



# The Ministry of Deacons

“Deacons - the people called in the Jesus Movement to stand as a bridge between the church and the world.” ~ Presiding Bishop Michael Curry in his book *Following the Way of Love*.

Sunday Circle, January 22, 2023

# Overview



- ▶ What do you know about Deacons
- ▶ Jesus as the exemplar
- ▶ The foundations of the diaconate in the New Testament and early Church.
- ▶ The role of the Deacon in liturgy, particularly our Sunday worship.
- ▶ The role of the Deacon in the world.



What do you know about the ministry and role of Deacons?



The ministry of Deacons is reflected in the words spoken in a Deacon's ordination by the Bishop who says, in part:

- 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.**
- 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.**

## The Ministry of Deacons



Some basics...

- Deacons are a full and equal holy order with priests and bishops
- Deacons' ministry is unique and distinct from that of priests and bishops
- Deacons are ordained clergy
- Deacons use the title "The Reverend" as do priests and bishops
- Deacons serve at the direction of the Bishop
- The Bishop can be assigned Deacons to different churches throughout their ministry

## The Ministry of Deacons



# Jesus as Exemplar for Deacons

“Jesus' identity and mission are the foundation of the diaconal sacramental character.” *Stephen F. Miletic, Ch. 2 of The Character of the Deacon*

- ▶ <sup>25</sup>But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. <sup>26</sup>It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant; <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’ ~ Matthew 20: 25-28
- ▶ <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” ... <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” ~ Matthew 25: 34-36, 40

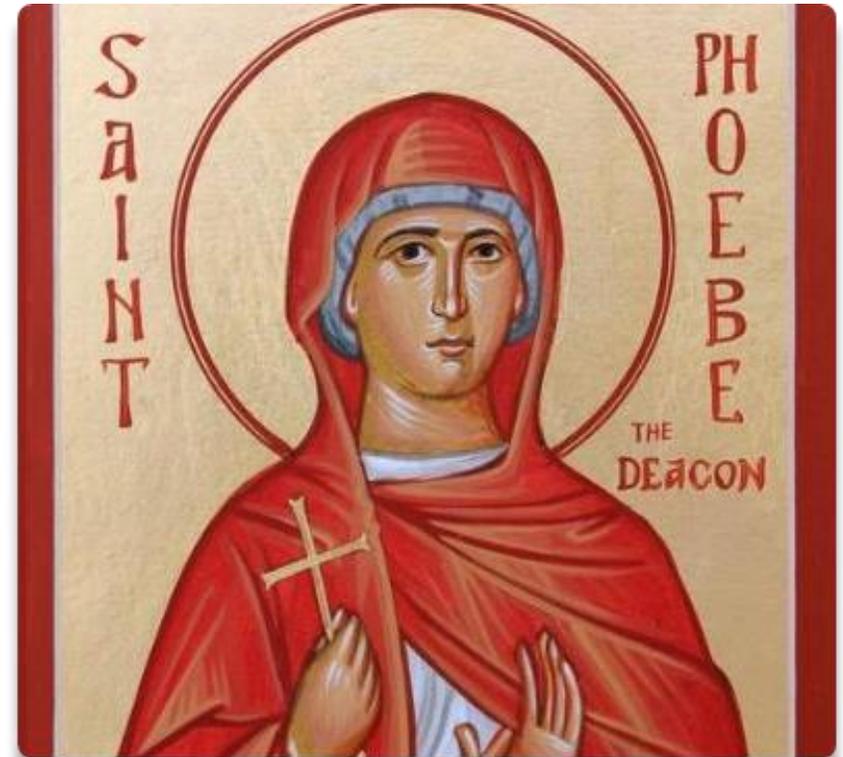


# Deacons in Scripture: Acts of the Apostles Chapter 6

- In chapter 6 of the Acts of the Apostles the 12 Apostles need people to minister to those on the margins of their community, in this case the widows of the Hellenists who were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.
- Stephen, Phillip, and five other men “of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” are raised up for this ministry by their community.
- The Apostles prayed and laid their hands on the chosen men to commission them in ministry.
- Stephen and Phillip’s ministries quickly expanded to include sharing the word of God, performing signs, and healing.
- Stephen and Phillip were not Deacons, but we can see in their ministries the inspiration for Deacons.

# Deacons in Scripture: St. Paul's letter to the Church in Rome, Chapter 16

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a Deacon of the church at Cenchreae, <sup>2</sup> so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.





# Deacons in the Early Church

- ▶ The role of the Deacon in the early church developed in concert with the role of the bishop - well before the role of presbyter or priest was created.
- ▶ Deacon worked with the Bishops to help meet the needs of the community.
- ▶ Following in Phoebe's footsteps many women served as Deacons in the early centuries of the church. with liturgical and pastoral roles; particularly offering pastoral care to women, preparing women for and baptizing them, and going with women when they addresses bishops.



# Deacons in the Early Church

In the first four centuries of the church Deacons carried out many of the same ministries as Deacons carry out today.

- ▶ Clement of Rome described the role of Deacons as being “the eyes of the bishop,” keeping order, informing the church of the sick so their needs could be met.
- ▶ Ignatius of Antioch said Deacons “exercised important functions in liturgy and charity.”
- ▶ Justin Martyr in *First Apology* wrote “those whom we called Deacons give to each one present to partake of the eucharistic bread and wine and water; and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.”

# The Ministry of Deacons in the Episcopal Church Today





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- You are to **assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments.**

## The Ministry of Deacons



# Deacons and Worship

# Proclaiming the Good News

Receive this Bible as the sign of your authority to proclaim God's Word and to assist in the ministration of his holy Sacraments.  
~Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 545

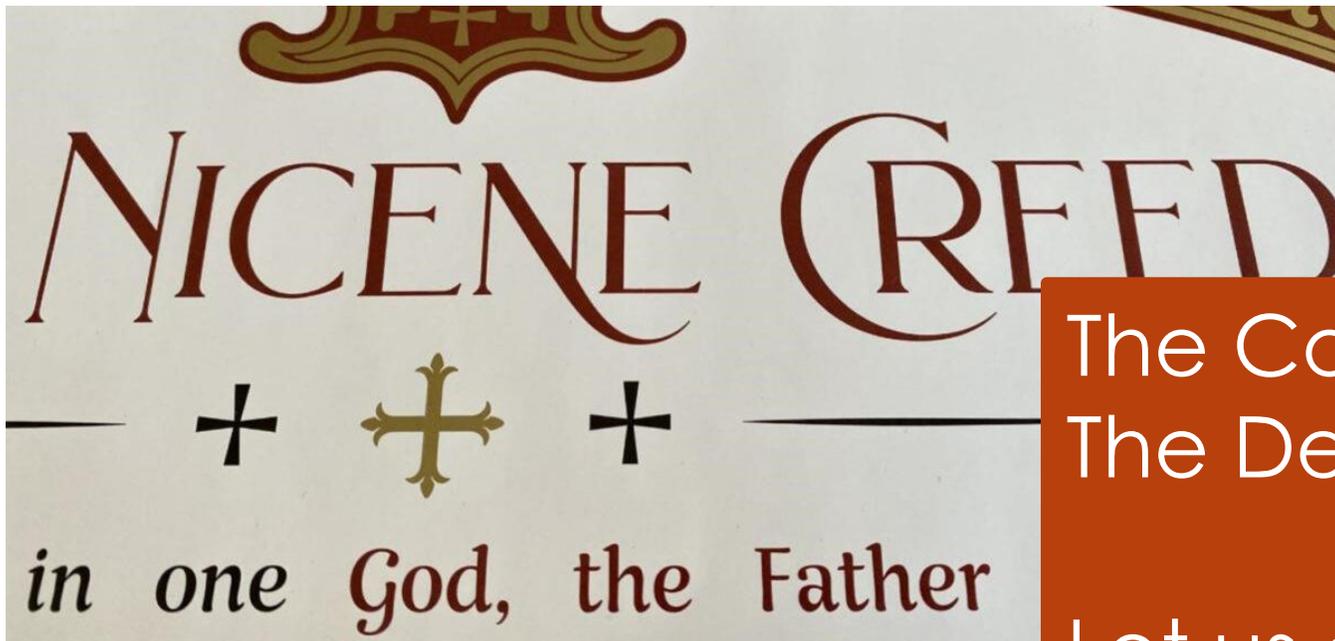


# Preaching

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. ~Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 543



# Inviting people to say the Creed and to Confession



The Confession  
The Deacon or Celebrant says  
Let us confess our sins against  
God and our neighbor.

You are to assist the bishop and priests... in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments.

- ▶ Preparing the Altar for Communion
- ▶ Distributing Communion
- ▶ Performing Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals



You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. ~  
Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 543

## Prayers of the People

A Deacon may write or support parishioners in writings the Prayers of the People.

### **The Prayers of the People**

*Prayer is offered with intercession for*

*The Universal Church, its members, and its mission*

*The Nation and all in authority*

*The welfare of the world*

*The concerns of the local community*

*Those who suffer and those in any trouble*

*The departed (with commemoration of a saint when appropriate)*

*See the forms beginning on page 383.*

*If there is no celebration of the Communion, or if a priest is not available, the service is concluded as directed on page 406.*

# The Dismissal

Having proclaimed the Gospel to the congregation and nourished them with the Body and Blood of our Lord at the altar, the Deacon invites the congregation into the world with them to address the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.



*The Deacon, or the Celebrant, dismisses them with these words*

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*or this*

*Deacon* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*or this*

*Deacon* Let us go forth into the world,  
rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*or this*

*Deacon* Let us bless the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*From the Easter Vigil through the Day of Pentecost "Alleluia, alleluia" may be added to any of the dismissals.*

*The People respond* Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia.



Ministry in the World: Serving all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.



# Deacons and Laity: A Partnership

Deacons do not minister to the marginalized alone. Deacons are to inspire and lead us in the fulfilling of our baptismal vows. They shine light on ways church can serve the needs of the world.

“ 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. ”

~ Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 543

“ 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.

”

~ Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 543

“

You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

”

~ Ordination of a Deacon, BCP p. 543



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# Call to the Diaconate



Questions?



Jan. 29 The Ministry of Priests and Bishops

Feb. 5-26 The Immigrant Experience

March 5-26 The Meaning of Sin and What Other Faith Traditions Can Teach Us

April 16 The Resurrection in Matthew Chapter 28

April 23 The Resurrection in Mark Chapter 16

April 30 The Resurrection in Luke Chapter 24

May 7 The Resurrection in John Chapter 20

May 14 The Resurrection in John Chapter 21

May 21 Exploring Pentecost - Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2

UPCOMING  
SUNDAY  
CIRCLES



Thank you!