

Community of Deacon's – Convention report

When a deacon is ordained, in the context of the liturgy they are given a brief “examination” by the bishop (p. 543 of the BCP) and the last statement in the preamble always gives me pause since it truly reminds the soon-to-be deacon, and the assembled community, that being a deacon is about to happen is a life-long commitment, not just a momentary “crossing the finish line of Holy Orders”. The bishop says: “At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.”

At all times – those three words pass by quickly in the ordination service, but tucked inside of them is a Spirit-led journey for all deacons once they are ordained. For the work of deacons is a life-long walk with the community (both inside the church and outside the church's walls) in many diverse and luminous ways. And since we come to the diaconate from many different vocations: social worker, nursing, IT, education, chaplaincy, community organizing, public advocacy, governmental – each deacon's witness, work and ministry is wonderfully unique.

This year we saw new deacons with the ordinations of Justin Martin and Valerie Patton and watched while their ministries with their respective church communities has begun to take shape. We also said farewell to the Rev. Angela Ferree who has faithfully served at Church of the Good Shepherd and at Hope, Town and Country. While she moves to join her beloved family out west, we give thanks for her graciousness and kindness which she has shared with the deacons and everyone she has met. May God continue to illuminate her path.

Our deacons continue to serve in a variety of parishes – some large and small, rural and suburban – assisting each church and their parishioners in doing good in the world. Our 19 deacons have over 225 years of service collectively! And we continue to serve liturgically and “on the street” with garden, food and community ministries. For those of us who travel with the bishop for his visitations, it is a joy to see all the good works happening in parishes and ministries around the diocese!

One of the issues which the Community of Deacons has discussed this year is the current inability for us to participate in the Episcopal Church's Pension Fund and to take advanced of their benefits. Since most deacons are not paid for their time spent in ministry, historically we have been unable to participate in these benefits like priests and bishops. As part of the work of General Convention over the summer, and now with a resolution which will be put forth in our diocesan convention, we hope this will be rectified so that current and future deacons may have assistance in their retirement planning. The Community wants to thank Deacon Justin Martin for his diligence in crafting the resolution.

I want to thank our bishop and members of our diocesan staff for being such gracious supporters of the diaconate here in our diocese. We could not ask for more fertile soil in which to grow the diaconate here in Missouri!

To learn more about us, our life and work: <https://diocesemo.org/clergy/deacons>