
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ATLANTA GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

August 24, 2022

The first work of the diaconate is to help the church know the state and condition of our most vulnerable neighbors. 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. Deacons *may* provide pastoral care. It is normally to be exercised with the poor and marginalized in the community in keeping with the description of a deacon's work in the BCP as among "...the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely."
4. Deacons are not to serve in parishes in this diocese without the 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 twelve 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 7.7)

6. The deacon will be assigned to a parish, mission, or worshipping community chosen by the bishop in consultation with the archdeacons with the agreement of the presbyter-in-charge.

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. Assignments may be less than 3 years and may also be extended for good cause. The circumstances requiring the extension, however, should be brought to the bishop's attention by the presbyter-in-charge before the expiration of the original 3 year assignment.

8. Deacons may serve as chaplains in consultation with the archdeacons and with permission of the bishop.

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. Once deacons are assigned, they are required to have a letter of agreement with the parish that is signed by the senior warden and presbyter-in-charge, and approved by the bishop. Suggested formats are available from the archdeacons. The letter of agreement should include provisions for reimbursement of expenses.

11. It is expected that a deacon's parish ministry will not place a financial burden on the deacon.

- a. Each parish should contribute to the deacon's continuing education expenses. The minimum suggested contribution is \$1,200 per year but exceptions may be made.
- b. Expenses related to retreats and meetings where the deacon's presence is required should be fully reimbursed.
- c. 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.

12. A deacon may have seat and voice at meetings of the parish vestry.

13. Active deacons are required to participate in Deacon Retreats and encouraged to attend Clergy Conferences. It is the deacon's responsibility to contact the archdeacons to discuss any reasons that would preclude their attendance. Resigned deacons are welcome to attend the conferences and retreats.

14. Deacons are invited and encouraged to attend convocational clericus meetings as their schedules permit.

15. Deacons are invited and encouraged to attend Annual Council. Active deacons have seat, voice, and vote at Council. If a deacon is unsure of their status, they should contact an archdeacon for clarification.

16. Deacons shall submit an annual report to the archdeacons which is subject to review by the bishop. Included in this report is a section for the reporting of annual continuing education hours.
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17. All deacons are required to have 20 contact hours of continuing education annually in accordance with diocesan policy. 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.

18. Deacons may be on the preaching rota and may be a guest preacher at other communities while compensated at the current diocesan rate.

19. While deacons may preside at pastoral offices (as provided in the Canons), they are normally reserved to the presbyters or bishops of the Church. Deacons may anoint the sick but cannot bless or consecrate.

20. Deacons are responsible for the training and oversight of Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors. Deacons may prepare a procedure to be used for training purposes. Archdeacons can provide resources if needed.

A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A Eucharistic Visitor is a lay person authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

(The Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church Title III, Canon 4.6-7)