The Diocese of Virginia

Diaconal Formation Institute

Student Handbook

2009-2011
The Diocese of Virginia Diaconal Formation Institute (DFI) prepares men and women to serve as vocational deacons in the Episcopal Church. The mission of the Institute is to provide a program for the education and formation of vocational deacons according to the canons of the Episcopal Church and the specific identified needs of the Diocese. The Institute is under the general oversight of the bishop of Virginia.

The diaconate, as a distinctive order, recalls to the Church, the Body of Christ, that Jesus Christ came to serve and that the Church has a servant identity. A vocational deacon is a person called and empowered by God and the Christian community to a specialized ministry of servanthood under the direction of the bishop. A person called to this unique order often continues in established ministries, while accepting the additional yoke of ordained leadership.

During the Service for the Ordination of Deacons in the Book of Common Prayer, a deacon is instructed to “make Christ and his redemptive love known by your word and example … to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world … to assist the bishop and priest in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and sacraments.” The DFI curriculum is designed to ensure an academic education in biblical, historical and theological studies, as well as the specific pastoral and liturgical skills and experience needed to equip the future deacon for effective ministry.

The goals and objectives of the theoretical studies can be achieved through a variety of off-site institutions or Internet course offerings. All theoretical course work will be evaluated against the core requirements for ordination, as prescribed by canon, prior to a final examination. Courses in the sacramental and the practical aspects of diaconal ministry will be offered by the Institute. The final examination will be a combination of written and oral questions. All grading will be a Pass/Need Additional Work system. Successful completion of all training requirements for ordination, including the final examination, should be achieved within three years of being admitted as a postulant in the Diocese of Virginia.

Following ordination there will be a directed six-month field practicum under the supervision of a parish priest and the faculty.
from the Institute. This must be completed before the deacon is fully licensed by the bishop.

Licensure is at the discretion of the bishop with agreement from the parish priest.

**FEES**

Effective September 1, 2009, the fee for attending the Diaconal Formation Institute for the entire program period, including tuition, lunch and beverages, is $1,500, payable to the Diocese of Virginia in three installments of $500 every six months. The first installment is due before the first day of class. There is an additional fee for the Episcopal Leadership Institute (ELI). Scholarships may be available through the Diocese to assist eligible applicants. In addition, students are expected to purchase all required textbooks and other materials.

**THE CALENDAR OF THE INSTITUTE**

The calendar is designed to provide both spiritual and practical formation for future deacons. To this end, classes start once each year, in September. Classes will meet for a full day on one Saturday of each month, beginning at 8 a.m. with Morning Prayer. The class day will usually end by 4 p.m. Each class session will be 80 minutes with a 20-minute break. A lunch break of one hour and 15 minutes will be taken between the second and third sessions.

**Daily Schedule**

8 a.m. .......................................................... Morning Prayer
8:45-10:05 a.m. ............................................ 1st class session
10:05-10:25 a.m. ........................................... Break
10:25-11:45 a.m. ........................................... 2nd class session
11:45 a.m.-1p.m. ........................................... Lunch
1-2:20 p.m. .................................................. 3rd class session
2:20-2:40 p.m. .............................................. Break
2:40-4 p.m. .................................................. 4th session

Sites for the classes are determined, based on availability and the geographic dispersion of students.
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Student attendance is expected at all class sessions. If a student needs to be excused from class, s/he must notify the course instructor prior to the beginning of the class session. Any missed work must be completed before the end of the course.

All homework assignments must be met in a timely manner to obtain a passing grade. Depending on the course instructor, these may include written papers, verbal presentations in class, Internet searches or field work.

In addition, students will participate in quarterly self-evaluations with their teachers.

Ember Day letters must be written to the bishop as required by canon four times each year until ordination.

GENERAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The student will demonstrate:

- the ability to integrate knowledge and experience, in theological reflection;
- an awareness of the implicit connections between all canonical areas of study;
- an awareness of the impact of the deacon’s ministry on those with whom s/he is in relationship;
- skills in conflict management;
- skills required to empower individuals and groups;
- skills for raising awareness about contemporary issues;
- an understanding of the role of the deacon as an interpreter and agent of change;
- skills in community coalition building;
- skills in working with volunteers;
- skills in group dynamics;
- skills in communicating the presence of Christ;
- consistency in attendance at class, participation in class and record keeping; and
- timely submission of Ember Day letters to the bishop throughout the course.
COURSES REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION, COURSE DESCRIPTIONS, AND SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. To be completed prior to enrollment in DFI: There will be a written test given prior to the first day of class to assess student competency in these areas. This test is not designed to affect admission as a postulant but to form the basis for a learning plan if the student does not meet the basic objectives.

1. **Holy Scripture (Old and New Testament):** The student will demonstrate academic knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament by:

   - identifying the major themes of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Writings, the Gospels and Epistles and the Book of Revelation;
   - identifying and understanding the major themes, figures and events of the Bible and their relationship to each other;
   - defining and working with different forms of biblical literature;
   - identifying source materials within their historical context;
   - describing the evolution of prophecy from Hebrew Scripture through the New Testament;
   - explaining the historical and theological relationship between Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament;
   - identifying the Synoptic Gospels, their history, development, similarities and differences as they relate to the ministry and mission of Jesus;
   - describing the development of the Gospel of John and its theological importance; and
   - identifying and explaining the issues related to the development of the New Testament Canon.

2. **Church History**--The student will demonstrate a basic knowledge of Anglican Church history by:

   - discussing and explaining major themes of Church history;
   - explaining how historical events preceding and continuing during the life of Jesus affected His life and teachings;
   - describing the historical issues and causes of change in the Church;
- describing the development of the Anglican Church from the first century through the 20th century including the major reform movements and their influence on current trends;
- defining “heresy” and demonstrating an understanding of the major heresies throughout church history;
- describing the development of the Episcopal Church in the United States;
- describing the development of the Episcopal Church in Virginia; and
- discussing the roles and importance of such church centers as Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople in the missionary expansion into Western Europe.

B. Phase I (Postulant)

1. History of Anglican Spirituality and Morality

This course will explore the history and development of Anglican spirituality and morality from the New Testament to present time with a special emphasis on the role of prevailing individual beliefs and culture.

The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of Anglican Spirituality and morality by:
- articulating how scripture, tradition and reason form the foundation of Anglican theory and influence practice;
- articulating methods for discerning the theological implications of contemporary issues;
- describing the development of Anglican morality from Jesus to the present day against prevailing beliefs and culture; and
- describing the development of Anglican spirituality from Jesus to the present day against prevailing beliefs and culture.

2. Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer

This course is an overview of the history of the development of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) and liturgy in the western Church with emphasis on Baptism, the Eucharist and the Daily Offices. Reading, reflection and class discussion will help students articulate the Church’s theology of Baptism and the Eucharist, understand the shape of the Daily Office and use the resources of the BCP to plan worship.
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the BCP by:
- describing the history of the development of the BCP and how revision influenced practice;
- discussing the historical documents of the BCP;
- identifying and describing the major and minor sacraments;
- explaining understanding of the theology of Baptism and the Eucharist;
- explaining the significance of the development of the creeds on church practices;
- identifying and explaining the development of the Daily Offices; and
- identifying and explaining all other orders of service in the BCP and how changes influenced practice.

3. **Foundations in Social Ministry**

The primary goal of this course is to explore the connection between the Church and the world through the lens of the deacon’s liturgical roles. By reexamining the baptismal covenant and the students’ own experience of Holy Baptism, this class will explore the church’s diaconal ministry in the world and the deacon’s role in embodying that ministry.

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the foundations of social ministry by:

- reviewing the meaning and significance of Holy Baptism in the life of the church as it relates to the calling of all the Baptized in their daily lives;
- articulating how each of the deacon’s liturgical roles relates to the church’s bridge ministries to the world;
- engaging laity in the workplace and listening to their witness about their ministry in their daily lives;
- exploring how the deacon makes the connection between the church and issues of social service and justice;
- articulating a knowledge of family systems theory and its applications to pastoral care and parish life and ministry;
- articulating an understanding of the dynamics of “expectations” in both the giver and the receiver roles of a pastoral care relationship.
4. **Anglican Identity, Mission and the Diaconate**

This course examines the history, unique polity and identity of the Anglican Communion and of TEC as a member province, with attention to the historic office of the diaconate and its expression in various parts of the Communion and in TEC. Special attention is given to the mission of the Church in the world as an apostolic community and to the unique role of the deacon in the fulfillment of that mission.

The student will demonstrate an understanding of Anglican identity, mission and the diaconate by:

- articulating a basic knowledge of the traditional areas of systematic theology;
- articulating how contemporary theology has been affected by feminist, liberation, creation, African-American, Latin American and Native American theologies;
- articulating some of the unique contributions of Anglican theology to the world;
- articulating the history of the diaconate from apostolic times to the present day with emphasis on the uniqueness of the deacon in the Church;
- describing the history and current issues of ecclesiastical authority; and
- describing the history and current issues of diaconal ministry.

5. **Leadership in Social Ministry Practicum**  
   *(Episcopal Leadership Institute)*

ELI is a year-long program of leadership development in which the participant’s own ministry project provides the context for action/reflection with a group of trusted colleagues. Participants meet four times a year for a three-day weekend. The core curriculum includes course work in leadership theory, group and change processes, conflict management, servant leadership and biblical models of leadership. Collegial reflection on events from the participant’s ministry projects, shared worship and an individual study plan will complete the program.
C. Phase II (Candidate)

1. **Liturghical Practicum: Theory and Practice for the Deacon**

This course will explore the theory and practice of diaconal liturgical ministry and its relationship to other orders within the Church. The student will become familiar with canon law pertaining to the functioning of the deacon in the Episcopal Church and with policies in the Diocese of Virginia. There will be practical application of skills and knowledge of the deacon’s role in the Eucharistic liturgy and in situations outside the Church. Students practice with the instructor to master the basics of doing liturgy comfortably and competently. Students will be designated as master of ceremonies for worship and are responsible for organizing liturgies as assigned.

The student will demonstrate a theoretical knowledge and the practical skills of the deacon by:

- identifying the role of the deacon in all of the liturgical settings in the Book of Common Prayer;
- articulating facility with the Book of Common Prayer, the Bible, Lesser Feasts and Fasts and the Book of Occasional Services;
- appropriately selecting a variety of hymns and music for worship;
- describing the licensure procedure for deacons in the Diocese of Virginia; and
- explaining the different ministries of bishops, priests and deacons and laity and their appropriate roles in the liturgy.

2. **Homiletics**

This course teaches the student the organizational, mechanical, voice projection and exegetical skills needed in the preparation of sermons. The emphasis will be on practicing and delivering sermons and receiving critical feedback within a safe community.

The student will demonstrate knowledge of homiletics by:

- identifying different types of exegesis of scripture into a homily;
- selecting appropriate passages for a diaconal homily in a variety of services;
- organizing material and resources appropriately;
- using voice techniques, gestures and props as appropriate to enhance the message to the audience;
- preparing and delivering at least two sermons, one for use in a Sunday Eucharist to an adult congregation and one for use in a family/children oriented service; and
- preparing and delivering one specialty-oriented sermon, such as funeral or marriage homily.

3. **Spiritual Formation**

Spiritual formation through prayer, biblical studies and meditation will be explored through different approaches and styles. Students will spend time discussing and journaling their ongoing experiences of God in daily life, the experiences of being called by God as leaders, and the experience of growing from call to specific ministries. This course is an opportunity for the student to develop the discipline of theological reflection, a process that involves examining specific ministerial experiences of the student in the light of Scripture, tradition and reason.

The student will demonstrate growth in personal spiritual formation and integration of a spiritual life in his/her diaconal role by:
- showing growth in theological reflection on experiences of God in daily life;
- articulating the various forms of prayer and use of these forms in both personal life and public worship;
- developing a personal “rule of life” and understanding the role that this plays in personal self-care;
- keeping a personal journal describing faith experiences and maturation;
- participating in group discussions of spiritual and diaconal formation;
- articulating an understanding of self-care and self-awareness in the role of pastoral care-giver in spiritual care issues;
- articulating a personal spiritual theology, including personal preferences and biases; and
- articulating the theological foundations of one’s own spirituality.
4. Pastoral and Ethical Issues in the Diaconate

This course offers an overview of the unique pastoral theology of the diaconate and issues related to that theology. Contemporary ethical issues in the areas of pastoral and social ethics receive special attention as they relate to the ministry and identity of the deacon.

The student will demonstrate the ability to make good ethical decisions in the light of the Christian Gospel by:

- describing the steps and issues in the process of making ethical decisions;
- articulating his/her own belief system in personal conduct as it relates to the ethical standards of a Christian in society today;
- explaining the relationship between ethics and contemporary social issues;
- articulating knowledge of resources for making ethical decisions;
- explaining the policy of the Episcopal Church on a variety of social issues;
- identifying and analyzing social justice issues facing the Church today;
- identifying a wide range of local resources for referrals; and
- articulating a range of viewpoints about at least two contemporary issues.

Directed Placement Practicum

This begins after ordination and will continue for six months. Students will be offered a choice of setting for this practical ministry by the Bishop with recommendations from the faculty. Students will be offered a choice of two or three options for interviews. The final decision grows out of discernment gained during these interviews. A directed learning agreement, a sample of which will be found in the manual for the Directed Placement Practicum, will be signed prior to starting the practicum. Upon completion of the practicum, the Letter of Agreement between the bishop, rector and Deacon will be signed. The content of the practicum is to be recorded and discussed with the supervising priest and faculty on a regular basis, at least at the beginning, mid-point and end of the directed Practicum.

The student will demonstrate the ability to function as deacon in a parish setting by:
articulating a working knowledge of church finances, record
keeping and church maintenance including altar guild;

developing a working contract (letter of agreement) with the
rector/vicar/priest-in-charge and with the bishop’s
approval;

showing evidence of practical experience in all roles of the
liturgical deacon;

preaching with evidence of critical feedback; and

developing at least one Christian education program with
goals, objectives and visual aids.

D. Other Requirements

Prior to graduation, all students must show evidence of training in
substance abuse awareness, the Church’s teaching on racism, child
abuse prevention, adult sexual misconduct prevention and Title IV
(disciplinary canons), as required for ordination in the Diocese of
Virginia.