

congregation; the poor receive the same amount as the rich. This means that God's material blessings belong equally to everyone, to be enjoyed according to each person's need. The whole ceremony is also a meal at which everyone has an equal place at the table."

From the Anglican Tradition:

From the Private Prayer Book of Elizabeth I (1578):

"Thou, O Lord, providest enough for all, with Thy most liberal and bountiful hand; but whereas Thy gifts are, in respect of Thy goodness and free favour, made common to all, we (through our naughtiness, niggardness and distrust) do make them private and peculiar. Correct Thou the thing which our iniquity hath put out of order: let Thy goodness supply that which our niggardliness hath pluckt away."

Charles Gore:

"What I am complaining of, what I want you to complain of, with a persistence and a conviction which shall make our complaint fruitful of reform, is - not that commercial and social selfishness exist in the world, or even that it appears to dominate society; but that its profound antagonism to the spirit of Christ is not recognized, that there is not amongst us anything that can be called an adequate conception of what Christian morality means."

William Temple:

"It is a mistake to suppose that God is only, or even chiefly, concerned with religion"

STUDY GUIDE ON THE PORTRAYAL OF
THE MINISTRY OF THE DIACONATE
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON
PROPHETIC MINISTRY
IN THE SCRIPTURES
AND IN THE ORDINAL AND TRADITION



THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF EDMONTON
THE RIGHT REVEREND JANE ALEXANDER, BISHOP

To the Parish Discernment Committee:

Greetings from the Examining Chaplains. We want to thank you for being willing to take on the important ministry of helping someone to discern their calling within the church.

This pamphlet is designed to help aspirants to articulate whether or not they have a calling to the Diaconate with a special emphasis on Justice Ministry.

It has always been the special ministry of the Deacon to act as a servant to the world. The function of the Deacon has traditionally been one of seeking out the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely and ministering to them, and in so doing, drawing the attention of the church to their need. However, ministry to relieve needs is often not enough. Needs are met, and yet cycles of injustice continue on. God is calling us not simply to meet needs, but to live in right relationship with all people. As our Bishop has said, it is not enough just to feed the poor; we also need to be asking the hard questions such as why there is poverty in the midst of great abundance. In asking such questions and seeking God's will we find the place where servant ministry includes prophetic ministry. The Diocese of Edmonton is excited about exploring the Diaconate as the interplay of prophetic and servant ministry.

According to this model, the Deacon is someone who goes beyond the traditional role as it is understood and seeks ways in which the church can fulfill its mission of justice. This may include dealing with inner city issues, advocating for the environment, seeking alternatives to violent conflict, etc. The Deacon, according to this model, does not do this work *on behalf of* the church, but seeks to bring the church alongside so that all Christians live in obedience to God's call for right relationships. The Deacon's work is a sign of the work and ministry to which all Christians are called. This is an important vocation, and we appreciate your help in discerning it in our midst.

God Bless,
The Examining Chaplains

Introduction

- 5) What is the relationship between the ministry of the deacon and the ministry of Jesus Christ?
- 6) What is it about diaconal ministry that you feel called to?

Part Four: Prophetic Ministry in Tradition and in the Contemporary World

Throughout Christian history, the saints of the church have often had the same concerns as the Israelite prophets about the lack of justice without and within the church. Using the quotes provided and any others that he or she might have, the aspirant should lead a discussion about the nature of justice and the church's calling to this ministry. Use this as an opportunity to talk about Justice Ministry today and in particular about the aspirant's own justice ministry.

From the early church:

St. Basil:

"When someone strips a person of their clothes we call them a thief. And one who might clothe the naked and does not -- should they not be given the same name? The bread in your board belongs to the hungry; the cloak in your wardrobe belongs to the naked, the shoes you let rot belong to the barefoot; the money in your vaults belongs to the destitute."

St. Chrysostom:

"Week by week you come to the Lord's table to receive bread and wine. What do these things mean to you? Do you regard them merely as some kind of spiritual medicine, which will purge your soul, like a laxative may purge your body? Or do you sometimes wonder what God is saying in these simple elements? Bread and wine represent the fruits of our labor, whereby we turn the things of nature into food and drink for our sustenance. So at the Lord's table we offer our labor to God, dedicating ourselves anew to his service. Then the bread and the wine are distributed equally to every member of the

known. Do you feel called to spread the Good News of Christ? How have you done this in your life so far?

Part Three: Diaconal Ministry in the Ordinal of the Book of Alternative Services

Read: Book of Alternative Services pp. 652-658 with special attention to the Examination and Prayer of Consecration on pp. 655-657.

The deacon is one of four orders of ministry with the Anglican Church. The other three are the laity, the bishops and the priests. Historically, the deacons had a very close relationship to the Bishops, often being the ones charged with the church's ministry to the poor and sick. The ordinal is the liturgical form used to ordain the deacon, and it contains the church's understanding of what a deacon is. Please read the ordinal before this second meeting and be ready to talk about the following questions as well as any others you might have. The goal is to be able to articulate a clear understanding of what the role of the deacon is in the church and why the aspirant feels called to this particular role.

Questions to discuss:

- 1) According to the Ordinal, what are the main functions of a deacon?
- 2) Why do you think that service is such an important aspect of ministry?
- 3) If every Christian is called to this ministry, why is the deacon set apart "to a special ministry of servanthood?"
- 4) What do you think it means to say that the deacon is supposed to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world? How would you do this?

This study is broken up into four different parts. The first two contain the scriptural foundation about what it means to be called by God to ministry and why justice ministry is so integral to God's plan for the church. The third section deals with questions around the ordination service and the final section is about the question of justice in the church's tradition, but it is really meant to be a springboard to talk about the aspirant's own understanding of justice and her or his own work in the area. Each part should take around 30-45min and the thought is that this study could be done in two sessions of between an hour and an hour and a half. Feel free to tailor it to your own needs.

Part One: Calling and Servant Ministry in the Bible

To prepare for this section please read Jeremiah 1:4-9 and John 13:1-15. The questions in this section should help to start a discussion for everyone involved. This should not just be about the aspirant answering the questions, but the entire group reflecting together about the nature of call and servant ministry.

Jeremiah 1:4-9

- 1) In this passage it says that 'the word of the Lord' came to Jeremiah. How have you experienced God's word being revealed to you?
- 2) How is it significant that God knew, consecrated, and appointed Jeremiah before he was born? Do you believe this is true of yourself?
- 3) Jeremiah is concerned about his youthfulness and lack of experience. What apprehensions do you have concerning this possible calling?
- 4) In this passage, God assures Jeremiah to have no fear of people. What concerns do you have about the response of people to prophetic diaconal ministry?
- 5) As God assures Jeremiah, He puts out his hand and touches him. In the ordination of a deacon the Bishop

lays hands upon the person and asks God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you are ordained a Deacon, what role do you anticipate the Holy Spirit will have in your life?

John 13:1-15

- 1) In this passage, the Son of God humbles himself by washing the feet of his friends: Jesus even humbles himself to Judas who he knows will betray him. In our current culture, and in the work to which you feel called, to what might foot washing translate?
- 2) When Jesus washes his disciples' feet he does more than wipe away physical dirt- how would the disciples be changed by this experience?
- 3) The vocational deacon vows to be faithful in prayer and in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures. It is from spending time with God and receiving his Grace that our character is transformed. What would you say about your own time that you spend with God.

Part Two: Diaconal and Prophetic Ministry

For this section please read Acts 6:1-6 and Isaiah 58. During this section reflect on the diaconate as it was first instituted and its relationship with servant ministry. As well, reflect on prophetic ministry and the question of the relationship between justice and our worship of God. Again this should be a discussion of the entire group, although it does have a focus on the aspirant's own thoughts and journey.

Acts 6:1-6

- 1) The neglect of the Hellenist widows would today be termed as discrimination. In what ways has discrimination affected you and what has been God's response?
- 2) What do you think of the disciples' response to the report of unfair distribution?

- 3) The people called to be the first deacons were of good standing, full of the spirit, and wise. What gifts do you bring to this ministry?
- 4) The deacons were called to do the work of apostles. This is a position of honour yet to 'wait upon tables' is a position of humility. How has God called you to both honour and humility?

Isaiah 58

- 1) How do you imagine the people and the religious leaders might have responded to Isaiah when he spoke God's pronouncement of their iniquity?
- 2) God accuses the people of rebellion, serving their own interests, false worship, and trampling on the Sabbath. Do you think that these offenses are occurring in the church today?
- 3) In this passage, God associates true humility with loosing the bonds of injustice and sharing with those in need. God calls the people to just and right relationships with each other. He promises that right relationship between people will lead to an awareness of the guidance and blessing of God. How have you experienced this truth in your life?
- 4) The deacon is called to interpret to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. What concerns of the world need to be brought to the church's attention today? What do you believe the church can do to be in right relationship with the world regarding these issues?
- 5) In the sacrament of ordination the deacon vows to pattern his or her life in accordance with the teachings of Christ that he or she will be a wholesome example to others. How do you anticipate being challenged by this vow? What hope and assurance has God given you?
- 6) The call to the prophetic diaconate is not just a call to motivate Christians to work for justice in the world, but also a call to make Christ and his redemptive love