

**The Deacon Formation Council**  
Report to the 186<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of Georgia

The primary work of the Deacon Formation Council (DFC) is to cultivate the professional development of deacons in our diocese, as well as to promote an increase in well-prepared deacons and the ministries they represent. Bishop Henry has actively supported the ministry of deacons in our diocese in a variety of ways. Under our Bishop's guidance, the order of deacons has continued to develop and grow as a professional group of clergy who are trained and committed ministers for our parish communities.

The Deacon Formation Council (DFC) was established in 2005, with a group of 12 deacons participating as Council members. We were given the initial tasks of: 1) developing a **formal education program** for those candidates in the ordination process using Canon III.6.3 as our definitive bench-mark; 2) developing a **mentoring program**, pairing an experienced deacon with someone in the ordination process in order to provide continuing emotional support and encouragement to the candidate; 3) developing and distributing **educational materials to the parishes** of our diocese regarding the ministry of deacons; 4) developing a variety of means to **encourage collegiality and communication** among the deacons of our diocese; 5) developing a program of **continuing-education** and retreats designed to further the professional capabilities of deacons.

After several months in planning meetings, in April 2006, we presented our first Deacon School for Ministry (DSM) weekend to provide an overview of the academic formation program to the candidates. Since then we have conducted trainings in Christian Ethics, Diakonia-Review of Relevant Canons, Holy Scriptures, Homiletics, Human Awareness & Understanding, Liturgy, Spirituality and Pastoral Care, Theology and Traditions of the Church. We have enjoyed the teaching participation of approximately 16 deacons and countless hours of preparation for the weekends.

The DFC has assumed responsibility for organizing our annual Deacon's retreat at Honey Creek each December. In addition, we hope to provide a means for deacons to share information about the numerous ongoing ministries in our diocese through an annual report, detailing their activities. We are currently in the process of developing a Deacon's Directory for the Diocese of Georgia, including pictures and addresses and parishes served. Our diocesan website includes a deacon's webpage, where we share sermons, book reviews, upcoming conferences, trainings and clergy meetings, as well as other information pertinent to diaconal ministry. We plan to staff a Deacon's Ministry table at convention each year. All DFC and DSM meetings are open and everyone is welcome to join us!

Members of the DFC and DSM have developed a "suggested customary" for continuing education opportunities for deacons. We strongly urge all deacons in our diocese to schedule continuing education and spiritual retreat time each year.

Because deacons are traditionally non-stipendiary, expenses incurred for participation in continuing education remains an issue. We encourage rectors to financially support their deacons from their discretionary funds, and vestries to include a budget line item for continuing education for their deacons. The DSM has established a scholarship fund to aid deacons cover continuing education costs. Contributions to this fund by congregations and individuals are very much appreciated. Checks designated for “Continuing Education for Deacons” should be made out to The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia and mailed to them at Diocesan House 611 East Bay Street, Savannah, GA 31401-1296.

If you have questions regarding any portion of the ordination process for deacons, please feel free to contact any member of our Deacon’s Formation Council or Deacon’s School for Ministry. We welcome opportunities to speak with you or any member of your congregation who may have questions or suggestions.

Respectfully Submitted,  
The Rev. Deacon Geri Thacker Nelson, Chairperson  
Deacon Formation Council