

FIELD WORK FOR DIACONAL CANDIDATES

Premise and Assumption Summary

The work of the deacon takes place both inside and outside of the traditional church. As an icon of service, the deacon leads others into lives of service by proclaiming the gospel through word and example (by those among whom they live and work and worship), participating in symbolic parts of the liturgy, by teaching and providing resources for others, and by walking beside those who are exploring their own gifts and how those gifts might be used to serve the kingdom of God in the world.

Outside of the church, the deacon lives a life of service. The deacon works among the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely (*BCP p. 543*), often in areas of social justice; illuminating and illustrating to the Church, the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. The deacon serves as an example and leads others into living further and deeper into their Baptismal covenant.

Practical application of field work in preparation for the diaconate

Field work will provide places of growth and challenge for the candidate. If at all possible, the candidate should spend a minimum of six months being mentored in an Episcopal church other than the candidate's sponsoring congregation.

The time of practicum for a candidate belongs to both the church and to the world. Field work which best prepares a candidate belongs in these two places. Therefore, it is our recommendation that field work have the following two components:

1. Work within a parish
2. Work within a community

These two divisions of field work may or may not be done concurrently.

Field Work Within a Parish

- The Episcopal parish chosen for field work should be as different in experience as possible from the past experience of the candidate.
- The candidate will obtain approval from the COM for the field work site.
- During the field work, the candidate will experience the workings of the Vestry or Bishop's committee.

- The candidate may be assigned to teach an adult Ed class, observe a Sunday school class, or supervise acolytes.
- The candidate will get a general feel of how churches differ in their operation, in their makeup and in their ministry.
- The candidate should begin to feel comfortable working with a priest in a worship context as well as in church administration. Although candidates do not function as deacons in worship services, training and practicums with the supervising priest will be part of the field training. Through this period of time the candidate will be supervised by the priest of the new congregation. (Please review and complete addendum A entitled Practicum for Diaconal Candidates.)

Field Work Within a Community

- Field work may be done after three modules have been completed.
- The second component of field work will involve the actual leading of people into an area of service and/or social justice. This might be done either from the candidate's sponsoring church or in a different church.
- The candidate will observe the community, investigating and identifying an area of service that is not currently being done.
- The candidate, with the permission and supervision of the priest, will research, design, write-up the project, as far as is possible, and begin the ministry.
- This project must be one which will inspire and call others into action. It is not a project that is done "solo". ¹
- This project will be conceived by the candidate along with the guidance of the candidate's shepherd.
- The supervising priest, formation director, and spiritual director may be used as sounding boards for the candidate, insuring that the candidate is exploring areas of service that provide a learning and growing opportunity.

¹ Formation weekend is a place to unpack this in an anecdotal and practical way.

- The actual service project may not be able to be completed in six months, but should at least be presented in written form with specific goals and objectives for implementation.

Documentation and Field Notes

Upon completion of field work, the candidate will submit two letters to the COM.

- The first will express the candidate's experience in working with a new priest and congregation and be signed by both the candidate and supervising priest.
- The second letter will describe the candidate's experience in designing and implementing the chosen service or social justice project. The candidate will describe how the idea was conceived, researched, and implemented, and will offer the candidate's evaluation of how well the project was received and carried out.