



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Diocesan policy on THE DIACONATE

(as from 10.10.2007)

1. Diocesan Director of the Diaconate

The Bishop appoints a Diocesan Director of the Diaconate, who shall be a priest of the diocese. He has responsibility for all aspects of selection and formation before ordination, and also the ongoing formation of deacons and the general directing of deacons in their ministry in the name of the bishop. He may be assisted by one or more deacons.

2. Basic Norms

The ministry of the diaconate is an esteemed dimension of diocesan life. The formation and ministry of deacons will be exercised in accordance with the Roman documents *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, and the Catholic Bishops' *Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons in England and Wales*. This policy simply highlights some of the issues raised therein.

3. Selection and formation

The selection of candidates for the diaconate will be conducted in accordance with the Bishops' Conference *Handbook for the Selection of Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate*. The Bishop has the final responsibility for deciding who shall be accepted for diaconal formation, who shall be admitted to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, and to Candidacy, and who shall be ordained, but he will always take full account of the discernment team.

For the foreseeable future, those accepted for preparation for diaconal ministry in East Anglia will participate in the inter-diocesan course which takes place at St John's Seminary, Wonersh.

4. Ordination & Appointment

Unless there is a very strong personal reason to the contrary (e.g. poor health of spouse), all ordinations to the diaconate will be celebrated at St John's Cathedral, as all ordained ministers are set aside above all for service of the diocese, and all ordinations should be celebrations of the diocesan family.

As far as possible, all members of the Diocesan College of Deacons should assist at the ordination of a new deacon.

Before ordination, the Bishop will discuss with the candidate, his parish priest and local dean, and the Director, whether the initial appointment will be to a parish or the deanery. This is open to ongoing review.

The specific roles and responsibilities of each deacon are to be agreed by mutual consent at local level with the parish priest and/or dean. Allocating responsibilities must take full account of the deacon's family and work.

A deacon should refer to the Director and Bishop before applying for any additional ministerial role (e.g. chaplaincy), or any secular role which might conflict with his ministry.

5. Diaconal Attire

The general norm in East Anglia is that deacons do not wear clerical dress unless there is a strong case for doing so on particular occasions in order to facilitate easier pastoral access and acceptance of his specifically ordained ministry (e.g. chaplaincy work in some institutions). This is left for each deacon to decide on a common sense basis. Deacons should not normally wear clerical dress at parish, deanery or diocesan events. (*See Canon 288; Directory 10*)

6. Diocesan Celebrations and Meetings

If at all possible, all deacons should be present at the Chrism Mass, so as to renew their dedication to their ministry before God and his people.

There are two diocesan meetings each year which all deacons are expected to attend unless there is good reason to the contrary (e.g. work, other ministry, health):

- (a) Annual meeting of the Diocesan College of deacons with the Bishop
- (b) Annual gathering of deacons, students for the diaconate, and wives

Deacons are expected to attend Deanery meetings unless work or bad health make this difficult.

8. Ongoing Formation

Ongoing formation is vital for every deacon. The annual retreat and study week organised by the diocese should be regarded as a priority. Deacons are encouraged to attend those clergy diocesan study days which are open to them.

9. Spiritual Direction

Every deacon is strongly encouraged to have and meet regularly with a personal spiritual director. The Director will help with finding such a person if asked.

10. Review of Ministry

The Bishop will meet with each deacon as a part of his four or five yearly visitation of parishes, and review the deacon's ministry with him. The Director will aim to meet with each deacon annually, and report back to the Bishop.

The local Dean has a special responsibility for overseeing the ministry of deacons in the deanery. The Dean should meet regularly with deacons to encourage them in their ministry, and to help to ensure fruitful harmony and cooperation with the priests and people of the deanery. Such care by the Dean also extends to the deacon's family, and to ensuring that at very least the deacon's expenses incurred in parish and deanery work are fully reimbursed.

Every deacon involved in parish ministry should meet annually with his parish priest for a review of ministry.

11. Disputes

In the event of a dispute between a deacon and his parish priest, they should first do all they can to resolve the matter informally between themselves. If this fails, they should then take the matter to the Director, who will liaise with the local dean (unless the dean himself is the priest in question) and take action as seems appropriate to move things forward. If continued efforts are unsuccessful, the Director will take the matter to the Bishop. None of the process outlined above restricts direct access by a deacon or priest to the Bishop, but the Bishop will usually require that the stages above be followed.

12. Remuneration

Deacons in East Anglia are generally accepted for diaconal formation and eventual ordination on the condition that they are and will remain financially self-sufficient through employment, pension, etc, and that they will see to their own and, where appropriate, their families' material needs (cf. Canon 281.3).

There are occasions, however, when it is appropriate for a deacon to receive payment:

A deacon is normally entitled to all stole fees given for the ceremonies at which he presides (e.g. baptisms, weddings, funerals). These should normally be made out to and paid into the parish account, and then offered to the deacon as a matter of course. If he does not wish to receive such a fee, he may ask that it be donated to the parish or another body. Once accepted, all such income must be recorded and declared to the Inland Revenue.

The parish should reimburse legitimate expenses agreed beforehand with the parish priest and incurred by the deacon in the exercise of his specifically diaconal ministry in the parish.

The diocese should reimburse legitimate expenses agreed beforehand by the diocese and incurred by the deacon in the exercise of his ministry on behalf of the diocese or diocesan bodies.

The parish should reimburse the cost of and expenses associated with a deacon attending the annual diocesan retreat and ongoing formation organised by the Director of the Diaconate. There should be no such expectation, however, for parishes to pay when deacons decide instead to make their own alternative arrangements.

In all cases, the deacon should provide corroborating evidence of the expenses claimed (invoices/receipts). Previously-agreed mileage expenses should be claimed on the basis of a clear record of journeys and in accordance with the diocesan mileage rate, which is adjusted from time to time.

The norm in East Anglia is that a deacon does not receive a salary for performing his diaconal duties. There are, however, times when it may be appropriate for a deacon to be offered full-time or part-time paid employment by the diocese, deanery or parish (after agreement with the diocese). Any such employment must be in keeping with employment law and diocesan policies. All such income must be recorded and declared to the Inland Revenue.

Any further contribution (e.g. honorarium) is entirely at the discretion of the parish priest, and should not be expected.

If a deacon is in financial difficulties, and there is a possibility of legal proceedings against him, the deacon should inform the Director of the Diaconate so that the appropriate diocesan authorities can be informed.

13. Retirement

A deacon is required to offer his resignation from any office or appointment on reaching his 75th birthday. If it is agreed by the Bishop and deacon that the latter may remain in office, the position will be reviewed annually thereafter. When a deacon resigns his office under normal circumstances, he obviously remains an ordained minister of the diocese, and may continue to assist on an *ad hoc* basis, with the consent of any local parish priest.

14. Pension

There are no pension arrangements for deacons in the diocese. All deacons, however, are eligible to join the Clergy Pension Scheme arranged with Norwich Union on a self-contributory basis. Details are available from the Diocesan Finance Office.

15. Funeral

The Bishop (or his delegate) will normally preside at the Funeral Mass of a deacon of the diocese.

As far as possible, all members of the College of Deacons should attend the funeral of a fellow deacon, and (if wished by that deacon) that of a deacon's wife.