



The EPISCOPAL DIOCESE of ATLANTA
Serving Middle and North Georgia

GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

June 1, 2013

The first work of the permanent diaconate according to the Prayer Book is to help the church in great detail, through firsthand knowledge, know the state and condition of our most vulnerable neighbors that the church might be better able to offer a Christian response. In this role deacons become a living icon of Christ the Servant within the church.

1. The deacon is directly accountable to the bishop and is at all times subject to the pastoral direction and supervision of the bishop.
2. **A deacon's principal ministry is in the world**, and deacons are expected to have a significant ministry to the poor and marginalized outside of the parish.
3. The servant ministry of the deacon will be assigned by the bishop and may be carried out on behalf of either the local congregation or the diocese.
4. Deacons are not to serve in parishes in this diocese without the expressed written consent of the bishop.
5. Resigned deacons may not serve in parishes of this diocese unless the bishop assigns them to a term not to exceed 12 months in accordance with the Canons.

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. (The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church Title III, Canon 7.6)

6. The deacon will be assigned to a parish chosen by the bishop with the agreement of the rector.

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. (The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church Title III, Canon 7.4)
7. It is understood that a deacon's assignment to a parish is not permanent. The diocesan norm will be 3-year assignments. Parish assignments may be less than 3 years and may also be extended for good cause, and the circumstances should be brought to the bishop's attention before the expiration of the original 3-year assignment. The season of reassignment will normally be in the summer of each year in anticipation that the deacon will be in place in a new assignment by August 1 of that year.
8. Deacons may serve as chaplains.

Deacons may accept chaplaincies in any hospital, prison or other institution. (The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church Title III, Canon 7.4d)
9. Deacons may not be in charge of a congregation:

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. (The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church Title III, Canon 7.4c)
10. When deacons are assigned to a parish, they are required to have a letter of agreement with the parish that is signed by the rector and approved by the bishop. Suggested formats are available from the archdeacons. The letter of agreement should include provisions for reimbursement of expenses.
11. Deacons in the Diocese of Atlanta are non-stipendiary. However, it is expected that a deacon's parish ministry will not place a financial burden on the deacon.
 - a. Expenses related to the use of a deacon's personal vehicle for parish business should be reimbursed at the level established by the diocese for clergy; this level varies depending on IRS allowances. See diocesan website (Parish Support > Administration & Finance) for the current rate.
 - b. Expenses related to retreats and meetings where the deacon's presence is required by the rector should be fully reimbursed.
 - c. Each parish should contribute to the deacon's continuing education expenses. The suggested contribution is \$1,000 per year.

12. At the discretion of the rector or vicar, a deacon may have seat and voice at meetings of the parish vestry.
13. Since the deacon's ministry is always discretionary, a formal rite for the celebration of new ministry is not appropriate; however, some liturgical recognition of the beginning and ending of a deacon's work in the life of a congregation is important. A copy of a suggested liturgy is available from the archdeacons or the diocesan office.
14. **Active deacons are required to participate in the semi-annual Deacons' Conferences.** Resigned deacons are invited to attend the conferences. It is the deacon's responsibility to contact the bishop to discuss any reasons that would preclude attendance.
15. Deacons are invited and encouraged to attend regional clericus meetings as their work schedules permit.
16. Deacons are invited and encouraged to attend Annual Diocesan Council.
17. Street clothing is considered normative for deacons. Deacons may wear clerical attire in appropriate ecclesial, clinical and pastoral settings.
18. "Deacon" is the proper title for deacons in the Diocese of Atlanta. In the Diocese of Atlanta, the appellation "The Reverend" is reserved for transitional deacons and priests.
19. Deacons shall submit an annual report to the bishop in the suggested format. Included in this report is a section for the reporting of annual continuing education hours.
20. All deacons are required to have 20 contact hours of continuing education annually in accordance with diocesan policy. The CE programs will vary according to need. If a specific program has not been approved for this requirement in advance, deacons will need to check with the archdeacons to determine if a program qualifies.
21. Presbyters are ordained to "preach the Gospel" (BCP 534), whereas deacons are ordained to "proclaim God's word" (BCP 545). In most cases it is inappropriate for a deacon to be included on a frequent basis in a parish preaching rota. A general guideline would be no more than 6 times per year. If the deacon has a charism of preaching that is life-giving to a parish and exemplifies the vocation of a deacon, the rector and deacon may petition the bishop for permission to allow the deacon to preach with greater frequency.

22. **If a deacon has a charism for pastoral care, it should normally be exercised among the poor and marginalized in the community.** Deacons normally are not assigned pastoral roles within the parish because that would impede their ministry in the world. If there is an unusual or overwhelming need for a deacon's pastoral ministry within the parish, the deacon and rector should consult with the bishop before the deacon undertakes this work.
23. There are a number of liturgical norms for deacons. Deacons will wear proper vestments and symbols of their office when performing liturgical functions. Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer assign certain duties to deacons. It is expected that deacons will be allowed to function in all of the rubrical roles:
- a. At the Great Vigil, carry the Paschal candle and chant the Exultet (the deacon's prerogative, BCP 284)
 - b. Read the Gospel at celebrations of The Holy Eucharist (BCP 354)
 - c. Prepare the table and place on it the gifts of bread and wine (BCP 354)
 - d. Make ready the Table for the celebration preparing and placing upon it the bread and cup of wine (BCP 407)
 - e. At the celebration of a marriage; deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, and read the Gospel (BCP 422)
 - f. Water portion of Holy Baptism is a local-parish option (BCP 307)
 - g. Rubrical preference for the deacon to call the people to confession (BCP 360)
24. The Constitution and Canons of the Church make provision for deacons to preside at certain liturgies in the absence of a bishop or priest. The rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer make clear that **these functions of presidency can be done only with the permission of the bishop. In the Diocese of Atlanta, the written permission of the bishop is required.**
- a. Celebration of Holy Eucharist and Distribution of Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (BCP 408)
 - b. Marriages (BCP 422)
 - c. The Burial of the Dead (BCP 490)

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