

Appendix D8

Training and Formation for Diaconal Ministry

This appendix comes into play for applicants who have completed the parish discernment process and been recommended to continue to the next phase of the diocesan discernment process (normally, designation as a postulant and attendance at a diocesan discernment conference.) It is primarily for the use of the applicant or postulant, their academic advisors, as well as supervising clergy, in preparing for ordained ministry as a deacon. The work of the parish discernment group will provide information to the director of deacons that will shape a postulant’s learning plan. In this regard, the group may find it interesting or helpful to familiarize themselves with the contents of Appendix D8.

This diocese aligns itself with the “Iona Report on the Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada” (2016), which embodies the following governing principles:

A Distinction between Training and Formation

Training refers primarily to the honing of practical skills. Formation, by contrast, refers to the shaping of a diaconal identity within the inquirer. We are interested not only in what a deacon does, but in who a deacon is, and in that person’s motivation.

Competencies

Historically, the Church has measured preparedness for ministry by assessing a candidate’s intellectual grasp of a topic under review, for instance through the writing of essays or exams. There is, however, a difference between achieving a B+ in a course on the parables of Jesus, and demonstrating that one can assist a study group to imagine how a particular parable applies to their local situation. In a competency model, we are looking for evidence that learners can incorporate “book learning” into their preaching, spiritual life, teaching, and leadership.

Lifelong Learning

Learning and the development of competence is a lifelong affair, and we expect all deacons to engage in ongoing continuing education, especially in areas of particular relevance to their ministry, or which will strengthen gifts and address weaknesses. The Iona Report therefore distinguishes between degrees of competence that might be expected of a deacon early in their process of vocational discernment, from what might be expected at the time of ordination, or again, after several years’ experience.

The Iona Competencies

The Iona Report sets out seven general areas of competence, each subdivided into several specific competencies. Further examples (not included here)¹ are given for each of these more specific competencies, as they might be demonstrated (1) by a new inquirer; (2) by an ordinand; and (3) by a seasoned lifelong learner. It is important to read these examples as illuminative rather than prescriptive. The context of each deacon will determine what each competency requires. The general areas of competence and their specific competencies are as follows:

General Area of Competence	Specific Competencies
Area A	1. Shows understanding of the biblical concept of diakonia and its

¹ For more granular detail, or to download a pdf of the Iona competencies, go to www.anglican.ca/diaconate.

Diakonia and the Diaconate	relationship to the diaconate. Is able to... 2. Identifies and articulates a personal role and identity in diaconal ministry. Is able to...
Area B Human Awareness & Understanding	1. Is growing in self-awareness, with a view to becoming fully present to others in one's ministry, relationships, and interactions. Is able to... 2. Is building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Is able to... 3. Is building and fostering healthy community life in a variety of contexts. Is able to... 4. Is becoming accepting of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Is able to... 5. Is learning to respond appropriately to conflict. Is able to... 6. Is learning to exercise ministry and leadership in collaboration with others. Is able to...
Area C Spirituality and Spiritual Practice	1. Gives evidence of practicing a prayer life, both in community and in solitude. Is able to... 2. Knows that the spiritual life is in continual development, and that healthy development requires attentiveness. Is able to... 3. Shows a vocational tendency toward the spirituality of a deacon. Is able to...
Area D Practical Training and Experience	1. Demonstrates a diaconal "servant" heart, and gifts for ministry. Is able to... 2. Demonstrates a knowledge of the local community. Is able to... 3. Interprets the "needs, concerns and hopes of the world" to the gathered church. Is able to... 4. Demonstrates a knowledge of, and eagerness to learn more about, contemporary issues. Is able to... 5. Capably performs all diaconal liturgical functions. Is able to...
Area E Church Polity and Diaconal Ministry in the Public Square	1. Demonstrates knowledge of the scope and structures of the church. Is able to... 2. Demonstrates ability to work within the structures of the church. Is able to... 3. Works within agreed procedures, vision, and priorities of the church. Is able to... 4. Demonstrates interpretive skills relating to "church world" interactions. Is able to...
Area F Scripture	1. Demonstrates an awareness of the sweep of the biblical narrative, its content and themes. Is able to... 2. Is learning about the context in which scripture was written. Is able to... 3. Is growing in ability to exegete and interpret scripture. Is able to... 4. Demonstrates an awareness of the authority of scripture in the Anglican tradition. Is able to... 5. Is learning to identify major biblical themes, especially those foundational to diaconal ministry. Is able to...

In addition, this diocese seeks growing competence in the basics of Christian theology, and in the work of advocacy, community development and change management.

Designing and Completing a Learning Plan

The completion of a learning plan takes place once an applicant has completed the parish discernment process, and been recommended to the bishop for postulancy. In some circumstances, applicants may be encouraged by the director of deacons to enrol in an introductory course on the ministry of deacons.

Upon designation as a postulant, and with a view to developing the necessary competencies, each postulant will work with the diocesan director of deacons to devise a program of learning appropriate to their own circumstances and relevant education and experience. This work includes (1) study; (2) practice; (3) engagement with ordained deacons; and (4) attention to prayer and spiritual growth.

1. Programs of Study and Learning

- Normally, candidates for the diaconate will complete their learning programs on a part-time basis, and via distance-learning. It is not required that deacons complete a degree in theology, and diaconal candidates holding an MDiv, or other theological certificate or diploma, may be asked to complete further modules of study.
- Normally candidates will hold a baccalaureate degree at a minimum, and prior to entering the discernment process, have appropriate qualifications to perform the diaconal ministry in which they are currently engaged.
- Candidates may pursue an institutional offering in its entirety, or may pick and choose relevant courses across a variety of programs. The director of deacons has a list of recommended programs and courses, although candidates may propose other means of fulfilling competency requirements.
- Please note that programs of study must be approved by the director of deacons in order to be credited towards readiness for ordination, and to be eligible for funding assistance.

2. Supervised Internship

Candidates will be expected to complete a supervised field placement of at least 3 months' duration as part of their formation. Such placements are already incorporated into many educational programs. If necessary, the director of deacons will assist in arranging a placement.

3. Diocesan Chapter of Deacons

The diocesan "Chapter of Deacons" is formally associated with Christ Church Cathedral, as the seat of the bishop. Applicants may be encouraged to participate in Chapter meetings as part of their ongoing diaconal formation. Postulants are expected to participate.

4. Spiritual Direction

Those in formation are expected to be working with a spiritual director of their choice. The bishop's office has a list of trustworthy individuals currently engaged in this ministry, and the director of deacons can assist in selecting someone who will be a good fit. Spiritual directors are meant to be a safe confidant (and sometimes, confessor) for the candidate. They are thus precluded from a reporting, or intervening, role in the discernment process.

Those in formation will meet at least annually with the director of deacons to review their progress and revise their training and formation plan as necessary.