

Covenant for Deacons

between

Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of California,
NN, a deacon of the Diocese of California,
and (*Name of Parish/Mission*)

The Bishop has assigned NN as Deacon at NN Episcopal Church, a congregation of the Diocese of California, beginning on XX YY, 20ZZ, for a period to be set by the Bishop in consultation with the deacon and parish and reviewed semi-annually. Period of service will be determined with consideration to the practical needs of the parish, the pastoral consideration of the deacon, and the logistical concerns and broader well-being of the Diocese.

Preface: The ministry of the deacon has its origins in the life and ministry of Christ and in the history of the early Church. The deacon's ministry is given shape, meaning and purpose in the words of the Baptismal Covenant, especially the agreements to *seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being*. Diaconal ministry is made concrete and specific by the words of the ordination service for deacons:

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. (BCP p. 543)

Diaconal ministry is understood as one which takes on characteristics of both servanthood and leadership. While the deacon is bound by vow directly to the Bishop, the Deacon also carries out ministries in close collaboration with the Rector/Vicar and congregation, as well as outside the formal boundaries of the Church.

1. Authority

Deacons serve directly under the authority of the Bishop and are accountable to the Bishop. Their presence and ministry within congregations reflects and extends their role as agents of the Church, commissioned by the Bishop to make the word of God, the mystery and servanthood of Christ, known in many different ways and venues.

Commented [1]:
This phrase is not very clear.

The Episcopal Church Constitution and Canons specifies the sources and functioning of authority for diaconal ministry:

“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, a Deacon team, 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.” (National Canons Title III, Canon 7, Sec.4)

2. Ministries

The Deacon shall work with the Rector/Vicar and the members in the work of encouraging the ongoing renewal of the congregation, through worship, outreach, formation, pastoral care, and other programs.

The Deacon shall work with the people of the congregation in discerning gifts and developing ministries to those in need.

The Deacon shall cultivate in the congregation a sensitivity to the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

The Deacon’s proposed ministry *in this parish or mission* will be as follows (please be specific):

The Deacon’s proposed ministry in the world and supported by the congregation will be as follows (please be specific):

3. Separate and Equal Orders

The Rector/Vicar shall model that their orders are separate and equal to the congregation in the following ways (please be specific):

4. Liturgy

The deacon shall perform the full and proper liturgical functions of a deacon at Sunday, Holy Day Liturgies, and at other liturgies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals by mutual agreement with the Rector/Vicar. The functions shall include: Proclaiming the Gospel; Proclaiming the *Exultet* at the Great Vigil of Easter; Bidding the Creed, the Prayers of the People, and the Confession; Assisting at and preparing the Table at the Eucharist; Sending Forth the Eucharistic Visitors; and Dismissing the People. It may include bidding the Lord’s Prayer, and other agreed upon functions appropriate to the deacon. Preaching on a regular basis and providing for the Prayers of the People are both strongly encouraged. *Pursuant to the rubrics in the BCP, So-called “Mass of the Pre-consecrated” are expressly prohibited, unless the prior permission of the bishop has been obtained (BCP p. 408).*

5. Congregational Support

The congregation will support the Deacon in the following ways (please be specific):

6. Participation in Diocesan & Congregational Life

From time to time the Deacon may assist at liturgies elsewhere.

The Deacon is to participate, to the fullest extent possible, in diocesan convention, clergy retreat (as possible for the deacon's schedule), and other required meetings, in-gatherings for deacons, and in continuing education. Any costs for required meetings shall be borne by the congregation.

By agreement with the Rector/Vicar, the Deacon may serve on appropriate committees of the congregation.

All newly-ordained deacons are expected to participate in the Diocesan "Fresher Start" program.

7. Work & Leave

N is expected to be present *X* Sundays per month and *Y* hours per week.

The deacon will/will not receive a stipend or other remuneration.

The congregation shall reimburse travel expenses incurred in the Deacon's activities on behalf of the congregation, including automobile at the current IRS rate for business use (except for travel from home to church) and out-of-pocket costs for parking fees and tolls. The Deacon shall be responsible for maintaining a log of these miles/expenses and submitting them quarterly for reimbursement.

The congregation shall establish a discretionary fund for the Deacon, funded out of offerings for the poor, other special offerings, and direct donations, to be used for charitable purposes outside the congregation. This fund should be set up as a line-item in the congregation's existing budget. The Deacon shall make a regular report to the Vestry on the use of the fund, without disclosing the names of beneficiaries.

The congregation shall furnish other support for the Deacon at the discretion of the parish finance committee such as:

- 1) continuing education for clergy conference and other classes;
- 2) spiritual direction expenses;
- 3) support for spiritual retreats;
- 4) support for health insurance costs;
- 5) support for books, materials, and vestments.

The Deacon is eligible at minimum for the following periods of leave, if possible taken concurrently with leave from secular work (if any) or as necessitated by family circumstances:

- Four weeks vacation each year.
- Two weeks each year for continuing formation.
- Sick leave, as required.
- Sabbatical leave from all church duties, normally after each seven years of service, after application to the Archdeacon and with the consent of the Bishop. The typical length of such leave is six months. At the discretion of the parish finance committee, support may be provided for sabbatical educational or travel activities.
- Such other leave as is required to develop and maintain self-support outside the church.

8. Review

The Rector/Vicar in Charge and Deacon will meet together on a semi-annual basis to discuss ministry goals, achievements and problems. If it is deemed necessary or desired, the Archdeacon may be invited to this meeting.

Bishop: _____ Date: _____

Deacon: _____ Date: _____

Rector/Vicar: _____ Date: _____

Senior Warden: _____ Date: _____

*This Letter of Agreement format was
approved by Bishop Marc Handley Andrus
January 2021*