

Deacon's Manual

Revised 2018



The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin, Bishop

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Introduction

“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, Ordination of a Deacon

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

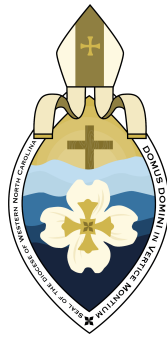
BCP. P. 856, The Catechism

The diaconate in the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina has been a vital and active ministry for over 30 years. This diocese currently has 26 active deacons and many “retired deacons” who continue to serve the diocese, and their communities through ministries including community gardens, transitional housing, ministry to those incarcerated, parish nursing, and many other ministries.

If you are a deacon who has moved to our diocese, we welcome you and look forward to working together in the ministry of servanthood as we seek to serve all people particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. Please contact the Bishop's office and the Archdeacon to let us know you are here, whether or not you wish to continue in active ministry.

This manual is written primarily for ordained deacons serving in the Diocese of WNC. When a person senses God's call to Holy Orders, or when someone suggests to an individual that he/she consider Holy Orders, then the individual should refer to the Commission on Ministry Manual in the Diocese of Western North Carolina., updated in 2015, and available on the diocesan website, www.diocesewnc.org

If you have questions regarding the content of this manual, please contact the Archdeacon of the diocese at archdeacon@diocesewnc.org



The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
The Rt. Rev. José Antonio McLoughlin, Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” Book of Common Prayer, pg. 856

Many years ago, the Rev. Deacon Chris Greer changed the course of my life. His mission and witness inspired my sense of call and shaped my ministry to fundamentally reflect the servanthood of Jesus Christ. Today, you continue the ancient and significant tradition of being the iconic embodiment of diakonia; your vocational witness and ministry brings together the dual responsibility of pastoral care (or mercy) within the worshiping community and service (or justice) beyond the community out into the world. Indeed, you connect a face with a name of those in need.

I want you to know that I deeply value and take seriously you and your ministry. I am humbled by and grateful for your witness and the many ways you speak the truth of justice and practice love in action. Likewise, as ordained leaders in the Church under my authority, I am committed to enhancing your formation and equipping you for an ever-changing world and an ever-changing Church. I hope this manual will serve as a guide for our mutual ministry to serve Christ in all persons.

Most faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin

Service in a Parish

A. The Covenant

The bishop assigns deacons to parishes to bring the needs of the world to the church through teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and participating in liturgical activities which remind the parish of each baptized person's call to serve those in need. The deacon also has a servant ministry in the community. The covenant is an agreement outlining the responsibilities of the deacon, the rector and the Vestry in the ministry of service. The covenant is reviewed and amended annually. The Covenant should be submitted to the Bishop and the Archdeacon by January 15 of each year. (Canon III.7.4.a) A template of the covenant is found in Appendix A.

B. Preaching

The Deacon may, at the discretion of the rector of the parish, preach regularly. Since the Deacon is an icon of prophetic ministry and exercises a prophetic voice in the Church, it is appropriate for sermons by Deacons to emphasize servant ministry.

C. Conflict Resolution

If for any reason this diaconal relationship with the parish or the rector becomes imperiled, both the deacon and the church should seek wisdom and advice of the Bishop. This relationship of ministry, however, may be ended at the sole discretion of the Bishop should he/she choose to assign the deacon to other duties for the good of the wider church. The Deacon, the Rector, or the Wardens may petition the Bishop for a change in assignment for the Deacon at any time any of them feel this would be helpful for the good of the congregation or the promotion of the Gospel.

D. Deacon Sabbatical Policy

The deacon will be encouraged to take sabbatical time. The guidelines adopted by the Executive Council in 2012 (p. 31 Diocese WNC Policy Manual) are ten weeks after five years, eleven weeks after six years or twelve weeks after seven years of service. Sabbatical time shall be scheduled several months in advance in conversation with the rector and vestry. The Bishop and Archdeacon should be notified of sabbatical schedules.

The sabbatical time for a Deacon is a time to take a break from all activities in the assigned parish. Deacons are encouraged to set at least one goal for the sabbatical; a goal that allows them to go deeper in their spiritual life. The goal should be shared with the Rector prior to the sabbatical, and a time scheduled with the Rector after the sabbatical to reflect on the goal. Deacons are encouraged to apply for financial resources to cover the cost of retreats, workshops, etc. Please contact the Archdeacon for more information about financial resources.

E. Continuing Education

“The Bishop and Commission shall require and provide for the continuing education of Deacons and keep a record of such education. “ Canon III.7.5

Deacons should plan for continuing education every year. The attendance at diocesan events such as the Diocesan Convention, Fall and Spring Clergy Retreats, and the Deacons’ Overnight are considered opportunities for continuing education. Parishes are expected to reimburse the deacon for expenses related to these events.

However, it is also recommended that each deacon choose an event, workshop, or in-depth study of a book that will be theologically and spiritually nourishing or that will be related to the specific ministry in which the deacon is engaged.

Reflections on the continuing education opportunities should be included in the deacon’s annual report to the Bishop.

The Deacons’ Liturgical Customary

Deacons should familiarize themselves with the Deacon’s Customary found in Appendix B of this document. The customary has been authorized by the Bishop as a guide for deacons serving in the Diocese of Western North Carolina. This customary establishes the protocol to be followed by deacons and priests as it relates to the liturgies and sacraments of the church.

Administrative Policies

A. Direction and Guidance of Bishop and Rector

Deacons exercise their diaconal ministry as an extension of the Bishop’s outreach to serve all people. The Bishop assigns each Deacon to a parish, in consultation with the Rector, the Deacon and the Archdeacon. All deacons in the Diocese of WNC are parochial deacons. While in the parish, the Deacon is directly under the oversight of the Rector or the Priest in Charge. Any exceptions to the assignment and practice of ministry of Deacons in this diocese are under the authority of the Bishop. Changes in parish assignment or diaconal focus are arranged with the Bishop through the Archdeacon.

B. Delineation of Duties between Priests and Deacons

There are three liturgical functions that deacons are NOT allowed to perform. These functions are strictly the function of a priest. The operational distinction is that the priest stands in the place of Christ.

- a. A deacon may not pronounce absolution. A deacon may ASK for God to forgive someone, but may NOT pronounce it.
- b. A deacon may not pronounce blessing. Again, a deacon may ASK for God to bless someone, but caution is advised when invoking the name of the Trinity and tracing the sign of the cross on a person.

c. A deacon may not consecrate the elements for Eucharist.

C. The Role of the Archdeacon

The Archdeacon is a Deacon appointed by the Bishop and guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of the Bishop. The Archdeacon models Servant Ministry in service to the Diocese as a whole and as servant to the Deacons performing their ministries. The Job Description of the Archdeacon is included in Appendix C.

D. Titles and Clerical Attire

The Title Deacon (abbreviated Dn.) is appropriate for normal address. When the title “The Reverend” is used, it should always have the word “deacon” appear in association with the title, for example “The Rev. Jane Doe, Deacon” or “The Rev. Dn. John Doe”. Deacons normally wear clerical attire when serving in a liturgical role, when representing the church in an official capacity, and at other appropriate times, which may or may not include their ministry in the world.

E. Parish Transitions

When the Rector of the parish retires or resigns, the Archdeacon should be notified. The Bishop will make a decision about the continued service of the deacon in a parish in transition. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

F. Required Trainings

Deacons are required to have the following trainings: Safeguarding God’s People, Safeguarding God’s Children, and Dismantling Racism. Each of these trainings must be updated every five years. The trainings can be completed online or in person. For more information, please contact the Canon to the Ordinary.

G. Voting at Diocesan Convention

Deacons have voice and vote at Diocesan Convention and are seated with the parish/ministry they serve. In a vote by orders, deacons vote as clergy

H. Retirement

Canon III.7.7 –“On reaching the age of seventy-two years, a Deacon shall resign from all positions of active service in this Church, and the resignation shall be accepted. The Bishop may, with the consent of the Deacon, assign a resigned Deacon to any congregation, other community of faith or ministry in another setting, for a term not to exceed twelve months, and this term may be renewed.”

The letter of resignation should be sent to the Bishop in advance of the deacon’s birthday. The Archdeacon should also be notified. If the deacon wishes to remain in service in the parish, the letter of resignation should include that request. A letter of support from the rector should also accompany the deacon’s letter.

Appendix A;

**The Deacon Covenant Diocese of Western North Carolina
Covenant Agreement
for
The Reverend Deacon**

and

Prologue

Deacons are ordained to a special ministry directly under the Bishop to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely. They are called to make Christ and his redemptive love known by word and example, to those among whom they live and work and worship. They are called to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world, to assist the bishop and presbyters in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments and to carry out other duties as assigned by the bishop (Book of Common Prayer, pp. 543-544). A deacon is assigned to a parish by the Bishop to bring the needs of the world to the church through teaching, preaching, pastoral care and participating in liturgical activities which remind the parish of each baptized person's call to serve those in need. In proclaiming the Gospel, in contributing to and overseeing the Prayers of the People, in assisting at the altar and the distribution of communion, and in dismissing the congregation to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord, the deacon encourages the people of God to live out their Baptismal promises.

Mutual Agreement regarding Roles and Responsibilities

1. Remembering that the role of the deacon is a way of bringing the needs of the world to the church and the church to the world, the deacon shall have a servant ministry in the community. The following is a description of this ministry at _____:
(provide your ministry focus and mutual goals at your assigned parish)

2. The ministry of the deacon is to educate, empower and encourage members of the parish to fulfill their Baptismal vows by service in the world. In addition to liturgical duties, the deacon will work in harmony with the rector and other leaders in the parish to establish relationships through ministries within the parish. These may include, but are not limited to, attendance at Vestry meetings with seat and voice, teaching Sunday school, mentoring EfM groups, pastoral care, and training Lay Eucharist Ministers. The deacon's focus should be on empowering the ministry of the laity. The following is a description of parish responsibilities at _____:
(provide your ministry focus and mutual goals at your assigned parish)

3. The deacon shall participate in the annual Diocesan Convention (*Diocese WNC Policy Manual p. 4*), and the Deacons' Retreat (*Canon III.7.2*). The deacon is encouraged to participate in other clergy activities including Clergy overnights, if it is possible with the deacon's employment responsibilities.

4. Many parishes in the diocese do not have a deacon assigned to them, so each deacon shall serve at least bi-annually with the Bishop during parish visits.

Times of Work and Leave

1. The deacon is a part-time non-stipendiary member of the church staff. The deacon will give hours of service per week in outreach ministry and parish responsibilities, with the understanding that this service will not conflict with the deacon's salaried employment.

2. Because it is important for the deacon to maintain professional responsibilities, spiritual life and growth, physical health, family life, and balance in life, the deacon will take Sundays off per year, as well as two weeks per year of time for spiritual retreat, continuing education and formation, and vacation.

3. The deacon will be encouraged to take sabbatical time. The guidelines adopted by the Executive Council in 2012 (p. 31 Diocese WNC Policy Manual) are ten weeks after five years, eleven weeks after six years or twelve weeks after seven years of service. Sabbatical time shall be scheduled in conversation with the rector and vestry. The Bishop and Archdeacon should be notified of sabbatical schedules.

4. Every deacon is strongly encouraged to have a Spiritual Director with whom they should meet regularly. The deacon at parish has a spiritual director.

Yes () No () Meetings take place _____ / month.

Expenses

The parish, _____, will establish a fund to assist the deacon with expenses related to continuing education (*Canon III.7.5*). The deacon should be reimbursed for expenses related to Diocesan Convention and other required diocesan events. The parish may agree to compensate the deacon for mileage.

Ministry Review

1. The rector and deacon agree to meet monthly with other leaders in the church to celebrate joys and successes, establish goals and clarify expectations of all parties to strengthen the ministry shared together (*Canon III.7.4*)

2. The deacon and rector shall have an annual review of this covenant and make amendments as necessary consistent with changes to ministry focus and/or responsibilities. Updated covenants are to be submitted to the Bishop's office no later than January 15. (Canon III.7.4a)

3. The deacon shall provide a written communication of their ministry annually to the Bishop and the Archdeacon. This letter should include a review of the deacon's ministry both in the world and in the church as well as information regarding continuing education and goals for the following year. The deacon is encouraged to share joys and concern about his/her ministry. Reports are due to the Bishop and Archdeacon by January 15. (Canon III.7.4b)

The Ending of a Diaconal Relationship

1. If the rector of the parish to which the deacon is assigned leaves the parish, the Archdeacon should be notified immediately.

2. If for any reason this diaconal relationship becomes imperiled, both the deacon and the church should seek wisdom and advice of the Bishop. This relationship of ministry, however, may be ended at the sole discretion of the Bishop should he/she choose to assign the deacon to other duties for the good of the wider church.

3. The Deacon, the Rector, or the Wardens may petition the Bishop for a change in assignment for the Deacon at any time any of them feel this would be helpful for the good of the congregation or the promotion of the Gospel.

4. It is understood that at the time the deacon reaches the age of 72 he/she will notify the Bishop and the Archdeacon of this event. The deacon will submit a letter of resignation in accordance with the Canons. The Bishop may reappoint the deacon to his/her existing ministry or appoint the deacon to another ministry as the Bishop sees fit. Any appointment is for a one-year period and is renewable annually. (Canon III.7.711/29/17)

To be signed and dated by all the following in pledge to this covenant agreement:

_____, Deacon Date _____

_____, Rector

_____, Senior Warden (on behalf of the Vestry)

_____, Bishop

Appendix B – The Deacons’ Liturgical Customary



Diocese of Western North Carolina Deacon’s Customary

This customary has been authorized by the Bishop as a guide for deacons serving in the Diocese of Western North Carolina. This customary establishes the protocol to be followed by deacons and priests as it relates to the liturgies and sacraments of the Church.

The Holy Eucharist

When a deacon is one of the ministers of the Eucharist, and not the sole Officiant, the deacon should read the Gospel lesson, read the biddings of the Prayers of the People, bid the invitation to Confession and pronounce the Dismissal. Additionally, the deacon should prepare the altar which includes the preparation of the vessels, attending to additional chalices and patens before the administration and may perform or supervise the ablutions.

In addition, the Deacon should stand with the celebrant at the altar and should assist in administering communion. A deacon may assist with the distribution of bread.

When a deacon is administering bread during the Communion and comes to a person who does not receive, it is appropriate for the deacon to place their hand on the person’s head or shoulder and say, “The peace of the Lord be always with you,” or “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us evermore.” No sign of the cross may be made.

If more than one deacon is a minister at the Eucharist, it is appropriate that both be at the altar with the celebrant. However, neither of these deacons, nor any priest or layperson who might stand with the celebrant and deacon at the altar, is to be referred to as the “subdeacon,” a term for an office which no longer exists.

A priest functioning in the deacon’s liturgical role is not to wear diaconal vestments and is not to be referred to as a deacon. Nor is it appropriate for lay readers, acolytes, or other laypersons assisting at a service to wear diaconal vestments.

Communion from the Reserved Sacrament-Rite I and II

The Deacon's Administration of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament is not a Eucharist and may only be conducted with the permission of the Bishop or The Canon to the Ordinary.

Administration of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament is a unique service, conducted by the Deacon only in extremis when a Priest is unavailable, communicating the previously consecrated bread and wine from a previous Eucharist. Accordingly, this service is not to replace a Eucharist but rather to extend a previous one. No similarity to The Great Thanksgiving is intended.

The Deacon emphasizes this distinction by avoiding words and actions that are included in a Eucharist celebrated by a priest. The Deacon does not officiate from behind the altar, but rather relates to the altar as a layperson would, either kneeling before, beside, or standing to the side of the altar.

General Comments

1. The Deacon needs to ensure that there is Reserved Sacrament available. If Reserved Sacrament is needed, a priest or Bishop must consecrate the elements during a service of Holy Eucharist.
2. At celebrations of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament, the Order for Morning or Evening Prayer may be used in place of all that precedes the Offertory. The rubrics for these services referring to "If a Eucharist is to follow," apply to the Deacons' Administration of the Reserved Sacrament as well.
3. The Deacon bids the Confession of Sin.
4. The Deacon says the Absolution (printed in the BCP), still kneeling, and substituting "us" for "you" and "our" for "your".
5. The Prayer in the middle of Page 397(BCP) is said in unison prior to the Lord's Prayer. (See sample liturgy on page 15 of this customary)
6. The Deacon speaks the words "The Gifts of God for the people of God", and may raise the elements or points towards the elements. The deacon may stand behind the altar while extending the invitation.
7. Following the Post Communion Prayer the Deacon proceeds directly to the dismissal. There is no blessing.
8. The Deacon enters the service into the register with the notation "Reserved Sacrament."

Use of Morning and Evening Prayer, Rites I and II, when preceding Communion

1. No Canticle follows the Gospel.
2. Canticles are sung or said standing.
3. If a sermon is given, it is delivered after the Gospel.
4. The Gospel is always included when Communion from the Reserve Sacrament follows Morning or Evening Prayer.
5. The Intercessions are to conform to the directions on BCP page 383.

6. If the service is to be Rite I, the same format is used except using the Rite I language and form where appropriate. The same restrictions and differences apply. In addition, the deacon may speak the comfortable words prior to the exchange of the peace.

Sample Liturgy of the Word with Deacon's Administration of Communion from Reserved Sacrament: Rite II

The Word of God

The Liturgy of the Word is conducted by the Deacon as in the Holy Eucharist except that, after the confession, if said, the Deacon remains kneeling and says:

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

Announcements may be made

Offertory

An appropriate offertory sentence may be said.

Administration of Communion from Reserved Sacrament by a Deacon

The Deacon does not stand behind the altar except to place the bread on the Paten and wine in the Chalice and when communicating the bread and wine to lay ministers, if present.

Using the prayer on page 397 (BCP) the Deacon and People pray, standing or kneeling

Officiant: The Lord be with you.

People: *And also with you.*

Officiant: Let us pray.

Officiant and People:

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who lives and reigns forever and ever. *Amen.*

Then follows the Lord's Prayer:

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Deacon:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Deacon may elevate or point towards the Sacraments and says:

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

The Deacon delivers the Sacrament in both kinds to the people. It is appropriate for lay minister(s) to assist with the chalice(s).

The Bread and the Cup are given to the communicants with these words:

The Body (Blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life. [Amen.]

or with these words:

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [Amen.]

The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. [Amen.]

During the ministration of Communion, hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung.

After Communion, the Deacon says:

Let us pray.

Deacon and People:

Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food in the
Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Send us now into the world in peace, and
grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

or the following:

Almighty and everliving God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do, to
love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

The Deacon may then say: (no sign of the cross is made, including crossing self)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
with us all evermore

Closing Hymn

The Deacon dismisses them with these words (or another dismissal sentence may be used):

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People: Thanks be to God.

If the service is to be Rite I, the same format is used except using the Rite I language and form where appropriate. The same restrictions and differences apply.

Sources

*The Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church
Prayer Book Rubrics Expanded, Byron D. Stuhlman
The Diocese of Oklahoma*

Baptism

Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints' Day or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions or when a priest or bishop is present.

If on any one of the above-named days the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, the Bishop may specially authorize a deacon to preside. At the Thanksgiving over the water all is read, however the deacon does not touch the water during the prayer. In addition, the deacon omits the prayer over the candidates (page 308) and does not perform the Chrismation. The Baptism may be entered into the church Registry, with the notation, "*Baptism by a Deacon.*" *Note: As soon as practical the person baptized should receive Chrismation by a priest or bishop.*

Confirmation

Confirmation is an Episcopal Act. The role of the deacon during the liturgy is determined and under the direction of the Assisting Priest and/or the Bishop.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon must obtain the permission of the Bishop in order to officiate at this service. If permitted to officiate by the Bishop, a deacon may use the service outlined in the BCP, omitting the nuptial blessing that follows the Prayers. Additionally, a deacon must be in compliance with the state laws of North Carolina and the Canons of the Church. The marriage may be entered into the church registry with the notation, "Marriage by a Deacon." Communion from the reserved sacrament is not to be used in conjunction with the Celebration of a Marriage by a Deacon.

When assisting a priest at a marriage ceremony, the deacon may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform assisting functions at the Eucharist.

A Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child

On occasion the rite might be used in the hospital or home; in other circumstances, it is particularly appropriate for use at the first parish Eucharist a family attends after the birth or adoption of a child.

If a deacon is presiding at the service, a blessing is not given, but rather a prayer offered for the child and the family.

In addition, there are no manual acts made by the deacon (hand over the child, holding child or having the child brought to the altar).

The Reconciliation of a Penitent

A deacon may not conduct the Reconciliation of a Penitent. Only a priest or bishop may give absolution.

Ministration to the Sick

Part I of this office may be led by a deacon or a lay person, with the exception of the absolution at the end which can only be given by a priest or bishop. A priest or a bishop should conduct part II, which consists of the Laying on of Hands and Anointing. However, in case of necessity, a deacon or lay person may anoint with oil blessed by a bishop or priest using the prayer on page 456 of the BCP, *“I lay my hands upon you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love.”*

Ministration at the Time of Death

A variety of materials are provided in the Book of Common Prayer for use with persons at or near the point of death and those gathered with them (BCP pg. 462-467). The materials are intended primarily for use by the “Minister of the Congregation,” who should be called at such time, but they may be led by anyone in cases of necessity.

The first prayer is for a person near the point of death. The Litany at the Time of Death is meant for use by those gathered around the dying person. Two prayers of commendation and the final brief prayer for rest in peace follow it.

The Burial of the Dead: Rite I and II

A priest normally presides at the service. It is appropriate that the bishop, when present, presides at the Eucharist and pronounces the Commendation. When the service of a priest cannot be obtained, a deacon may preside at the service using the rubrics outlined in the Prayer Book.

If a deacon presides, there is no Eucharist and no blessing of the people offered at the end of the service. In addition, no manual gestures are made during the commendation.

During the prayer of committal, when earth is cast on the coffin (or urn), the deacon does not extend their hand or make a sign of the cross with the dirt.

If the grave is in a place that has not previously been set apart for Christian burial, the Deacon may not consecrate or bless the burial site.

Bishop's Visitations and Diocesan Eucharists

The rubrics for assisting at the Eucharist apply when the Bishop is the celebrant. The deacon should read the Gospel lesson, stopping for a blessing of the Bishop before proceeding into the Nave. The deacon should read the biddings of the Prayers of the People, bid the invitation to Confession and pronounce the Dismissal. Additionally, the deacon should prepare the altar, which includes the preparation of the vessels, attending to additional chalices and patens before the administration and may perform or supervise the ablutions.

The Archdeacon serves as the Chaplain to the Bishop. If The Archdeacon is not present, a priest, deacon or other person may be asked to serve as Chaplain.

Appendix C – The Archdeacon Job Description

The Archdeacon is a deacon of the diocese who is appointed by, responsible to, and with access to the Bishop. The Archdeacon is unpaid, but with expenses provided.

1. The Archdeacon is a liaison between the Bishop(s) and the deacons
 - a. advocating for deacons with the Bishop and in the diocese
 - b. bringing to the Bishop's attention the needs, concerns, and problems of deacons collectively and individually
 - c. communicating the Bishops' wishes and expectations to the deacons
 - d. assisting the Bishop in addressing the pastoral needs of deacons
 - e. helping to arrange opportunities for deacons' communication with each other and with the Bishop
 - f. assisting the deacons and the Bishop in arranging and maintaining satisfactory parochial assignments
2. The Archdeacon has a role in administration with respect to deacons
 - a. assisting in putting in place letters of agreement for deacons
 - b. obtaining annual reports from deacons
 - c. maintaining records of deacons and their assignments and ministries, and of aspirants, postulants, and candidates
 - d. serving as a member ex officio of the Commission on Ministry.
 - e. serving as the Bishop's Chaplain at convention, ordinations, and other diocesan liturgies
 - f. arranging visits to parishes to describe diaconal ministry
 - g. developing ways of identifying aspirants to the diaconate
 - h. educating the diocese about the diaconate
 - i. helping to integrate deacons into the workings of the diocese
 - j. assisting the director of deacon formation in the formation program including conducting initial information interviews with people in discernment.