

## CUSTOMARY FOR VOCATIONAL DEACONS

### EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF TENNESSEE

#### 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.

*~ North American Association for the Diaconate*

#### THE DISCERNMENT OF A CALL TO DIACONAL MINISTRY

Through their ordination vows, deacons place themselves under orders to follow Jesus and to be obedient to the bishop, who gives them the mandate to encourage, support, and develop servant ministry in this diocese.

##### **Three aspects of Call:**

- 1) This is a person who has the ability to articulate the proclamation of servant ministry that is present in the Gospel, and who shows leadership skills and a willingness to lead others into servant ministry.
- 2) A deacon is also one who has the courage to be a prophetic voice to the Church concerning the needs of the powerless and voiceless in the community. She or he is a person who has the mental ability and competence for ordained ministry, and who understands that the diaconate is a life-long discernment of the direction of his or her ministry. This process involves continuous prayer, openness to change, willingness to study, and the active quest for personal growth.
- 3) The vocational diaconate is a distinct order and is not a stepping stone to the priesthood. Likewise, the diaconate is not to be seen as a reward for faithful service as a lay reader, chalice bearer, warden, or member of the vestry. Nor is it to be seen as a reward for a pre-existing servant ministry. The individual aspiring to the Sacred Order of Deacons must clearly articulate and demonstrate that he or she is called to the order of ministry which is personified by servant ministry, diakonia.

##### **Signs of Call:**

First, a person identified with having a vocation to the diaconate would be recognized by him/herself and by the Church as meeting three fundamental

requirements:

- 1) The exercise of a servant ministry in the world
- 2) The desire and capacity to call the Church to a life of service in the name of Christ and to call the body of Christ to live out the servant ministry given at baptism
- 3) The desire and capacity to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world

Second, a person with a discernible vocation evidences many, if not all, of the following qualities:

- 1) a strong commitment to and deep love for Jesus Christ and the Church
- 2) an ability to articulate his or her faith
- 3) a confirmed adult member in good standing with the understanding of his or her ministry as a baptized person
- 4) a spiritual life marked by the holy habits of worship, prayer, the study of scripture, and tithing
- 5) a vocation to serve and enable others to serve
- 6) empathy for the powerless
- 7) a history of satisfactory employment (if applicable) and interpersonal relationships
- 8) a willingness to undertake extensive preparation, including theological education, spiritual formation, and practice of ministry
- 9) a clear understanding of the ministry of a deacon
- 10) a willingness to serve God through the leadership of the diocesan bishop

Third, a person with a discernible vocation to the diaconate would be recognized both by her/himself and by the Church as being called to live the vision statement for diaconal ministry, noted at the beginning of this booklet. Deacons are often at work in risky places and at the margins, responding to the needs of the poor, the weak, the addicted, the sick, and the lonely, thus enabling them to discover the presence of God in their world. Deacons are called to engage the issues of justice, mercy, poverty, family, and the environment. Increasingly, the role is one of opening doors of opportunity, encouraging others to take risks, and serving as agents of change.

## **EDUCATION/FORMATION**

The education/formation process is intended to be completed in a minimum of two years. Before ordination each candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

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

The education/formation requirements are met by attending monthly gatherings with six events beginning Friday evenings and concluding late Saturday afternoons (January, March, May, July,

October, December) and four Saturday events (February, April, September, November), each year. Topics include group development, homiletics, Christian Education/Formation (including faith development, learning and leadership styles), systems theory, and others. Theological reflections on academic studies are also part of the formation process. The formation process shall also include a basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or an equivalent as approved by the Commission on Ministry (COM) and the Bishop, sexual misconduct prevention training, training regarding Title IV of these canons, and anti-racism training.

During the education and formation process evaluation of the participant's progress will be made in accordance with Canon III, Section 6 (i). See Appendix A. The Basic Expectation of Candidates Seeking Ordination to the Diaconate is in Appendix B.

## **THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF A DEACON**

### **Deployment**

“The Bishop, after consultation with the Deacon and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, may assign a Deacon to one or more congregations, other communities of faith- or non-parochial ministries.” (Title III, Canon 7.4- Appendix B) The bishop may re-assign a deacon, or the deacon may request re-assignment, at any time after the second year with a congregation. The gifts, talent, and experience of a deacon will be considered in deployment decisions, as well as the ministry needs of the diocese. The deacon shall have an annual written letter of agreement with the presbyter, vestry, and bishop. The contents of the agreement will follow the outline provided by the bishop's office. (Appendix A)

### **Clothing**

Clerical garb should be reserved for liturgical or pastoral occasions.

Vestments: Alb and stole should be worn only when the deacon is functioning as a deacon in the worship service. A dalmatic, if any, should be in keeping with the vestments worn by others. Cassock, surplice with tippet, or alb without stole, is appropriate for non-Eucharistic worship services. If a master of ceremonies is in charge of the service, his/her direction shall be followed. It is expected that any vestment other than alb and cassock and surplice be purchased by the congregation served by the deacon.

### **Rites of Passage**

A recognition of diaconal ministry with the congregation is appropriate during a regular worship service upon a new assignment. Likewise, a leave-taking liturgy is appropriate when a deacon leaves the congregation for reassignment or retirement.

### **Term of Stay in a Congregation**

When the presbyter resigns or otherwise leaves the cure, the deacon contacts the bishop immediately and tenders his/her written letter of resignation. Options for continuing service will be discussed with the bishop, deacon, warden, and interim presbyter if there is one. When a new presbyter is called, the deacon may or may not be reassigned to the congregation by the bishop.

## **ROLE IN THE PARISH**

### **Leadership**

In accordance with Title III, Canon 4, sections 6 and 7, subsection c, in those congregations where there are Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors, these ministries would normally be under the direction of the deacon of the congregation. The sacramental rites of the church are appropriately administered by a priest. Therefore, Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage, Confession, and Unction are to be administered by the priest with the deacon assisting. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances only with the permission of the bishop.

### **Ministration to the Sick**

In a public liturgy of healing, the priest should anoint with oil while the deacon may assist in the laying on of hands and with prayers. In cases of necessity, in the absence of or at the request of a priest, it is appropriate for a deacon to anoint with oil when praying for the sick, using oil that has been blessed by a bishop or priest. (BCP, p. 456)

### **Liturgy**

All clergy are expected to be knowledgeable in and observant of the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer and the canons of the Church. Together they guide the liturgical functioning of the deacon. The presbyter will neither ask the deacon to function in ways prohibited by the BCP rubrics and canons, nor deprive the deacon of those roles that are preferred to the order.

“A deacon should read the Gospel and may lead the Prayers of the People. Deacons should also serve at the Lord’s Table, preparing and placing on it the offerings of bread and wine, and assisting in the ministration of the Sacrament to the people. In the absence of a deacon, these duties may be performed by an assisting priest.” (BCP pg. 354) The deacon may also bid the Confession (BCP p. 360) and say the Dismissal. (BCP p. 366) The deacon may preach, but with the understanding that the rector/vicar is the ordinary preacher of the parish. It is appropriate for the deacon to preach on Maundy Thursday and other feast days or occasions related to servant ministry.

### **Service**

Deacons appropriately work with pastoral care, the outreach committee, and/or social ministries within the parish and the diocese.

### **Diocesan Functions**

It is expected that all persons planning diocesan functions and liturgical events will include deacons, and will provide for appropriate participation according to the order. All deacons canonically resident in the diocese shall be included in all general diocesan mailings to the clergy.

### **The Community of Deacons and the Council on Deacons**

All deacons canonically resident in the diocese (except those retired or living out of state) constitute a Community of Deacons, which shall meet from time to time. The bishop may establish a Council on Deacons to oversee, study, and promote the diaconate. (See Title III, Canon 7.2 & 7.3)

### **Finances**

The deacon shall normally serve the congregation to which he/she is assigned for a maximum of eight to ten hours per week without stipend or other compensation. It is expected that the deacon will

be reimbursed by the parish for expenses related to his/her service, including reimbursement for mileage, expenses of attending diocesan conventions, and other diocesan clergy events. This matter should be specifically addressed in the deacon's letter of agreement. The congregation should provide funding for continuing education for the deacon. When a deacon undertakes a non-parochial assignment, reimbursement of expenses related to the deacon's service shall be discussed with the bishop and the supervisor, and resolved before the assignment is effective.

### **Rule of Life**

It is expected that the deacon will maintain a disciplined prayer life, have and consult a trained spiritual director approved by the bishop, and follow a regular program of study. A plan of continuing education should be prepared by the deacon annually, and implementation should be reported in the deacon's annual report. (See Appendix A, Sample Letter of Agreement)

### **Continuing Education**

All active deacons shall complete continuing education each year as directed by the bishop. Topics chosen should either improve skills and vision for the deacon's current ministry, or prepare the deacon for a new ministry of justice, in such areas as racism, affordable housing, prison, etc. The details should be acknowledged in the yearly report to the bishop. It is desirable that continuing education be completed in community, not in isolation. Suggested continuing education programs are weekend or one- or two-day classes or seminars sponsored by hospitals, civic organizations, and educational institutions, as well as religious organizations (houses of faith, denominational entities) at the state, national, or international level. Online continuing education hours as approved by the bishop may be possibilities for continuing education.

### **Retirement**

“On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months, and this term may be renewed.”

(Title III. Canon 7.7 – See also Appendix B)

## **AGREEMENTS**

### **Leave**

The deacon should take the following periods of leave: national holidays, to be taken so as not to interfere with worship for major occasions; one month annual vacation, consisting of twenty-three workdays, which shall include five Sundays. No more than \_\_\_\_ days and one Sunday may be carried forward to succeeding years. Professional development leave may be taken at the rate of two weeks per year. Also, two weeks per year of service in this parish/mission for sabbatical leave will be available after the sixth year. Sabbatical arrangements shall be made in full consultation with the bishop, rector/vicar, and vestry/mission council, to insure benefits for the parish as well as for the deacon.

### **Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence from congregational ministry may be taken after a conversation with the bishop and rector of the congregation. At that time the length of the leave will be determined, with appropriate check-in points.

**Reports**

The deacon shall provide a written annual report to the bishop. Deacons functioning in a congregation shall give a copy of the report to the presbyter of the parish, including the completion of a Mutual Ministry Review as per Appendix C. In addition to the required written report, the deacon and bishop should have periodic discussions. Those deacons on leave or otherwise not actively deployed shall write the bishop an annual letter describing their activities, spiritual life, connection with church, etc. Retired deacons are not required to provide annual reports/letters.

If problems arise which affect the life of the congregation, and/or the ministry of presbyter or deacon, the deacon shall discuss them first with the presbyter who is his/her supervisor and follow his/her counsel and advice. In case of disagreement, the deacon, with the knowledge of the presbyter, shall inform the bishop in writing, with a copy to the presbyter. The bishop shall accept the responsibility for resolution.

*We are indebted to The Rev. Michael P. Durning, Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese of Southwest Florida, for their Customary for Deacons.*

2009

## Appendix A

### TITLE III. CANON 6: Of the Ordination of Deacons (2015 Canons)

#### Sec. 1. Selection

The Bishop, in consultation with the Commission, shall establish procedures to identify and to select persons with evident gifts and fitness for ordination to the Diaconate.

#### Sec. 2. Nomination

A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, may be nominated for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith.

(a) The Nomination shall be in writing and shall include a letter of support by the Nominee's congregation or other community of faith committing the community to

- (1) pledge to contribute financially to that preparation, and
- (2) involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for ordination to the Diaconate.

If it be a congregation, the letter shall be signed by two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and by the Member of the Clergy or leader exercising oversight .

(b) The Nominee, if in agreement with the nomination, shall accept the nomination in writing and shall provide the following to the Bishop:

- (1) Full name and date of birth.
- (2) The length of time resident in the Diocese.
- (3) Evidence of Baptism and Confirmation.
- (4) Whether an application has been made previously for Postulancy or the person has been nominated in any Diocese.
- (5) A description of the process of discernment by which the Nominee has been identified for ordination to the Diaconate.
- (6) The level of education attained and, if any, the degrees earned, and areas of specialization, together with copies of official transcripts.

#### Sec. 3. Postulancy

Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call to the Diaconate.

(a) Before granting admission as a Postulant, the Bishop shall

- (1) determine that the Nominee is a confirmed adult communicant in good standing, and

(2) confer in person with the Nominee,

(b) If the Bishop approves the Nominee proceeding into Postulancy, the Commission, or a committee of the Commission, shall meet with the Nominee to review the application and prepare an evaluation of the Nominee's qualifications to pursue a program of preparation for ordination to the Diaconate. The Commission shall present its evaluation and recommendations to the Bishop.

(c) No Bishop shall consider accepting as a Postulant any person who has been refused admission as a Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate in any other Diocese, or who, having been admitted, has afterwards ceased to be a Candidate, until receipt of a letter from the Bishop of the Diocese refusing admission, or in which the person has been a Candidate, declaring the cause of refusal or of cessation.

(d) The Bishop may admit the Nominee as a Postulant for ordination to the Diaconate. The Bishop shall record the Postulant's name and date of admission in a Register kept for that purpose. The Bishop shall inform the Postulant, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the Postulant's congregation or other community of faith, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the director of the Postulant's program of preparation, of the fact and date of such admission.

(e) Each Postulant for ordination to the Diaconate shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Postulant's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual, and practical development.

(f) Any Postulant may be removed as a Postulant at the sole discretion of the Bishop. The Bishop shall give written notice of the removal to the Postulant and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the Postulant's congregation or other community of faith, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the director of the program of preparation.

#### **Sec. 4. Candidacy**

Candidacy is a time of education and formation, in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee and the congregation or other community of faith.

(a) A person desiring to be considered as a Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate shall apply to the Bishop. Such application shall include the following:

- (1) the Postulant's date of admission to Postulancy, and
- (2) a letter of support by the Postulant's congregation or other community of faith. If it be a congregation the letter shall be signed and dated by at least two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body and by the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight.

(b) Upon compliance with these requirements, and receipt of a written statement from the Commission attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant, and having received approval in writing of

the Standing Committee who shall have interviewed the Postulant and who shall have had an opportunity to review the documentation relating to the application of the Postulant, the Bishop may admit the Postulant as a Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate. The Bishop shall record the Candidate's name and date of admission in a Register kept for that purpose. The Bishop shall inform the Candidate, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the Candidate's congregation or other community of faith, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the Dean of the seminary the Candidate may be attending or proposes to attend, or the director of the Candidate's program of preparation, of the fact and date of such admission.

(c) A Candidate must remain in canonical relationship with the Diocese in which admission has been granted until ordination to the Diaconate under this Canon, except, for reasons acceptable to the Bishop, the Candidate may be transferred to another Diocese upon request, provided that the Bishop of the receiving Diocese is willing to accept the Candidate

(d) Any Candidate may be removed as a Candidate, at the sole discretion of the Bishop. The Bishop shall give written notice of the removal to the Candidate and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the Candidate's congregation or other community of faith, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the director of the program of preparation.

(e) If a Bishop has removed the Candidate's name from the list of Candidates, except by transfer, or the Candidate's application for ordination has been rejected, no other Bishop may ordain the person without readmission to Candidacy for a period of at least twelve months.

#### **Sec. 5. Preparation for Ordination**

(a) The Bishop and the Commission shall work with the Postulant or Candidate to develop and monitor a program of preparation for ordination to the Diaconate in accordance with this Canon to ensure that pastoral guidance is provided throughout the period of preparation.

(b) The Bishop may assign the Postulant or Candidate to any congregation of the Diocese or other community of faith after consultation with the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight.

(c) Formation shall take into account the local culture and each Postulant or Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry.

(d) Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for ordination.

(e) Wherever possible, formation for the Diaconate shall take place in community, including other persons in preparation for the Diaconate, or others preparing for ministry.

(f) Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

- (1) Academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology,

and the tradition of the Church.

- (2) Diakonia and the diaconate.
- (3) Human awareness and understanding.
- (4) Spiritual development and discipline.
- (5) Practical training and experience.

**(g)** Preparation for ordination shall include training regarding

- (1) prevention of sexual misconduct.
- (2) civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse.
- (3) the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, particularly Title IV thereof.
- (4) the Church's teaching on racism.

**(h)** Each Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual, and practical development.

**(i)** During Candidacy each Candidate's progress shall be evaluated from time to time, and there shall be a written report of the evaluation by those authorized by the Commission to be in charge of the evaluation program. Upon certification by those in charge of the Candidate's program of preparation that the Candidate has successfully completed preparation and is ready for ordination, a final written assessment of readiness for ordination to the Diaconate shall be prepared as determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission. This report shall include a recommendation from the Commission regarding the readiness of the Candidate for ordination. Records shall be kept of all evaluations, assessments, and the recommendation, and shall be made available to the Standing Committee.

**(j)** Within thirty-six months prior to ordination as a Deacon, the following must be accomplished

- (1) a background check, according to criteria established by the Bishop and Standing Committee.
- (2) medical and psychological evaluation by professionals approved by the Bishop, using forms prepared for the purpose by The Church Pension Fund, and if desired or necessary, psychiatric referral.

**(k)** Reports of all investigations and examinations shall be kept permanently on file by the Bishop and remain a part of the permanent diocesan record.

## **Sec. 6. Ordination to the Diaconate**

**(a)** A person may be ordained Deacon:

- (1) after at least eighteen months from the time of written acceptance of nomination by the Nominee as provided in III.6.2(b)., and
- (2) upon attainment of at least twenty-four years of age.

**(b)** The Bishop shall obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee:

- (1) an application from the Candidate requesting ordination as a Deacon under this Canon.
- (2) a letter of support from the Candidate's congregation or other community of faith, signed and dated by at least two-thirds of the Vestry and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight.
- (3) written evidence of admission of the Candidate to Postulancy and Candidacy, giving the dates of admission.
- (4) a certificate from the seminary or other program of preparation showing the Candidate's scholastic record in subjects required by the Canons, and giving an evaluation with recommendation as to the Candidate's other personal qualifications for ordination together with a recommendation regarding ordination to the Diaconate under this Canon.
- (5) a certificate from the Commission giving a recommendation regarding ordination to the Diaconate under this Canon.

(c) On the receipt of such certificates, the Standing Committee, if a majority of all members consent, shall certify that the Canonical requirements for ordination to the Diaconate under this Canon have been met, that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination. The Standing Committee shall evidence such certification, by a testimonial, addressed to the Bishop in the form specified below and signed by the consenting members of the Standing Committee.

**To the Right Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, Bishop of \_\_\_\_\_ We, the Standing Committee of \_\_\_\_\_, having been duly convened at \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, do testify that A.B., desiring to be ordained to the Diaconate under Canon III.6 has presented to us the certificates as required by the Canons indicating A.B.'s preparedness for ordination to the Diaconate under Canon III.6; and we certify that all canonical requirements for ordination to the Diaconate under Canon III.6 have been met; and we find no sufficient objection to ordination. Therefore, we recommend A.B. for ordination. In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, in the year of our Lord \_\_\_\_\_.**  
**(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_**

(d) The testimonial having been presented to the Bishop, and there being no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate to the Diaconate under this Canon; and at the time of ordination the Candidate shall subscribe publicly and make, in the presence of the Bishop, the declaration required in Article VIII of the Constitution.

## **Canon 7: Of the Life and Work of Deacons**

**Sec. 1.** Deacons serve directly under the authority of and are accountable to the Bishop, or in the absence of the Bishop, the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese.

**Sec. 2.** Deacons canonically resident in each Diocese constitute a Community of Deacons, which shall meet from time to time. The Bishop may appoint one or more of such Deacons as Archdeacon(s) to assist the Bishop in the formation, deployment, supervision, and support of the Deacons or those in preparation to be Deacons, and in the implementation of this Canon.

**Sec. 3.** The Bishop may establish a Council on Deacons to oversee, study, and promote the Diaconate.

**Sec. 4.** The Bishop, after consultation with the Deacon and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, may assign a Deacon to one or more congregations, other communities of faith or non-parochial ministries. Deacons assigned to a congregation or other community of faith act under the authority of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight in all matters concerning the congregation.

**a)** Subject to the Bishop's approval, Deacons may have a letter of agreement setting forth mutual responsibilities in the assignment, and, if such a letter exists, it is subject to renegotiation with the Vestry/ Bishop's Committee after the resignation of the Rector or the Priest-in-Charge.

**(b)** Deacons shall report annually to the Bishop or the Bishop's designee on their life and work.

**(c)** Deacons may serve as administrators of congregations or other communities of faith, but no Deacon shall be in charge of a congregation or other community of faith.

**(d)** Deacons may accept chaplaincies in any hospital, prison, or other institution.

**(e)** Deacons may participate in the governance of the Church.

**(f)** For two years following ordination, new Deacons shall continue a process of formation authorized by the Bishop.

**(g)** The Bishop or the Bishop's designee, in consultation with the Commission, shall assign each newly ordained Deacon a mentor Deacon where a suitable mentor Deacon is available. The mentor and Deacon shall meet regularly for at least one year to provide guidance, information, and a sustained dialogue about diaconal ministry.

**Sec. 5.** The Bishop and Commission shall require and provide for the continuing education of Deacons and keep a record of such education.

**Sec. 6 (a)** A Deacon may not serve as Deacon for more than two months in any Diocese other than the Diocese in which the Deacon

is canonically resident unless the Bishop of the other Diocese shall have granted a license to the Deacon to serve in that Diocese.

(b)

- (1) A Deacon desiring to become canonically resident within a Diocese shall request a testimonial from the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which the Deacon is canonically resident to present to the receiving Diocese, testimonial, if granted, shall be given by the Ecclesiastical Authority to the applicant, and a duplicate thereof may be sent to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese to which transfer is proposed. The testimonial shall be in the following words:

**I hereby certify that A.B., who has signified to me the desire to be transferred to the Ecclesiastical Authority of \_\_\_\_\_, is a Deacon of \_\_\_\_\_ in good standing, and has not, so far as I know or believe, been justly liable to evil report for error in religion or for viciousness of life, for the last three years.**

**(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_**

- (2) Such testimonial shall be called Letters Dimissory. If the Ecclesiastical Authority accepts the Letters Dimissory, the canonical residence of the Deacon so transferred shall date from the acceptance of the Letters Dimissory, of which prompt notice shall be given both to the applicant and to the Ecclesiastical Authority from which it came.
- (3) Letters Dimissory not presented within six months from the date of transmission to the applicant shall become void.
- (4) A statement of the record of payments to The Church Pension Fund by or on behalf of the Deacon concerned shall accompany Letters Dimissory.

**Sec. 7.** On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months, and this term may be renewed.

**Sec. 8.** Release and Removal from the Ordained Ministry of this Church

If any Deacon of The Episcopal Church shall express, in writing, to the Bishop of the Diocese in which such Deacon is canonically resident, an intention to be released and removed from the ordained Ministry of this Church and from the obligations attendant thereto, including those promises made at Ordination in the Declaration required by Article VIII of the Constitution of the General Convention, it shall be the duty of the Bishop to record the matter.

The Bishop, being satisfied that the person so declaring is acting voluntarily and for causes which do not affect the person's moral character, and is neither the subject of information concerning an Offense that has been referred to an Intake Officer nor a Respondent in a pending disciplinary matter as defined in Title IV of these Canons, shall lay the matter before the Standing Committee, and with the advice and consent of a majority of the Standing Committee the Bishop may pronounce that the person is released and removed from the ordained Ministry of this Church and from the obligations attendant thereto, and is deprived of the right to exercise in The Episcopal Church the gifts and spiritual authority as a Minister of God's Word and Sacraments conferred in Ordination. The Bishop shall also declare in pronouncing and recording such action that it was for causes which do not affect the person's moral character, and shall, at the person's request, give a certificate to this effect to the person so released and removed from the ordained Ministry.

**Sec. 9.** If a Deacon submitting the writing described in Section 8 of this Canon be the subject of information concerning an Offense that has been referred to an Intake Officer or a Respondent in a pending disciplinary matter as defined in Title IV of these Canons, the Ecclesiastical Authority to whom such writing is submitted shall not consider or act upon the written request unless and until the disciplinary matter shall have been resolved by a dismissal, Accord, or Order and the time for appeal or rescission of such has expired.

**Sec. 10.** In the case of the release and removal of a Deacon from the ordained Ministry of this Church as provided in this Canon, a declaration of release and removal shall be pronounced by the Bishop in the presence of two or more Members of the Clergy, and shall be entered in the official records of the Diocese in which the Deacon being released and removed is canonically resident. The Bishop who pronounces the declaration of release and removal as provided in this Canon shall give notice thereof in writing to every Member of the Clergy, each Vestry, the Secretary of the Convention and the Standing Committee of the Diocese in which the Deacon was canonically resident; and to all Bishops of this Church, the Ecclesiastical Authority of each Diocese of this Church, the Presiding Bishop, the Recorder of Ordinations, the Secretary of the House of Bishops, the Secretary of the House of Deputies, The Church Pension Fund, and the Board for Transition Ministry.

## Appendix B

### Basic Expectations of Candidates Seeking Ordination to the Diaconate

#### Holy Scriptures: Old Testament

- A knowledge of the general historical outline of the Old Testament, and the ability to put Old Testament history in a theological context
- A familiarity with the basic narratives
- A clear understanding of such basic Old Testament theological terms as *covenant*, *sacrifice*, and *people of God*
- A familiarity with the prophetic tradition and how it relates to the work and ministry of a deacon

#### Holy Scriptures: New Testament

- A knowledge of the basic outline of the life of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels, with special emphasis on the Passion and Resurrection narratives
- An awareness of the unique perspective of each of the four Gospel writers
- An understanding of the parable as a basic teaching tool
- A knowledge of the basic outline of the book of Acts
- Familiarity with the New Testament development of the office of deacon
- The ability to discuss different New Testament perspectives on the relationship between church and the world

#### Church History

- A knowledge of church history before, during, and after the Reformation.
- The ability to discuss what it means to be a Catholic and Reformed church
- A basic knowledge of the Episcopal Church and of the history of the Diocese of Tennessee
- The ability to discuss the development of the office of deacon throughout church history

#### Theology

- A clear understanding of the meaning of the word “theology”
- The ability to articulate how the candidates hears and responds to the word of God in his or her own life
- The ability to define such basic terms as *providence*, *faith*, *justification*, *salvation*, *sacrament/sacramental*, *grace*, *sin*
- Familiarity with the basic terms of the baptismal covenant
- Familiarity with “An Outline of Faith commonly called the Catechism” in the Book of Common Prayer

#### Christian Ethics and Moral Theology

- The ability to articulate the moral vision of the Episcopal Church
- The ability to express what it means to be a “servant leader”
- The ability, when presented with a case study of a human situation, to bring to bear the resources of scripture, tradition, and reason in fashioning a Christian ethical response

#### Studies in Contemporary Society

- A familiarity with the history of the Diocese of Tennessee

- A familiarity with how the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Tennessee have dealt and are dealing with racial and ethnic minorities, and the ability to critique both our past and present practice
- The ability to clearly define racism, and to articulate how racism has affected the candidates' own life
- The ability to respond to case studies in ways that show a clear understanding of what it means to be a servant in the modern world

#### Liturgies

- A general familiarity with the contents of the Book of Common Prayer
- Familiarity with role of the deacon in liturgy and how it relates to the wider ministry of the diaconate
- The ability to plan and lead Daily Offices

#### Theory and Practice of Ministry

- Knowledge of the lines of authority in which the deacon exercises his or her ministry, both in the parish and in the diocese
- An awareness of appropriate and inappropriate relationships in the parish setting, and a proper sense of boundaries
- The ability to discuss proper ways of managing conflict within a parochial staff situation
- Know of the current policy and procedures for dealing with accusations of sexual misbehavior

**Appendix C  
Sample Letter of Agreement**

Deacon \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Rt. Rev. John C. Bauerschmidt, Bishop of the Diocese of Tennessee, agrees that the exercise of the diaconate by \_\_\_\_\_ shall be subject to the terms set forth in the Customary for the Diaconate as reviewed by the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee, and as amplified by the additional provisions of this Letter of Agreement.

**I. Deployment**

a. The bishop assigns the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, Deacon, to serve in \_\_\_\_\_ Church, \_\_\_\_\_, Tennessee, where he/she shall function as a part-time, non-stipendiary deacon. This assignment is to be reviewed annually by the rector and bishop, and a new agreement signed when necessary.

b. Deacon \_\_\_\_\_ shall serve with the Rev \_\_\_\_\_, rector of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, (hereafter referred to as presbyter) who will act as immediate supervisor.

**II. Ministry Guidelines**

- a. All parties to this agreement understand that the deacon’s secular employment takes precedence over community involvement and church activities.
- b. The deacon generally expects to serve the church a maximum of 10 hours per week, with an overall goal of a maximum of 30 hours per month.
- c. The deacon should receive financial assistance for the cost of continuing education, the diocesan meetings, and travel required for fulfillment of diaconal responsibilities. A continuing education allowance of up to \$\_\_\_\_\_ per year, to be reviewed annually, will be paid to or on behalf of the deacon toward expenses incurred in relation to continuing education. An expense allowance of up to \$\_\_\_\_\_ per year will be paid to or on behalf of the deacon for diocesan meetings. Travel reimbursement will be paid at the rate of \$.\_\_\_\_\_ per mile, to be reviewed annually against actual cost, as well as out of pocket costs for parking fees, tolls, bus fares, etc.<sup>1</sup>
- d. The deacon should have access to a discretionary fund, established by the parish for such purposes.

**III. The Deacon shall Serve in the World as Follows:**

- a. Encourage the Church’s participation in all opportunities for ministry in the world, especially in this country.
- b. Make Christ and his redemptive love known by word and example to the people of the world through:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**IV. The Deacon shall Serve the Congregation through Pastoral Ministry, Particularly to:**

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Internal Revenue Service does not allow travel reimbursement for commuting from home to work.

**V. The Deacon Shall Serve Liturgically as Follows:**

- a. Perform the full and proper liturgical role of a deacon at Eucharist on Sunday, and at the liturgies of Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and other congregational worship services as requested by the rector.
- b. Assist at other liturgies, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and in the inter-parochial or diocesan liturgies when called upon to do so by the rector or the bishop.
- c. Compose and preach liturgical homilies, with the understanding that the presbyter is the ordinary preacher of the parish.

**VI. Leave**

The deacon should take the following periods of leave: national holidays, to be taken so as not to interfere with worship for major occasions; one month annual vacation, consisting of twenty-four workdays (workdays being Monday through Saturday) and five Sundays; (no more than \_\_\_\_\_ days and one Sunday may be carried forward to succeeding years); Professional Development Leave, at the rate of two weeks per year; two weeks per year of service in this parish/mission for sabbatical leave, to be available after the sixth year.

**VII. If Problems Arise that Affect the Welfare and Unity of the Parish:**

The deacon shall consult with the presbyter and shall follow his/her counsel and advice. In case of a disagreement, the deacon, with the knowledge of the presbyter, shall inform the bishop in writing, with a copy to the presbyter. The bishop shall accept the responsibility for resolution. The quality of the priest's supervision and the adequacy of inter-personal communication shall be considered in working towards resolution.

**VIII. Annual Report**

The deacon shall submit to the bishop an annual report of all ministry and continuing education performed in the previous year, with a copy to the supervising priest who shall provide an evaluation of the deacon's contributions to the life of the congregation. The major emphasis of this report shall not be liturgical, but shall be the development of lay ministries in the world under the leadership of the deacon.

**IX. This Agreement Terminates:**

- a. At the discretion of the bishop and/or presbyter
- b. If and when the deacon moves to another community, which would require over a 45 mile drive in one direction on a regular basis to perform assigned duties
- c. When the supervising presbyter resigns from the parish
- d. After \_\_\_\_\_ years; after evaluation, then may be renewed after any necessary changes
- e. If deacon is reassigned to a new parish; a new agreement should be in place after ninety (90) days
- f. At age 72, following the guidelines of the Customary for Deacons

**X. Written Consent**

In order for the deacon to function at this parish, the written consent of the presbyter is required on this Agreement. This Letter of Agreement shall be made part of the minutes of the next Vestry meeting following its signing by the presbyter, the Senior Warden, the deacon, and the Bishop of Tennessee. One copy shall be given to the deacon, one copy shall remain on file in the parish, and one copy shall be on file in the diocesan office. Copies shall be given to each new Vestry member.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Deacon: \_\_\_\_\_

Bishop: \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ Church in \_\_\_\_\_, Tennessee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Warden  
I consent to the above agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presbyter  
I consent to the above agreement.

## Appendix D

### Mutual Ministry Review

There is no single way to do a Mutual Ministry Review. This overview is provided as a guide.

#### **What is Mutual Ministry Review, and why should our parish do it?**

Mutual Ministry Review is a way for every parish to ask, "How are we doing?" It is a time to celebrate what has been done well and to understand what might be done better. As Christian people we must always ask: "What is God calling us to do and to accomplish here in this place?" And then, "How can we best practice this ministry?"

#### **Ministry is the work of the whole people of God, not just of the ordained clergy.**

Therefore, Mutual Ministry Review is meant to help the entire parish better accomplish God's mission. What is being reviewed is the ministry of laity and clergy working together in the daily life of the community for the glory of God. Mutual Ministry Review is intended to nurture environments where responsibilities are discussed and reviewed regularly and comfortably. As a result, communities and individuals will understand what is expected of them. Roles will be clarified, and time and energy centered on what is important for the building up of the Body of Christ. Participants are encouraged to remember that the intent of the Mutual Ministry Review is to improve effective ministry. The focus will be on means of improvement rather than on reasons why something was not done. Within the pastoral context of the review process, the emphasis is on celebrating the successes and resolving the challenges. This is sound, healthy stewardship.

### PLANNING A MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

#### **Deciding where and when to begin**

Many believe that the most critical influence on congregational health and vitality is the Vestry/Rector relationship, and that is where Mutual Ministry Review usually begins. Mutual Ministry Reviews work best when they are part of a regularly scheduled process of clarifying expectations, responsibilities, and effectiveness. When discussion and feedback are expected as a normal part of life together, the anxiety about such a process is greatly reduced. At all times, prayer and support for everyone involved in the Review is integral to the process. Avoiding defensiveness, encouraging participation, and setting clear goals for turning challenges into successes are key factors. Comprehensive reviews are not helpful when major conflicts are present. Using evaluation as a weapon is never acceptable. When regular assessments are a part of a congregation's and rector's life together, strengths and challenges can be identified early and easily. The time to begin a review process is NOT when the relationship is already in trouble. If major tension has developed, conflict resolution or problem solving is called for, not ministry review.

#### **Identifying what you want to achieve**

A successful Mutual Ministry Review helps the rector, deacon, and vestry feel affirmed, supported, and encouraged in their ministry, and valued as individuals whose efforts and accomplishments are recognized and appreciated. Both personal and organizational problems need to be tactfully but clearly identified and mutually explored to find ways to alleviate the problems. The rector, deacon, and vestry should exchange ideas on priorities for continuing personal growth and development in the rector's skills, the vestry's effectiveness, and their mutual effectiveness as a vestry/rector team. A

successful review will leave all parties uplifted and energized by a sense of God's presence and action in the process.

## **MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW GUIDE (OPTION #1)**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To celebrate what is going well and to identify what needs attention/change
- To give clear and reliable feedback, speaking the truth in love
- To identify lay and priestly leadership development needs
- To minimize unrealistic expectations
- To renew/establish goals and priorities for the next period of time
- To deepen rector/vestry relationship and enhance communication for the building up of the Body

Goals/priorities should be:

Limited in number

Specific

Measurable, as much as possible (how will we know we've been successful?)

Achievable, within the time frame

### **STANDARD QUESTIONS**

1. How did we live out/put into action our Mission Statement (the Gospel) this year?
2. What was a highlight of our ministry this past year – with one another? In the world? Or, what was the most positive activity in our parish during the past year? Who was responsible for making it happen?
3. Whom do we want to thank?
4. What now needs the attention of the rector/vestry? What would we like to change?
5. What task/goal is most important for the coming year?

### **OTHER QUESTIONS**

1. How would we describe the quality of our parish community life this past year?
2. Last year, we set \_\_\_\_\_ as a goal. How did we do?
3. What disappointed us about our ministry/mission this past year? Or, what is our greatest weakness? What is our greatest need?
4. How do we feel about our liturgy and worship life?
5. What attracts newcomers? What keeps them/turns them away?
6. How visible and available is the vestry to members of the congregation?
7. What do we believe God is calling us to do in the next \_\_\_\_ years?
8. How do we feel the vestry functioned/lived up to its commitments this year? The rector? The deacon?
9. What did we learn this year? How did we grow?
10. How are the needs of our community “heard” at this congregation?

## **Mutual Ministry Review Guide (Option #2)**

**OBJECTIVE**

By the end of our time together we will have addressed three separate questions, each designed to enable us to focus more broadly on the nature of our collaborative ministries to our congregation. We are trying to understand three areas of interest for us all:

1. What are the areas in which you see \_\_\_\_\_ Church working well and, indeed, even excelling in its ministry both within and outside the parish? In other words, what are we doing well?
2. What are some of the areas in which you feel we need improvement? What needs attention and who might be giving it?
3. What might be our best “dreams” for the future of this parish?

**PROCEDURE**

Take a few moments to think about these areas and consider what your thoughts might be in each of the three. Using this form, jot down your thoughts. When you are ready, please make your entry on the provided newsprint. You may find that others have already mentioned what you had in mind. At that point you might want to move on to your next idea.

Next, the entire group circulates among the newsprint and places “dots” next to the items that strike you as important. Place only one of your dots next to each item that you believe has importance. After everyone has had time to write their comments on the newsprint and to place dots on those items that were important to them, the rest of the time is taken up with discussion. The MMR is less of a time for planning action steps and more of a time to get ideas out that will, no doubt, be enacted later.

Question #1 – What are the areas of our ministry together at \_\_\_\_\_ Church that I feel are going well and are successful?

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Question #2 – What are the areas of our life together at \_\_\_\_\_ Church that I feel need attention or improvement?

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Question #3 – What are my “dreams” for the future of \_\_\_\_\_ Church?

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