



ST. JOHN'S NORWAY

ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE BEACHES

What is a Vocational Deacon and Are We Called to this Ministry at St. John's?

This is the first of three articles written to help our community understand what diaconal ministry is and to begin a journey of discerning whether we may have a call to raise up a deacon at St. John's. This first article focuses on the call that we all have as Christians to proclaim the Gospel and be agents of God's love and care for the world. Much of what is written in these articles is based on the The Iona Report, which was received and commended by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in 1989.

The church exists because of the transformational love of God, made known to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. As a community of believers, we are called to proclaim this truth through the witness of our lives, through care and concern for our neighbour, for the world, and for each other. What makes us different from other charitable organizations that may provide relief for the poor and afflicted, strive for justice, and advocate for peace is that our work is rooted in the Gospel that calls us to a ministry of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world.

William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944 was passionate about economic and social reform. Perhaps you know this quote from his book, "Christianity and the Social Order" which was published in 1942. *"The Church is the only organization that does not exist for itself, but for those who live outside of it."* That is not to say that we do not also care for each other as a community of believers. Indeed we do! Christian churches are well known for the care and love they lavish on each other when members are in need, when there is cause for celebration, and in the support we offer each other as we grow in our Christian faith and understanding. The Church offers us a place to gather, to pray, to hear scripture proclaimed, and receive the sacraments; knitting the community of faith together to hear where God may be calling us to be witnesses of the divine love that God has for the whole world.

At baptism, we are all (re)born into the body of Christ and we are therefore all called as individuals, and together as the church, to participate in the Kingdom of God, here on earth, in our very own time and place. All Christians are called to this ministry. The church has classically understood this call in three ways. The **ministry of the presbyter (priest)**, the **ministry of the episcopate (bishop)**, and the **ministry of the diaconate (deacon)**.

All Christians are called to the ministry of the presbyter, which we sometimes refer to as the “*royal priesthood of all believers*”; to live together in reconciled communion, to point to God’s transfiguring power, calling attention to the holy in what is ordinary and in what is exceptional. Some among us are called to be ordained as priests in this ministry, “serving as icons of Christ, inviting us into the holiness of God”.¹

All Christians are called to the ministry *episcopus*; striving for unity with one another, being stewards of the talents and treasure given to us by grace, studying the and learning from the scriptures, and being participants in the good governance of our gathered life. Some among us are called to be ordained and serve as bishops in this ministry, “serving as icons of Christ, inviting us into the fullness of the living body of Christ”.²

All Christians are called to the ministry of *diakonia*, to bring the light of Christ where there is darkness, where there is brokenness, where there is injustice, where there is need. It is the expression of the Gospel through faithful service in the world, participating in God’s Kingdom of peace, love, healing, and reconciliation. Some among us are called to be ordained as deacons in this ministry, “serving as icons of Christ, inviting us into proclamation and service of the gospel for the sake of the world”.³

Our next article will focus on the order of Deacon, as expressed in ordained ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada.

¹ This paragraph is transcribed and slightly edited from *The Iona Report*, page 17

² Ibid

³ Ibid, paragraph continues on page 18 of *The Iona Report*