



Episcopal Diocese

— OF CENTRAL FLORIDA —

A Customary for The Sacred Order of Deacons

Updated 04/28/2022

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The Diocese of Central Florida gratefully acknowledges the adaptation and use of material previously developed by our sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Atlanta, The Diocese of Western New York, The Diocese of Maine, The Diocese of Kansas and the Association for Episcopal Deacons. The Diocese also acknowledges and appreciates the work of the Special Task Force (2020-2021) for their revision of this Customary.

**A Customary for
The Sacred Order of Deacons
The Episcopal Diocese
Central Florida**

Updated 4/28/2021

“My *brother or sister*, every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ, serving God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.

As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.”

Examination of a Deacon, Book of Common Prayer, Page 543

“You are called on behalf of the church and in the name of Jesus, to engage in what can only be described as frontline ministry. In contrast to priests, whose anchors are pulpit and altar - both pieces of furniture inside a church building - the ordination service for deacons mentions neither of these things.

Instead, the ordination service for deacons provides a job description that is almost entirely a ministry outside the four walls of a church building. It doesn't give you furniture at all. In fact, furniture would be antithetical to a ministry on the street, in the office, at the local coffee shop, in a hospital, working among the neediest of our culture and society. You need different equipment.

What you need is a helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit, breastplate of righteousness, to be able to live and be at home, and this is important, to be at home outside the margins of insider church life. It's okay that we have an insider church life. I'm not decrying it. It's inevitable, in fact. (But) in some ways your gift to the church is the fact that you pay attention to the world.”

Bishop Gregory O. Brewer
From his sermon preached on September 7, 2019
The Cathedral Church of St. Luke
Orlando, Florida

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.”

~ Association for Episcopal Deacons

The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Catechism

Book of Common Prayer page 856

The understanding of diaconal ministry set forth herein is grounded in four primary sources

- the Holy Scriptures
- The Book of Common Prayer (1979; hereafter “BCP”)
- the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church
- the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida.

Each of these sources bears witness to diaconal ministry as service, in the Church and in the world. As servant ministers, Deacons (and those who aspire to ordination to the Diaconate) strive to exemplify a spirit of service to others, and a dedication to helping others enter into the ministry of Christian service. Ordination to the diaconate is not done to recognize or validate existing ministries. Rather, it is a means of forming ministers of the Gospel called to model the servant ministry of Christ to all the baptized. Deacons are not ordained to do outreach ministry on behalf of the Church but to model servant ministry and to lead all members of the Church into servant ministry.

Deacons also help interpret the needs and concerns of the world to the Church. Deacons have a visible ministry to the dispossessed, advocate that ministry, and strengthen servant ministry in the Diocese. The word deacon derives from the Greek word *Diakonos* meaning servant or minister. The biblical concept of *diakonia* is service; particularly to the poor, sick and oppressed. A deacon’s service is a sign or sacrament of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve. Jesus is the model for servant leadership. A deacon is called to “have one foot in the world and one foot in the church”. A deacon’s ministry and service are grounded in worship at the Table. From there, their ministry flows into the community. Deacons serve in specific roles in the liturgy; however, their liturgical roles are symbolic of their real ministry in the world. They base that ministry as offering back into the worship at the Table.

The Relationship of the Deacon and the Bishop

The Bishop of the Diocese is the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in charge of all spiritual affairs. Pursuant to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida, all Deacons serve directly under the authority of and at the pleasure of the Bishop.

The Bishop or the Archdeacon, under the direction of the Bishop, designates whether a deacon shall serve as a parochial deacon or a non-parochial diocesan deacon.

Parochial deacons are charged with serving a particular parish or mission. According to Canon XVI, Section 7, Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida, parochial deacons also work under the charge and direction of a Priest in all such ministrations, and work collaboratively with the leadership of the Parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge.

Non-parochial diocesan deacons are charged with actualizing and developing diocesan ministries and initiatives under the guidance and oversight of the Bishop or other designated authority (i.e., Canon to the Ordinary, Canon for Vocation or Archdeacon.)

Placement Protocol

The Candidate or Deacon, in consultation with his/her clergy, is expected to prayerfully discern where he/she feels that God is calling him/her to serve. When the Candidate or Deacon feels one has heard God’s voice speaking to him/her, the Candidate or Deacon is to contact the Archdeacon. If the Bishop, having conferred with the Archdeacon and Canons support the person’s sense of call, then the person should contact the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, and ask if he/she would be amenable to the assignment. If so, the Deacon should request in writing that the Bishop make a formal assignment to that ministry, providing the Archdeacon a copy of that request. The Bishop shall either affirm or deny the placement request, taking into account not only the discernment of the Candidate or Deacon but also the broader needs of the Diocese.

Parochial Assignments

Deacons shall be assigned to congregations of the diocese by the Bishop in consultation with the Archdeacon, prospective Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, and the newly ordained deacon. Before the newly ordained deacon receives his/her placement assignment, his/her sense of God’s call to a parish, his/her gifts for ministry and experience are considered.

Parochial deacons serve a particular parish under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. Prior to the beginning of ministry, the deacon and parish shall execute a Letter of Agreement for Deacons. (See Exhibit A).

This Letter of Agreement must be approved by the Bishop, the Deacon and the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge. This letter is intended to provide clarity of role within the parish, specifically assigned duties, and the structure for an annual review by the Rector. The Letter of Agreement shall be deemed to incorporate the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida, including those which provide that all Deacons serve directly under the authority of the Bishop, and that all parochial deacons also work under the charge and direction of their Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge.

All deacons are required to submit an Annual Report (See Exhibit B) to the Archdeacon by July 1 of each calendar year. The Archdeacon shall transmit the Annual Report Request Form in the Spring

Retired Deacons serving occasionally, Non-Parochial deacons, deacons who are Canonically Resident in a Diocese other than Central Florida, and deacons 72 years of age or older are required to be re-licensed each year. The licensing year is July 1st of the current year through June 30th of the following year.

The Relationship of the Deacon to the Congregation and Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge

The deacon works as a ministry assistant under the authority of his/her Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, and the latter has full charge under the Constitution and Canons of all things affecting the spiritual interests of their Congregations, subject to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Bishop of the Diocese. The deacon meets regularly with the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, including an annual ministry review meeting. Mutual respect, professionalism and open communication should be at the center of such meetings to help maintain and nurture a healthy relationship. Should a conflict arise, the foregoing will help foster a resolution, but the relationship of the Deacon to the Congregation and Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge will at all times be subject to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida.

In accordance with Diocesan Canons, family members of the deacon are not permitted to serve on the vestry of the parish (or mission committee) in which the deacon is engaged in ministry.

The Deacon Speaking to the Parish/Mission

As a symbol of servant ministry, the deacon brings the concerns and needs of the world to the attention of the church. It is, therefore, appropriate, when invited by the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, for the Deacon to attend Vestry meetings and other decision-making bodies of the parish/mission, with seat and voice but no vote. As the deacons' ministry enriches the church's awareness of Jesus' call to serve "the least of these", it is essential that their voices be heard and their leadership, under the direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, followed in our efforts to serve Christ in the world.

The Deacon in the Liturgy

Liturgical service is the launching pad for the deacon. Deacons sacramentally express their mission and ministry in worship, and worship fuels their mission in ministry. Thus, a deacon's servant ministry is expressed liturgically in the following ways:

1. Deacons proclaim the Gospel to symbolize taking the Good News of God's love to the world.
2. Deacons may lead Prayers of the People to reflect bringing the concerns of the world to the church. (Other lay persons often lead the Prayers of the People.)
3. Deacons set the table to model servanthood.
4. Deacons proclaim the dismissal to symbolize their mission to send the people of God out into the world.

The deacon may have other duties as assigned by the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge and in agreement with the Bishop.

The liturgical role of the deacon does not specifically include, but specifically precludes:

1. The deacon may not pronounce absolution of sin. The Deacon may PRAY for God to grant forgiveness but may NOT pronounce it.
2. The Deacon may not pronounce the blessing. Again, the Deacon may PRAY for God to bless someone.
3. The Deacon may not consecrate the elements for Eucharist.
4. The Deacon may not officiate in what is commonly, but erroneously, called a "Deacon's Mass", except that the Deacon may distribute Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament ONLY

when specifically approved by the bishop and after it is determined that the services of a priest cannot be obtained (see the rubric on p. 408 of the Book of Common Prayer).

The following are warning signs of the blurring or confusion of liturgical roles:

1. Liturgical duties are listed first in the deacon's letter of agreement.
2. When Deacons are expected to lead services at their assigned church on a regular basis, except as a matter of missionary strategy approved by the Bishop.
3. If the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge proposes communion from the reserved sacrament without the bishop's specific and prior consent or otherwise inconsistent with the BCP rubrical requirements. (The deacon shall immediately report to the Archdeacon any such request or direction.)
4. The deacon's liturgical duties take time away from the deacon's servant ministry in the world.

Non-Parochial Diocesan Assignments

Non-Parochial Diocesan assignments are made by the Bishop, in consultation with the Archdeacon and the deacon in question.

Upon the Bishop's request, the deacon shall provide a detailed description of the ministry to which he/she shall be engaged as well as the contact information for the person to whom the deacon shall be accountable in the context of such ministry (*i.e.*, Supervisor of hospital or prison chaplaincy, social service agency, etc.).

The effectiveness of this ministry shall be reviewed annually by the Bishop, Archdeacon and Deacon. In cases where the Deacon has a supervisor or person to whom he/she is accountable, the Bishop may request from that person an evaluation of the Deacon's ministry (or performance of responsibilities).

Non-Parochial deacons are required to submit an annual report detailing their ministry for the previous year. Reports are due July 1 of each calendar year. It is understood that Non-Parochial deacons may be reassigned by the Bishop (in consultation with the Archdeacon).

Resignation Protocol

After discussion with the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, when the Deacon desires to resign or step down from his/her current assignment, he/she must contact the Bishop in writing to request permission. After receiving the Bishop's permission, the deacon shall write a detailed letter outlining his/her decision. This letter shall be sent to the Bishop, Archdeacon, Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, and the Senior Warden of the Vestry if it is a parochial assignment. The letter is then shared with the Vestry.

The deacon shall then work with the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge to establish a resignation plan to include, but not be limited to, the final date of service, the announcement to the congregation, the surrendering of keys, the relinquishment of duties and the termination of discretionary accounts. (Discretionary accounts shall be addressed more fully further in this customary.) The congregation shall be informed as much as possible about the about the resignation and the reasons that prompted it.

Conflict Management Involving the Deacon and Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge

The Diocese recognizes that occasional conflicts may arise between a Priest and a Deacon assigned to a parish/mission. In fact, some levels of conflict ideally lead to creativity and harmony. The following guidelines are offered as a means of dealing with conflict in a positive way, limiting the negative aspects of conflict and, instead, leading to openness, honesty, healing and partnership in the gospel. Should a conflict arise, these guidelines are intended to help foster a resolution. These guidelines do not change the relationship of the Deacon to the Congregation and Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, or the relationship of the Deacon to the Bishop of the Diocese, which will at all times be subject to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida.

These guidelines are built on the principles outlined in Matthew 18: 15 - 17 and the work of Speed Leas, well known consultant in dealing with congregational conflict, especially in the identification of Levels of Conflict and suggested steps in managing the inevitable conflict that arises when vibrant shared ministry thrives.

NOTE:

Open and honest communication between the Priest and Deacon is of utmost importance. This does not happen by accident but requires an intentional commitment to healthy relationships.

Level One:

When there is a problem to solve, people of good will meet to discuss how to resolve the issue. When a conflict emerges between Priest and Deacon, the two parties shall meet and discuss the issues related to this disagreement. No outside intervention is expected.

Level Two:

When the conflict is no longer centered on the common problem but on defending oneself or one's position the two parties should return the conversation back to the shared issue. Someone trusted in the congregation who can be impartial might be asked to join the conversation.

Level Three:

When the conflict moves to "win/lose" or "I'm right/you're wrong" it is clear that the Priest and the Deacon are no longer talking **to** each other but are talking **at** each other. The Letter of Agreement should be reviewed and modified if that seems called for. The Archdeacon (or the Canon to the Ordinary) should be informed of the conflict and any modifications to the Letter of Agreement.

Level Four:

When the conflict shifts to getting rid of the other, the Diocese should be actively involved. The Vestry should also be made aware of the conflict. Every effort should be made to reconcile the Priest and the Deacon. Open communication at all levels is essential. This could include, at the Deacon's request, a meeting between the Deacon and the Bishop.

Level Five:

When reconciliation does not seem possible, the Bishop, in consultation with the Canon to the Ordinary and the Archdeacon shall consider reassignment of the Deacon. Careful planning shall undergird the ending of the pastoral relationship with the Deacon and the Priest involved in the leave taking. (See "Resignation Protocol", page 4 above.)

Re-assignment

When reassignment is appropriate, it shall be negotiated through the Archdeacon, who shall keep the Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary apprised of the process. The Priest of the new parish, who has agreed to receive the deacon, shall request that the Deacon be assigned to his/her parish in writing to the Bishop and copied to the Archdeacon. The Bishop may or may not, at this point re-assign the Deacon.

A Service of Celebration of a Deacon's New Ministry shall be scheduled, and the Deacon shall be installed in the new parish.

The Deacon and Continuing Education

Any deacon serving in the Diocese of Central Florida is required to successfully complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. The continuing education hours shall be reported to the Archdeacon each year in the annual report.

The Deacon and Clerical Clothes

The deacon is normally expected to wear a clerical collar and appropriate diaconal Vestments whenever he/she is serving in a liturgical function.

The Deacon and Forms of Address

The proper title or form of address for a deacon is "Deacon" before the first or last name of a deacon. For example, "Deacon Joe" or "Deacon Smith". They may also use the title "The Reverend".

An Archdeacon is addressed in a like manner; the word "Archdeacon" before his/her first or last name. The title of the Archdeacon is "The Venerable".

The Deacon and Discretionary Funds

The deacon is not required to be given a discretionary account. In a church that allows the deacon a discretionary account, it is important to note that the discretionary account is established and owned by the Church, not the deacon. It must remain in compliance with standards and practices required by the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Central Florida. Discretionary accounts are to be used to alleviate suffering of the poor, not to pay church professional or ministry expenses. All statements and information pertaining to the account are sent directly to the church. All account information, including checks, is to be maintained by the church. Further, the account is to be audited annually while preserving the confidentiality of the fund.

Exhibit A, Deacon Letter of Agreement

**DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
LETTER OF AGREEMENT**

FOR

DEACON:

DATE:

The Rt. Reverend Gregory O. Brewer, Bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida, hereby assigns the Reverend _____, Deacon, to serve at

_____ Episcopal Church,

under the immediate supervision of

the Reverend _____.

The assignment of this deacon to this parish has been made by the Bishop, in consultation with the Deacon, Archdeacon, Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, and the Vestry of the parish. This assignment and all aspects of this Letter of Agreement shall at all times remain subject to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Central Florida. This assignment of the deacon to this parish remains subject to modification or change by the Bishop at any time, is on an at-will basis and is voluntarily entered into by deacon, and shall not constitute a contract for any definite term of employment.

A change in assignment may also be considered and reviewed by the Bishop at any time, whether on the Bishop’s own initiative or at the request of the Deacon, Vicar, Rector or priest-in-charge, or Archdeacon.

Both the deacon and parish agree to abide by the deacons' guidelines as they are now currently in effect. The Deacon agrees to take at least 12 hours of continuing education each year, as required by the diocesan Continuing Education Policy.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Please list the primary areas of responsibility of the deacon:

Servant Ministry beyond the parish:

Liturgical and/or non-liturgical ministry within the Parish:

(use the reverse side of this form if necessary)

1. Work schedule/anticipated hours/days per week:
2. Vacation Period:
3. Other understandings:
4. An evaluation meeting shall be held each year with the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge.

In order to support the deacon in the exercise of his/her ministry, the following reimbursement shall be provided by the parish: (**NOTE:** not all deacons are reimbursed in all of the following ways. Please complete only those lines that reflect the practice currently being followed in the parish.)

5. Annual reimbursement
- 5.1 Automobile allowance: \$

5.2 Diocesan Convention: \$

5.3 Continuing Education: \$

5.4 Clergy/spouse conference: \$

5.5 Clergy conference: \$

5.6 Deacons' Retreat: \$

5.7 Insurance:

5.7A Life insurance:

5.7B Medical:

5.7C Dental:

5.8 Contribution to Discretionary Fund: \$

5.9 Other reimbursement (state type):

TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT: \$

Signed:

Deacon

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge

Senior Warden

Archdeacon

Bishop

Exhibit B, Deacon Annual Report

This annual report should be signed off on by the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge since the deacon is serving under the guidance and direction of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. This also provides another opportunity to share and discuss their shared ministry and changes as they may be needed for the parish and community.

Diocese of Central Florida Annual Report

For all Active Deacons, Retired Deacons, Non-Parochial Deacons, Deacons who are Canonically Resident in a Diocese other than Central Florida, and Deacons 72 years of age or older.

**Please return the completed report, no later than July 1st of each year, to:
The Ven. Kristi Alday
1017 East Robinson Street, Orlando, Florida 32801**

Or Via Email: kalday@cfdiocese.org

Name:

Spouse's Name:

Address:

City: _____ **State:** _____

Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Diocese of Canonical Residence: _____

Retired: Yes or No

Currently Serving (parish/institution and city)_____

I have fulfilled my 12 Hours of Continuing Education Yes or No

Brief description of ministry (or causes/reasons which have prevented exercise of the same) – add additional sheets if necessary:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Note: By signing this form you certify that the information is correct and (where appropriate) are applying for a renewal of your license to function as a deacon in the Diocese of Central Florida and/or wish to remain in your present tenure. Also, please note, a physical license shall be sent to those who are 72 years of age and over and still serving, and to those who are not canonically resident and assigned to a church. If you are NOT in this group, please make a copy of this report as you shall NOT receive a physical license.

It is expected that you meet with your Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge and review your ministry with them.