially those which are represented in their local context.

### Comment

*In today's diverse society, understanding and appreciating other religious traditions is essential for effective ministry. Engaging with other traditions fosters dialogue, dismantles stereotypes, and allows for collaboration on common ground, such as social justice issues. This exposure can enrich deacons' own faith and equip them to better serve increasingly in ecumenical and interfaith contexts. It is also important for deacons to appreciate the various means by which other traditions engage diakonia.*

## 4. Liturgical Expertise

Prospective deacons develop proficiency in leading and participating in Anglican worship, including proclaiming the Gospel, preaching and hermeneutics, writing and leading the prayers of the people, assisting at the eucharist, and dismissing the assembly to its work in the world. They gain a deep understanding of the essentially missional structure of the liturgy, and use this understanding to mobilize the people of God for *diakonia*.

### Comment

*Skillful engagement with liturgy allows deacons to enrich worship experiences and faithfully fulfill their liturgical roles. By mastering the forms and language of worship, they ensure its beauty and order, contributing to a deeper encounter with the holy, and equipping the congregation for diakonia (Malachi 1.10-11).*

## 5. Ministry immersion and skills development

Where possible, and with due consideration of previous experience, aspiring deacons participate for an extended period in an appropriate field placement outside of their home Church.

**Comment**

*This placement could be in a relevant social agency, or in another parish. New settings offer diverse ministry experiences, fostering adaptability and allowing the candidate to hone practical skills. Stepping outside one's comfort zone allows aspiring deacons to develop a broader understanding of ministry contexts, and refine their ability to serve effectively in various settings. This aligns with the call to be adaptable and ready to serve wherever needed, as exemplified by the immediate relocation of the deacon Philip to Azotus (Acts 8.40).*

**6. Mentorship**

Enquirers are mentored by experienced deacons or a community of deacons, who provide practical guidance, share experiences, and offer support.

**Comment**

*Diaconal mentors relate differently to deacons in formation than learning facilitators or field work supervisors, who have an evaluative role. Mentorship allows aspiring deacons to learn collegially and without judgment from seasoned practitioners and gain valuable insights into diaconal life. Finding role models who exemplify the qualities of a faithful deacon offers invaluable support and helps bridge the gap between theory and real-world ministry. This echoes the importance of learning from those who have gone before us, as seen in the mentorship relationship between Timothy and Paul (1 Timothy 4.12-16). The ministry of mentorship invariably enriches the mentor, as well.*

**7. Attentiveness to Personal Prayer and Worship**

Candidates learn to integrate their daily life into the rhythm of the Church year by praying the daily offices and participating alongside the people of God in the weekly Sunday liturgy.

**Comment**

*Integrating daily prayer with the weekly eucharist (where possible) offers a biblically grounded and theologically rich rhythm for the Christian life. Following Jesus' model of constant prayer (Mark 1.35), the daily offices structure prayer around the natural order of day and night (Genesis 1), inviting us into consistent conversation with God. The eucharist is the wellspring from which the People of God are nourished for diakonia (John 6.53-54), and strengthens the bonds of fellowship (1 Corinthians 10.16-17).*

**8. Spiritual Direction**

Candidates meet early in their formation, and regularly, with a qualified spiritual director for guidance and reflection on their call to ordained leadership and in conforming their life and prayer to the diaconal example of Jesus and the prophets.

**Comment**

*Spiritual direction fosters self-awareness, discernment of God's will, and personal growth essential for diaconal service. A trusted spiritual director provides a safe space for aspiring deacons to explore their motivations, navigate challenges, and cultivate a deeper relationship with God. In seeking such wisdom and guidance, the candidate enters into a long and esteemed spiritual practice, as evidenced in the lives of the saints and prophets, and the witness of scripture (Proverbs 11.14).*

## 9. Continuing Discernment

Throughout the process of training and formation, both the candidate and the Church remain open to the wisdom and vocational discernment of additional members of the Church, at the parish, regional, diocesan and provincial levels.

### Comment

*Multi-level discernment ensures a holistic evaluation of the candidate's calling, gifts, and suitability for diaconal ministry in a variety of contexts. This comprehensive process allows for diverse perspectives and insights from clergy, laity, and leadership across the Church. It reflects the importance of the wider community's role in identifying and affirming those called to ordained ministry (1 Corinthians 12:28-30).*

## The Delivery of Education, Training and Formation

*Several models for diaconal training and formation have emerged. These include:*

- Diocesan schools for deacons which prepare candidates for the diaconate only. Some schools may serve a cluster of dioceses.
- Diocesan schools for ministry – including lay faith formation, and formation for lay readers, candidates for the diaconate, and locally called presbyters.
- Institutional centres – such as the Centre for Christian Studies (Winnipeg), the Vancouver School of Theology, or theological schools that include a stream for the diaconate.

*In addition, several “established” Anglican theological colleges have expressed interest and willingness to adapt their programs to the needs of the Church for diaconal training and education.*

### Best Practices

1. While upholding high standards, models for formation are appropriately flexible, and may include in-person and online delivery, and variable content depending upon the skill and previous education of the candidate.

### Comment

*Flexibility ensures that formation programs are accessible to a wider range of candidates, regardless of their geographic location or personal constraints. It also allows for tailoring the program to the specific needs and learning styles of individual candidates.*

2. Candidates do not necessarily need to complete a diploma or degree program at a single institution, but may select desirable learning opportunities from a variety of providers.

### Comment

*A modular approach, where an academic credential is not necessarily required, can provide candidates with greater flexibility and choice, allowing them to work with diocesan authorities to tailor their formation to their specific interests and goals, and ensuring that they align with the needs and requirements of the Church. It can also help to ensure that candidates are receiving high-quality instruction from experts in their field that may not be available locally.*

3. Dioceses provide opportunities for practical and community-based formation, particularly with respect to such matters as social context, Canadian liturgical practices, and diocesan governance.

**Comment**

*Practical and community-based experiences are essential for preparing deacons for effective ministry. By providing candidates opportunities to serve in their local settings, dioceses can help them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to serve their communities effectively.*

4. Diocesan programs for the diaconate are competency-based and reflect the components of a comprehensive program for education, training and formation as outlined above (“The Focus of Training and Formation”).
5. Dioceses that design their own diaconal formation program commit to provide the leadership, time and money necessary to ensure the highest quality of preparation possible.

**Comment**

*Dioceses may wish to make use of the many established programs, both in Canada and the US, now delivering online courses and discussion groups. Such programs expand access to knowledgeable teachers and competent mentors. They also provide a community of diaconal learners with whom the aspirant may interact.*

6. Deacons are involved in the development and delivery of formation programs for the diaconate.

**Comment**

*Deacon involvement can help to ensure that formation programs are relevant and responsive to the needs of current deacons. It can also help to foster a sense of community and shared responsibility among deacons.*

7. Assessing readiness for ordination, and monitoring a candidate’s progress in achieving the necessary competencies, is the responsibility of the diocesan authority delegated this task by the bishop.

**Comment**

*Ordination may be conferred when a candidate demonstrates readiness for ordination as described in the Iona Report. In making this determination, diocesan authorities may seek input from teachers or others who have worked with the candidate closely. The establishment of a group to assist with this work, and to make policy and program recommendations concerning diaconal formation is advisable. Wherever possible, deacons should be involved in this work.*

8. Deacons are ordained for the whole Church, even when the expectation is that they will function locally.

**Comment**

*Deacons in good standing should be able to relocate to another diocese in the same way that presbyters do. To this end, local formation programs need at the very least to ensure that deacons meet the core expectations for diaconal ministry throughout the Church. Deacons who transfer to another diocese may be required to complete additional training or orientation to prepare them for ministry in a new context.*

9. The diocese and deacons themselves seek and create opportunities for continuing diaconal education.

**Comment**

*These may include conferences, field placements, internships, webinars, peer groups and more. The gathering and curation of a widely available list of offerings would be a helpful contribution.*

## Practices for a Restored Diaconate Licensing, deployment, the Deacon in the world, compensation, councils of the Church, and transitions

### Licensing and Letters of Permission

1. Deacons are authorized for public ministry by a bishop's licence or letter of permission, allowing them to function liturgically and to model and equip others for *diakonia* on behalf of the Church.
2. A licence is appropriate for deacons who are actively exercising their ordained ministry in a diocese, parish, or other placement. A letter of permission is appropriate for deacons who have resigned from active ministry, or who are serving temporarily in another diocese.
3. Deacons are licensed according to the terms of Canon XVII of The Anglican Church of Canada. A licence specifies the conditions of appointment, including: position, location, supervision, compensation, length of term, and timing of review.
4. Deacons are licensed by their bishop to a parish or parishes or to a special ministry as "deacon" (not as "curate," "associate," or "honorary assistant.") Deacons who are appointed by the bishop to a parish or parishes or special ministry, function as the bishop's emissary, normally under the delegated leadership and authority of the incumbent.

#### Comment

*The status of deacons differs from that of associates or honorary assistants who serve as part-time, assisting, or honorary priests alongside a priest-incumbent.*

5. Two or more deacons may be assigned to the same parish, provided their duties are clearly delineated.

#### Comment

*With respect to liturgical leadership, deacons may alternate in their liturgical roles, or divide their roles between being the Deacon of the Gospel and the Deacon of the Eucharist. (See Practices - Liturgy)*

6. Deacons who wish to serve in a diocese where they are not canonically resident require a letter of permission from the hosting bishop.
7. A deacon's licence will be revoked when they cease to function in a parish or diocese, for example, upon leaving their current diocese or parish, upon resigning from active ministry, or if inhibited or deprived as set out in Canon XVII.
8. A deacon's licence should be reviewed at regular intervals (e.g. every two or three years) and at times of transition, e.g. the appointment of a new rector or bishop.
9. The time of retirement for a deacon will normally be determined in consultation with the bishop, or upon submission of a letter by the deacon to the bishop asking to resign from active ministry.



10. A deacon who has resigned from active ministry may ask to remain active under certain conditions to be reviewed annually, or to function from time to time with a letter of permission from the bishop.
11. In discerning the terms of resignation from active ministry, consideration should be given to:
  - ongoing activities – in liturgy, preaching, teaching, committees, community service
  - continuing involvement in diaconal community and diocesan clergy activities
  - where to worship
  - when and how often to revisit the agreement.

### Deployment

1. Deacons exercise their diaconal ministry both within and outside the church. Their work in the world often represents the greatest call on their time, and may be their chief or only source of compensation. At the same time, some deacons' principal paid employment may be in service to a parish, diocese, or synod, for example as administrators, educators, chaplains, social workers, agency directors, etc.

#### Comment

*It is the nature of their principal ministry that gives deacons credibility as exemplars of diakonia within the Church itself, and the capacity to make effective connections between the Church and the world. It also follows that deacons employed outside the Church will be available for ministry to and with the Church on a part-time basis.*

2. The Church has no supervisory role with respect to the deacon's employment/ministry in the world.
3. With respect to their ecclesial leadership, deacons are appointed and licensed by the bishop to a parish or parishes, or to a particular ministry. It is assumed that deacons are anchored in a worshiping community, where they participate in parish life, as members of a parish family, as deacons in parish liturgies, and as interpreters of the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.
4. Newly ordained deacons may be appointed to their home parish, or to another parish, at the bishop's discretion. The bishop may change this appointment every few years or when a change in rector or other circumstances makes reassignment advisable.
5. Deacons do not serve as the cleric in charge of a parish with no priest.

#### Comment

*Deacons exercise their leadership in community with others, rather than in a solo presiding role. In the absence of a priest to take charge of a parish, the bishop is responsible for appointing a priest or qualified layperson as interim pastor. For the short term, if a priest is prevented from presiding, for example due to illness or travel, a deacon may be asked to provide temporary oversight, but never to the detriment of their primary ministry—to exemplify and mobilize the people of God into loving service of neighbour.*

6. Deacons are subject to the same canonical obligations and privileges which apply to all clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada.

7. The relationship between deacons and their diocese is governed by a letter of appointment or similar formal agreement as to the office of deacon, which could include such matters as compensation, hours, vacation, sick leave, expectations and compensation for continuing education, benefits, pension, term of office, performance review, and provisions for termination of the relationship.

**Comment**

*Even when self-supporting, a formal agreement is desirable for any deacon who is licensed and appointed to a particular ministry. In addition to ensuring mutual clarity of expectations, such an agreement protects the interests of both the deacon and the diocese in the event of subsequent disagreements.*

8. The relationship between deacons and the parish to which they are appointed is governed by a covenant in ministry. This covenant is focused on the diaconal identity and aspirations of the parish. It touches on the specific roles and commitments of the parish community, of the deacon's immediate supervisor, and of the deacon. Some provisions of the covenant may overlap with the diocesan letter of appointment or similar formal agreement as to the office of deacon. Covenants are reviewed and amended regularly, and are counter-signed by the bishop or other diocesan authority.

**Comment**

*It is important to note that the covenant in ministry starts with the objectives of the parish. The covenant is a declaration of partnership in diaconal ministry, and is meant to ensure both that the parish is ready for a deacon, and that the deacon is attuned to the parish's potential for diakonia.*

9. Deacons who move to another community or diocese require the permission or licence of the bishop to minister and function liturgically.

### **The Deacon in the World Nomenclature, Vesture, and Representation**

1. It is appropriate to use the honorific "the Reverend" for deacons, and to address them as "Deacon [Last Name]," though some may prefer "Deacon [First Name]."

**Comment**

*As members of the clergy, presbyters and deacons are entitled to use the same honorific and street dress (clergy collars). Addressing deacons by their order (much as we address our bishops as Bishop So-and-So) is a helpful way of distinguishing between the two.*

2. Deacons wear clerical street dress (i.e. a clerical collar) when it is useful or necessary, for example to gain admission to hospitals, jails or other institutions.

**Comment**

*The use of clerical garb (and titles) are indicators that the deacon is specifically representing the Church in a particular ministry, and may cause confusion if worn on other occasions when the deacon is functioning in a different context or professional capacity.*

3. In their public speaking and writing deacons are mindful (a) of whose interests they are representing; (b) for whom they are speaking, including for whom they have authority to speak; and (c) whom others may *perceive* them to be representing.

#### **Comment**

*Because deacons inhabit the uncomfortable intersection between the Church and the world, they must often answer to several supervisors, and entities, both within and outside the Church. Many workplaces, including dioceses, have clear guidelines about public representations.*

### **Compensation**

#### **Contextual Note**

*Financial conditions within the Anglican Church of Canada vary considerably across parishes, provinces and dioceses. Priority should be given to address the significant inequities that already exist between the compensation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clergy. Nevertheless, where circumstances permit, these core principles apply:*

1. Compensation for deacons is one way of recognizing their training, education and skills, and the ministry and leadership they provide to the Church. The form of compensation ranges from reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, access to certain clergy benefits, and fee-for-services, to an honorarium, stipend or salary. At a minimum, deacons have the same access to continuing education and employee assistance programs as presbyters.

#### **Comment**

*Fair compensation is a recognition by the Church that deacons have invested time and money in their formation, which enhances the value of their work for the Church; and by the deacon that they are “in orders,” and are under obligation to fulfil their ministry both in and out of season.*

*Historically, the general practice in the Anglican Church of Canada has been that deacons remain employed at their secular jobs and do not receive a stipend for the ordained ministry they exercise within the Church. Increasingly, the practice for deacons who are employed in part-time or full-time positions in the Church is that they receive a salary and benefits in the same manner as lay employees. If a deacon is eligible for pension and benefits, it should be according to the same terms as presbyters.*

*There are fewer deacons in the ELCIC than in the Anglican Church of Canada. Almost all rostered deacons are employed by the Church to serve in special ministries at the Synod level. All rostered deacons are paid.*

2. The cost of the training, education, and formation of deacons is equitably shared among those who benefit: the individual, the diocese, and the sponsoring community of faith.
3. Deacons are reimbursed for mileage and meals (beyond the normal hours of commuting to church) according to the guidelines of their diocese.

4. Deacons are compensated in accordance with diocesan or parish practice at the same rate as presbyters when they officiate and/or preach at occasional services (e.g. Sunday, midweek, or special services).

**Comment**

*In situations where deacons are already receiving a salary or stipend, such work may already be considered part of their covenanted role. Where this is not the case, deacons should receive the same financial consideration as any presbyter not on the payroll of the parish.*

5. Where it is necessary to assign a deacon to take interim charge of a parish, they are compensated according to the same guidelines as presbyters.

### **Councils of the Church**

1. Licensed deacons in active ministry are normally members of the Parish Council or equivalent body.
2. Deacons are intentionally included amongst the members of diocesan, provincial and General Synod.

**Comment**

*It is important to hold space for the voice of deacons in the deliberations and councils of the Church. Not only does exposure to deacons deepen the Church's understanding of their distinctive ministry: it also calls the Church to deepen its appreciation of its own obligation to embody Christ's diakonia. Synods may need to review their canons on membership to ensure representation from the diaconal order.*

### **Transitions**

**Contextual Note**

*Particular attention should be paid to the ministry of deacons whenever a transition is to take place: a change in parish incumbent, the election of a new bishop, even the appointment of new wardens or a new coordinator of deacons. Because the Church is still achieving a much needed consensus about the role and identity of deacons, and because their work takes a wide variety of forms with multiple levels of accountability (to diocesan bishop, parish priest, and when applicable, to their employer), deacons are susceptible to upheaval, misunderstandings, and conflict whenever there is a change in office.*

1. A deacon arriving in a new diocese will schedule a meeting with the bishop to inform the bishop of their presence in the diocese and, if desired, to discuss opportunities for appointment and licensing.
2. A deacon may not minister or function liturgically in a parish without the consent of the incumbent and wardens, nor until an appointment is made by the bishop, and a licence or letter of permission issued.
3. The appointment and licensing of deacons to a new parish or ecclesial ministry follows on a period of relationship-building and renewed mutual discernment concerning the diaconal objectives and readiness of the receiving parish for diaconal leadership, alongside the gifts and interests of the deacon.

### Comment

*For deacons to serve as effective models of diaconal ministry, their ministry must be welcomed by the receiving parish, and their exemplary diakonia known and observable. In this sense, the receiving parish is once again (or for the first time) being asked to discern who in its midst exemplifies the diakonia of Jesus Christ.*

4. The deacon is introduced to the diocesan college or community of deacons in order to build connections of support.
5. If the deacon is married to a presbyter who has moved to a new diocese, every effort is made to ensure that the terms of their respective appointments are compatible regarding location and workload. It is not assumed that the deacon and presbyter will serve in the same parish, although this is not precluded.
6. Candidates for bishop are expected to demonstrate an understanding of and support for the distinctive ministry of deacons, including their role in liturgies and public worship, their relationship with the bishop as well as with presbyters, lay readers, and laity. They will be able to articulate their vision for the diaconate within the overall life of the diocese and the wider Church.
7. The Anglican Church of Canada's theological statement on the diaconate and recommended best practices<sup>6</sup> are included as part of the orientation curriculum for new bishops. Anglican Deacons Canada is also a source of information and guidelines for deacons.
8. Parish search committees include a description of the deacon's ministry in the parish profile; when interviewing candidates they ask about their experience of working with deacons and how they intend to work with the deacon(s) in the new parish.
9. When new churchwardens are chosen they are briefed on the deacon's role and ministry, along with the terms of their appointment, covenant and compensation.
10. The deacon's licence and covenant are used to re-define expectations, and should be reviewed regularly or upon request.

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<sup>6</sup> *Once adopted by the Church.*

## Practices for a Restored Diaconate The Deacon's Role in Liturgy

### General Principles

- a. Deacons actively participate in the liturgy and share in its leadership.
- b. Within the context of liturgy, deacons are a living symbol of Christ's own *diakonia*; a life given in service for the healing and life of the beautiful and broken world beloved by God.
- c. The liturgical functions of a deacon are visible expressions (or icons) of this fundamental diaconal posture of service; a service which "points to" and is always directed toward Christ.
- d. Deacons are visible, and actively participate in the liturgical leadership of the community. They are equally concerned with empowering and equipping lay people for liturgical ministry. Both are essential.
- e. Deacons embrace their liturgical duties with reverence, passion, and preparation, and seek ongoing training to develop their abilities.
- f. Deacons understand their liturgical roles as intrinsically related to their diaconal calling by their meaning and logic.
- g. It is the responsibility of all who plan and lead liturgy to support deacons in their full participation in liturgy. Deacons are not assistants to the priest: they have their own distinct ministry.
- h. Dioceses should ensure that deacons are visible in diocesan liturgies.
- i. It is desirable that each parish have a deacon to give visible expression to the church's diaconal identity. Where a community does not have the benefit of a deacon, diaconal roles may appropriately be taken on by lay leaders or the priest.

### Part 1

#### Roles Intrinsically Related to the Diaconal Calling by their Meaning and Logic

##### **Vesture**

1. In parishes where a chasuble is worn by the priest, it is desirable that a deacon wear a dalmatic along with their diaconal stole.
2. In the absence of a deacon, presbyters who perform diaconal roles in the liturgy vest according to the order of priest.

##### **Entrance Rites**

3. In contexts where there is a formal liturgical entrance, a deacon precedes the presider.
4. A deacon carries the gospel book in the entrance procession.
5. Where practical, the deacon sits or stands at the right of the priest.

##### **Reading the Gospel**

6. A deacon is the ordinary minister of the Gospel.

**Comment**

*The reading of the gospel has for centuries been a role of the deacon. In accordance with their vocation as heralds of good news, deacons proclaim the gospel effectively, with authority, clarity, passion, and joy.*

**Preaching**

7. While remaining open to the unpredictable leading of the Spirit during sermon preparation, nevertheless deacons have a particular responsibility to be attentive in their preaching to poverty and need in the world.

**Comment**

*Diaconal ministry has a prophetic dimension and takes seriously the gospel imperative to shine light into the dark places of our world and on unjust social and economic structures. As such, preaching provides an important context in which to “interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world” and is an essential part of the ministry of a deacon.*

**Prayers of the People**

8. Through both example and mentorship, a deacon embraces the ministry of intercession and ignites in the hearts of the assembly attentiveness to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, and the vulnerable.

**Comment**

*The Prayers of the People invite the Church to look beyond itself to the needs of others. The work of public intercession is one important way deacons can fulfill their prophetic calling to interpret to the church the needs and concerns of the world. It is thus desirable that the deacon be given regular opportunity to lead the Prayers. Diaconal leadership in this ministry of intercession may also include the training and support of lay intercessors, and/or when the prayers are spoken by a layperson, introducing the prayers with a short bidding.*

**Preparation of the Gifts**

9. A deacon prepares the table and elements for the eucharist.

**Comment**

*From the beginning (Acts 6.1-6), serving at table has been a central image of the diaconal vocation. This physical act is a symbolic reminder of characteristic features of the diaconal vocation (i.e. concern that the hungry be fed, and attentiveness to the organization and distribution of resources). Deacons set the table for the eucharist as their service is to the whole assembly. As appropriate, this task may be shared with lay servers. The training and support of lay servers is an appropriate expression of diaconal leadership.*

10. A deacon receives the gifts of bread, wine and money.
11. A deacon leads the Prayer over the Gifts.

**Comment**

*As the person who has received the offering, which will be returned to the community as nourishment and resources for ministry, it is appropriate for the deacon to lead this prayer.*

### **At the Eucharistic Table**

12. A deacon stands at the presider's right.
13. A deacon prepares the consecrated elements for distribution.
14. A deacon clears the table following communion and is responsible for the ablutions, wherever they take place.

### **Dismissal**

15. A deacon speaks the dismissal to mobilize the gathered community and send it out in shared mission.

#### **Comment**

*The dismissal calls the assembly to shift its attention from the communal table and shared "inner room" experience to its outward-facing missional identity – that shared ministry of diakonia which has been entrusted to the Church and for which it has been nourished and equipped in the liturgy.*

### **Diaconal roles in Special Services**

16. A deacon normally leads the bidding portions of the Solemn Intercession on Good Friday.

#### **Comment**

*This solemn moment is a natural extension of a deacon's ministry as a model of intercessory prayer and is a profound example of the iconic nature of the diaconal function. For as Christ intercedes at the right hand of the Father for all, the deacon likewise, standing to the right of the presider, acts as friend of the lost, the outcast, and the sinner and calls for mercy for all.*

17. A deacon carries the Paschal Candle and sings the Exsultet at the Easter Vigil.

#### **Comment**

*This liturgical function is a visible expression of the light who is Christ being carried into and banishing the dark places in the world. In circumstances where the deacon truly cannot sing, and the Exsultet must be assigned to someone else, it is still appropriate that the deacon carry and install the Paschal Candle.*

## **Part 2**

### **Roles which may be appropriately assigned to a deacon, although not explicitly diaconal**

#### **Communion**

18. A deacon may share in the administration of the elements.

#### **Introducing the Creed and the Confession**

19. A deacon may invite the community to affirm its faith and to make a confession of sin.

#### **Funerals**

20. A deacon may officiate at funerals.



**Comment**

*It is fitting for a deacon to officiate or assist at a funeral where the pastoral relationship to the deceased or the family merits it.*

**Home or Hospital Visits with the Reserved Sacrament**

21. A deacon fittingly brings the reserved sacrament to those sick and shut-in, as an expression of a ministry of caring for those in need.<sup>7</sup>

**Comment**

*Deacons share this ministry with priests or authorized lay ministers as is the custom of their community. The provision of training and support for this ministry is an appropriate expression of diaconal leadership.*

**Anointing of the Sick & Confession**

22. In accordance with diocesan practice, a deacon may be asked to administer anointing for healing.

**Comment**

*Deacons undertake this ministry in consultation with the parish priest or other person responsible for pastoral care.*

23. Deacons do not hear formal confessions.

**Comment**

*On occasion, deacons may be privy to an expression of penitence and may offer a prayer for forgiveness (not a formal absolution). In such cases, deacons bear the same burden of confidentiality as priests.*

**Baptism**

24. The bishop or a priest is the normal minister of baptism. However, in an emergency, a deacon or lay person may be called upon to baptize.
25. A deacon takes a visible role in the baptismal liturgy.

**Comment**

*Equipping and empowering lay persons to fully live out their own baptismal calling is at the heart of diaconal vocation. Diaconal leadership in the context of a baptism may include presenting candidates whom they have prepared for baptism, leading the Prayers of the People, asking some or all of the questions in the Baptismal Covenant, and taking the lead in the Giving of Light.*

**Special Services**

26. A deacon fittingly functions in a visible role on occasions which reflect the charism of *diakonia*, including:
- assisting with the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday
  - assisting with the Liturgy of the Palms on Palm Sunday

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<sup>7</sup>An authorized order for “Public Distribution of Holy Communion by Deacons and Lay People” may be found on the Anglican Church of Canada website.

- assisting with the foot-washing on Maundy Thursday
- assisting with lighting candles for the departed on All Souls Day
- assisting with the preparation and distribution of oils at the Chrism liturgy
- assisting at diocesan services, such as confirmations, ordinations, inductions, and synod services, regardless of where they take place

### Part 3 Liturgical Roles to be Avoided

*The following are liturgical roles which, by their nature, threaten to confuse the distinctive ministry of deacons, and so should be avoided.*

#### Presiding at Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

27. A deacon does not officiate at regular parish services of Communion using the Reserved Sacrament.

##### Comment

*To uphold the ministry of deacons as full, equal, and distinct from the presbyteral role, adopting this practice as a norm should be avoided. Especially when this becomes commonplace within a worshipping community, it cannot help but blur the lines between diaconal and priestly ministry. If a reserved sacrament communion service is deemed necessary due to the unavailability of a priest, a lay person authorized by the bishop would more appropriately lead the service.*

28. In cases of special outreach services of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (for example, in care homes or prisons) a deacon might appropriately preside.

##### Comment

*In such contexts, the deacon is an emissary and representative of the Church in the world, a witness to gospel hope, and an embodiment of Christ's compassion for the suffering world.*

### Part 4 The Difficult Question of Weddings

#### Weddings

29. A priest (or bishop) normally officiates at weddings, including those which are non-eucharistic.

##### Comment

*This is assumed by the rubrics of both the BCP and the BAS. The BAS states (p. 527) that "the incumbent shall be responsible for the conduct of the marriage liturgy." However, the rubric does add a final provision that "when the form of service on p. 541 is celebrated by a deacon, the nuptial blessing and the blessing of the ring(s) shall be appropriately changed." This has led to a variety of practices throughout the Church. In some dioceses deacons are permitted to officiate at marriages. In others, they are not. In yet others, deacons may officiate in exceptional circumstances. All call upon the rubrics on p. 527 in defence of their chosen practice. This is a matter which needs further discussion, and its resolution will need to be more clearly reflected in our*

*authorized liturgies. In the meantime, we offer the following considerations for determining diocesan practice.*

- Deacons who officiate at marriages must comply with civil authority (i.e. be authorized to conduct marriages by their province or territory, and do so in accordance with the provisions of that authorization.) They must also have the approval of their diocesan bishop, whether by general policy, or singular permission to conduct a specific wedding.
- In some Anglican circles (possibly following longstanding Roman Catholic practice), deacons may bless any inanimate object not reserved to a bishop (i.e. altars, fonts, patens, chalices and bells). Where this is the practice, it follows that the deacon would be permitted to bless the rings at a wedding.
- Canon XXI (On Marriage in the Church) recognizes that the marriage union is established by the covenant made by the couple, expressed in the Declaration of Intent, and their mutual vows. In other words, a marriage without the benefit of a nuptial blessing is in every way a valid marriage.
- The nuptial blessing, pronounced by a priest, is what distinguishes a church wedding from a civil wedding. (This accounts for the European practice of the blessing of civil marriages – couples seek and receive an additional grace upon their union.) This is the principal reason for reserving the celebration of a wedding to a priest or bishop.
- Deacons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, our full communion partner are permitted in some cases to perform weddings, but note that they do not consider marriage to be a sacrament of the Church.
- Deacons and bishops must give thought as to whether officiating at weddings is truly an expression of the unique calling of a deacon, or is in danger of obscuring this. Some would claim that marriage and family life fall more closely into the purview of a priest's pastoral ministry, in so far as they relate to the life of the Christian community. This is not to preclude the participation of the parish deacon in the marriage liturgy. Where the deacon has a well-established relationship with the couple, it may be entirely appropriate for the deacon to read the exhortation or witness their vows.
- Similarly, through their diaconal work outside the church, deacons may develop important relationships with people who neither have nor even wish a connection with the institutional Church, but who may wish to entrust the deacon with their wedding. Again, those involved may want to explore the couple's reasons for seeking a Christian wedding.