

Truly Called... Two



SC015962

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Preface

In December 1994, the SEC became the first Anglican Province to approve the Porvoo Common Statement. This declares, amongst other things, a commitment 'to work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry'. Since then there have been two consultations on *diakonia* and diaconal ministry (London 2006 and Oslo 2009) and a further consultation is planned for Dublin in 2013. Our working group was set up by the Faith & Order Board 'to respond to the Recommendations' from the second consultation (see Appendix Three). These recommendations require us to consider not simply the ordained diaconate but also what *diakonia* means for the SEC.

Scotland is not Finland or Iceland; our ecclesiastical and cultural histories are quite distinct. We cannot find ready-made in the Scandinavian church a model of *diakonia* or the diaconate that we can usefully import into Scotland. On the other hand, our participation in the Porvoo Communion challenges us to explore our own tradition, to acknowledge difference yet also to recognize common ground. As will be argued in this paper, this open-minded and self-critical encounter with our Christian brothers and sisters has helped us to unlock again doors that have been long closed; to visit the treasury of our own tradition and to discover there ancient truths that speak to a new age.

This is not the first re-evaluation of the diaconate in recent times in the SEC. In 1987, a Bishops' Working Group, under the convenership of Robert Halliday, produced the report, *Truly Called by God to Serve as a Deacon*.¹ Whilst a lot of ministerial history has passed under the bridge since 1987, that report remains remarkably fresh and persuasive. Whilst acknowledging that ours is a work in progress and lacks the polish of this earlier report, yet we dare to claim kinship with it in the title of this paper, and we affirm the insights contained there.

My warm thanks to all who have shared in the deliberations of our working group, including those who have contributed to this paper and its appendices. We hope that it will stimulate a wide debate throughout the SEC.

I am pleased to say that the Working Group approached its task with enthusiasm and with an open mind. We ask you to receive this paper in the same spirit.

John Armes

1. Now is the time

Exactly ten years ago, a Church of England report on the vocational diaconate was published entitled *For Such a Time as This*². Whilst it failed to make any significant impact on practice south of the Border, it did give rise to a significant piece of theological discussion written by specialists in the fields of ecumenical theology, ecclesiology, biblical studies, philosophical theology and ethics.³ This discussion about the imperative of mission, the nature of ministry and the relationship between ordained and lay forms of ministry has since influenced much thinking on these subjects north of the Border⁴. In the wake – and in the light - of these theological discussions, the authors of this document argue that now is the time to be looking again at the issue of a renewed diaconate here in the Scottish Episcopal Church. This does indeed feel like a *kairos* moment in the life of our church, not least as regards this issue.

We argue this on two counts: firstly, a revitalised diaconate is an essential component of a Church concerned with mission - and ‘mission’ is very much in the air at present. The Spirit appears to be calling us as a Church to look *outwards* at the society in which we are set and to connect our lives of worship with the needs of God’s world more effectively than hitherto. *The Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy* is predicated upon an understanding of the primacy of mission. It states that:

*Our primary task as a church is the work of mission. We believe that the mission is God’s mission – his unceasing work of lovingly drawing back the world to himself. Our task is to be part of that redemptive and engaging work. We are called to share with people the good news of Jesus Christ and of God’s love for them. We are called to go and make disciples, to baptise and to teach.*⁵

It follows that a ‘mission-shaped’ Church needs to renew that part of her being – ‘essence’, ‘ordering’ – which represents this centrifugal calling to ‘commissioned agency’ - *diakonia* - and so enables others to fulfil their own vocation to be ambassadors of the Gospel and apostles in daily life. If, in the words of *Eucharistic Presidency*, ‘the ordained ministry is best conceived as a gift of God to his church to promote, release and clarify all other ministries’⁶, then the Church needs a visible symbol of that crucial aspect of her being. Deacons, those ‘sent with authority’ (in John Collins’s redefinition⁷) to assist the Bishop and Priests in a diocese in proclaiming the Gospel to the world, are a sign and sacramental embodiment of that Gospel commissioning, that missionary task.

Not that this is a new understanding. The last significant piece of work undertaken on the diaconate in the SEC was a ground-breaking report entitled *Truly Called by God to Serve as a Deacon*, published in 1987.⁸ It made the very same points and is worth quoting at length:

*It must be stated clearly that Deacons are primarily a task force at the disposal of the Bishop, for work, most of which is out in the world. They have their proper place in a Diocesan rather than a congregational strategy of mission. They are a pioneer corps rather than auxiliaries to share the load of existing intra-congregational ministries. The mark of true Diaconal ministry is to foster the initiation of lay ministries galore - to pioneer and then hand over in order to be free again to pioneer. The visible Distinctive Diaconate can be expected to give new emphasis to all Christians’ serving ministry to the world for Christ’s sake, and to generate practical support for Christian lay people in their work in the world ...The growth of Diaconal service to the community, evoking interest in Episcopalian congregations, and visibly demonstrating that the Church does not exist for itself, but for those outside it, will mean much to the numerous members of our Church who have been regretting the Church’s preoccupation with ecclesiastical conservation, financial survival, and structural adaptation, and who will welcome and identify with the renewed, institutional affirmation of the love of God which is not restricted to members of his Church. It can be seen that, far from clericalising lay leadership or monopolising opportunities to serve, the ministry of Distinctive Deacons will proclaim the Church’s commitment to the transformation of human society by the Reign of God, will renew enthusiasm for the Church in members who are depressed by its seeming introversion, will promote a more outward-looking social conscience among Church people generally, and will generate new forms of lay ministry.*⁹

Similarly the 1996 Hanover Report of the Anglican Lutheran International Commission “The diaconate as ecumenical opportunity”, commented that

raising the possibility of an ordained diaconate, visibly incorporated into ordered ministry and eucharistic liturgy, challenges the church in every location both to take greater ownership of diakonia as a sign of apostolicity and to encourage the whole people of God to understand their daily life as an arena for Christian service. Likewise, the emergence of a distinctive, lifelong ordained diaconate in the Anglican Church invites all Christians better to integrate worship and service in their daily lives. A revitalized diaconate can be a means for equipping the laity to become serving leaders in their various callings and for mobilizing them to become effective agents for the transformation of worldly structures and institutions.¹⁰

In short, the diaconate enacts and brings into focus a central aspect of the church’s missionary being, namely the diaconal calling of the whole church to proclaim the revelation of the gospel of Christ to the world. A truly missionary – or even ‘mission-shaped’ - church needs such a sign and reminder of her vocation, indeed is impoverished without it.

Secondly, the Church Ecumenical is awakening to the need for a renewed diaconate. The current discussions in the Scottish Episcopal Church were occasioned by the need to respond to The Communion of the Porvoo Churches’ *Second Consultation on Diaconal Ministry* held in Oslo, 27-30 April 2009¹¹, this meeting being an earnest of the Communion’s continuing work of deepening its members’ understanding of and collaboration in the diaconate. But there are similar moves in a multitude of traditions and denominations as they likewise work through the implications of seeing *diakonia* as an essential aspect of the ministry of the whole church¹². The renewal of the diaconate over the past thirty years is not only “an escalating phenomenon”¹³ but also “an ecumenical opportunity”.¹⁴ Five major ecumenical documents or agreements since 1982 have specifically mentioned the diaconate as an area of particular concern: BEM (1982),¹⁵ Meissen (1991),¹⁶ Porvoo (1995),¹⁷ Fetter Lane (1995)¹⁸ and Hanover (1996).¹⁹ As the ecumenical statement formulated at St George’s House Windsor in 1997 put it,

It is our experience that, in the late twentieth century, the diaconate is a growing movement whose voice is increasingly audible around the world, in the part it is playing in changing patterns of ministry and mission. Coming from catholic and reformed traditions, we have discovered a converging vision for ministry.²⁰

That this should be happening at a time of acute political and social change - at least in the developed world - should not surprise us. As Bishop Barry Rogerson has pointed out²¹, God has repeatedly raised up a renewed diaconate at times of significant social upheaval: in fourth and fifth century Rome, during the Reformation period and in the phase of rapid industrialization across Europe in the early nineteenth century. He comments:

At the very time when our structures in Europe are disintegrating, we need people with the time to organise partnerships, gather resources and train the baptised to engage in diaconal activity.²²

This critical-prophetic aspect of *diakonia* is a gift of God to the world mediated through the Church – a *timely* gift, it is argued, to our own society. Early twenty-first century Scotland, suffering all the stresses caused by post-industrialization, economic cuts, debate over its identity and the birth of ‘the Big Society’, is surely yet another such ‘disintegrating’ context.

For these two reasons, we believe we stand at a *kairos* moment regarding the vocational diaconate in Scotland.

2. *Diakonia* and the Diaconate in Porvoo and SEC Traditions

Contemporary New Testament scholars dispute whether the seven disciples appointed to distribute food in Acts 6.1-6 were the first ‘deacons’. *Diakonia* in the New Testament is now thought to cover ministry in a more general sense.²³ But what is not disputed is that the mission of the church includes an active love for neighbour as a way of modelling God’s love for all people. From early times this was embodied in the ministry of the church and it is this that we find reflected still in the order of deacons in the various Lutheran churches.

The statement from the Oslo Consultation on *diakonia* affirms that, whatever the social context, *diakonia* is an ‘essential aspect of mission’, of the whole church.²⁴ It goes further and suggests that both priestly and diaconal ministry is to be derived from the ministry of Christ²⁵ who was sent by the Father to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

However, whilst *diakonia* and the vocational diaconate sit easily within the language and culture of our Porvoo Lutheran partners, the same cannot be said for Scottish Episcopalians or of British Anglicans in general.

Whilst there was a time in Britain when the Church was a primary provider of education and social service, this role was largely displaced by the emergence of the Welfare State. In Scandinavia and other parts of Europe, on the other hand, the churches retain to this day an expectation that they will offer healthcare, social welfare and aspects of education; this supported by Church taxes gathered by the State. The Deacon, in many Lutheran churches, is a recognized and respected figure, trained in a caring profession (nursing, teaching, social work, counselling, youth work) and authorized to perform these responsibilities within church-based projects. The role is a longstanding one, expressing the church’s caring ministry as opposed to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament which belongs to those directly ordained to the Presbyterate.

In other words, *diakonia* in the Lutheran tradition tends to be identified with the socio-caritative rather than the critical-prophetic dimension of church life. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that understandings of *diakonia* in the Porvoo Lutheran churches are static. The Church of Norway, for example, recently defined *diakonia* as,

*the caring ministry of the Church. It is the Gospel in action and is expressed through loving your neighbour, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggling for justice.*²⁶

Whilst there may be an evolving understanding of *diakonia*, the role of the Deacon in the Porvoo Lutheran churches has remained more static. Deacons tend to occupy professions in which women are in the majority and whilst there are growing numbers of women Presbyters in the Lutheran churches, male Deacons are fairly rare. Perhaps for this reason, perhaps because the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is seen as the higher calling, Deacons tend to be regarded as junior to Presbyters, even where both are understood to be full Orders of ministry.

The Episcopal Church has very little of this ‘back story’ to deal with. The diaconate enjoyed what now seems like a false dawn in Scotland in the late 1980s when many women were ordained Deacon. This coincided with the last significant report on the diaconate in our Province²⁷ but it turned out only to be a transitional phase prior to most of those women going on to ordination as Priests. On the other hand, whilst we may lack this detailed experience of a vocational or distinctive diaconate and do not speak easily of *diakonia* we should not imagine that these are wholly new to us or worse, strange foreign imports from non-Anglican sources. If we delve beneath the surface of our practice and theology we find that the diaconate and *diakonia* are implicit to our life in three areas, each of which offers the potential for a renewed approach to mission. Firstly, social outreach and prophetic action are integral to our self-consciousness as a church; secondly, we do, in fact, have an Order of Deacons, distinct from that of Presbyter or Bishop; thirdly, our liturgy assumes such an Order.

a. **Prophetic outreach, service and social action**

In the SEC, it might be said, we do not talk the talk of *diakonia* but we do walk the walk. If we take the Norwegian statement quoted earlier, for example, *diakonia* is defined as loving neighbour, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggling for justice. Every diocese in our Province can point to concrete examples of such activity. These concerns are expressed in our public prayers and our preaching, through individual service and in clearly defined projects, some driven locally, some at diocesan level. Many of these projects attract support, sometimes financial, from the Province.

In 2004, for example, the then Social Responsibility Committee of the SEC published *Prayer and Action*.²⁸ As its title suggests, this booklet not only invites readers to pray but also calls them to action on a range of social issues including homelessness and health, racial justice and HIV/AIDS. It lists relevant organizations, some from the SEC, some from other Christian denominations, some fully ecumenical in scope. Nowhere is the word *diakonia* used, yet the diaconal mission imperative, through service, social action and prophetic outreach, is explicit throughout.

The opportunities for the social engagement of the church in Scotland are quite different from those available to the Scandinavian churches. But what the Lutheran tradition offers us is a challenge to recognize that social action is integral to Christian life and mission. Serving the community or struggling for justice are not just things that some Christians do because they happen to be ‘into that sort of thing’, they express the call of all Christians, the whole church, to express the ministry of Christ, who laid down his life in service.

b. **The Transitional Diaconate and the Distinctive Diaconate**

Every year the SEC celebrates the ordination of new Deacons; within twelve months virtually all those Deacons will also have been ordained Priest. Deacons, if they are encountered at all by our church members, have tended to be junior clergy; clergy on their way to becoming a Priest. To be Deacon is a transitional or probationary phase defined more by what a minister cannot do – bless, absolve, preside at the Eucharist – than by what they can. Whilst many Priests cherish their diaconal identity and may even define themselves, in part, in diaconal language, yet in practice their diaconate is subsumed into a fuller sense of ministry called priesthood. This is underlined when, in rare cases, individuals do not proceed to priestly ordination because, for one reason or another, they are not considered capable of doing the job. A Deacon, in this sense, becomes someone who tried but failed to be a Priest!

However, we also have in the SEC men and women who believe they are called to be a Deacon, not a Priest; these are our ‘vocational’ or ‘distinctive’ Deacons. They are few in number (only 12 in the whole Province); at any one time there are likely to be almost as many transitional Deacons in the SEC as there are distinctive Deacons. Therefore, the average churchgoer rarely encounters these exotic creatures and there are few role models for those who otherwise might also identify in themselves a call to a distinctive diaconal ministry. In spite of this, several Scottish dioceses are encountering a growing number of men and women who seem to be sensing a call to precisely this way of serving God.

As may become clear in the Case Studies offered in Section 3 of this paper, the way in which Anglican vocational Deacons work out their ministry is diverse and does not mimic the highly organized and largely state-funded diaconal ministries in many Porvoo Lutheran churches. But the broad thrust is the same; namely, to represent and/or to equip the church in her outward-facing mission.

The SEC, therefore, in common with many Anglican churches, has bifurcated the Order of Deacon. On the one hand there are those in transition to priesthood, on the other, those committed to a solely diaconal role. If we wish to reclaim the full potential of the diaconate then we need to understand the recruitment, discernment and training requirements for both these strands of tradition.

c. **The Deacon in the Liturgy**

The Deacon's traditional ministry in the liturgy represents the ministry of service and mission of the whole Church. This includes: calling the community to confession of their sins; proclaiming the gospel; preaching; leading prayers of intercession; receiving the gifts and preparing the altar for Holy Communion; assisting the president with the distribution of Communion; and sending the community out in the service of the Lord.

The Deacon does not do any of these things *instead* of other people. All ordained ministers, including Priests and Bishops, spend most of their time doing things that others can or might do. The primary significance of the Orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon is in what they represent and not in the functions they perform. A Deacon is sacramentally dedicated to a Christian ministry of service and mission with the entire authority of the Church, to be a sign and model of that ministry for the whole People of God. Since *diakonia* is to be characteristic of all Christians, the significance of the Order of Deacons lies in its capacity to provide a focus for what is proper to the Church as a whole.

Exactly as for Priests and Bishops, therefore, a major part of the ministry of the Deacon, within the liturgy and outside it, is the development and exercise of lay ministry and Christian discipleship. This could take the form not only of reading the Gospel but enabling and training others to read scripture in worship, not only of leading the intercessions but training others to do this, not only sending the congregation to love and serve, but organizing and encouraging their involvement in local mission.

Our dialogue with our Porvoo partners, therefore, encourages us to acknowledge the centrality of the call to mission and discloses a sizeable area of common ground which our partners define as *diakonia*. Their recognition of the ministry of Deacon, furthermore, helps us to see how this *diakonia* may be embodied fully within our existing orders of ministry and reminds us how this is already modelled in our liturgy. The call to diaconal ministry is not an alternative to the call to the priestly ministry of Word and Sacrament or indeed the call to share the Word through evangelism; all three together express the ministry of Christ's Church.

3. How might the renewed Diaconate take shape?²⁹

How then might we see a vocational Diaconate being lived out in Scotland? These Case Studies draw both on our present experience in the SEC and also on the experience of Anglican churches elsewhere. Each example is located in the overall mission of the church. The first two belong in a diocesan as much as a congregational strategy for mission. In these cases, it makes sense to see Deacons as primarily a task force at the disposal of the Bishop for work, most of which is beyond the day-to-day life of the average congregation.

Case Study 1

*'We need to locate the diaconate more centrally in the overall mission of the church.'*³⁰

*'Deacons are primarily a task force at the disposal of the Bishop, for work, most of which is out in the world. They have their proper place in a Diocesan rather than a congregational strategy of mission.'*³¹

In the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, a (vocational) Deacon is carrying out a role which fulfils both those criteria quoted above. The post of Diocesan Ministry Development Officer is indeed related closely to 'the overall mission of the church' – the diocese being seen as 'the primary location for the engendering of missional energy'³² - and to the Bishop's ministry as 'leader of mission' therein. The job spec is very diaconal:

- it entails *being sent* to work with congregations and clergy wherever they are, *enabling* them to discern their future missional pathways and make new connections with the communities around them. Through the vehicle of the Diocesan Growth Strategy, it is concerned to focus congregational attention *outwards*; upon 'seeking out the lost sheep and bringing both the message of the gospel and the practical care that goes with it to the unchurched'³³.
- it aims to *equip the ministries* that will carry those plans out, growing 'mission-shaped ministries' amongst the whole people of God.
- in so supporting and enabling congregational missional activity on the ground, aligning that with the needs and strategy of the diocese as identified by the Bishop, the role mirrors the ancient pattern of Bishop-Deacon working together. Deacons, unlike Priests, are ordained by Bishops alone; thus their primary sense of collegiality with one another is shaped by their relationship with their Bishop.
- it models the idea of the diaconate as a diocesan, rather than a congregational, resource; of a 'pioneer corps'³⁴ working as needed across the diocese, when and where missional need arises.

Case Study 2

J, from an Anglican Church in North America, has a similarly cross-diocesan role. At present, J occupies a church-remunerated position as the co-ordinator of eco-justice networks; in other words, is an 'emissary', a 'go-between' of the Province in matters of peace, justice and ecology. The role includes drafting letters on behalf of the Primate; for example, protesting on behalf of six aboriginal leaders imprisoned for contempt of court after failing to pursue a case against a mining company seeking to excavate their land, due to their lack of funds. It also involves overseas visits on behalf of the Province, including those by the Anglican Peace and Justice Network, and ecumenical discussions concerning specific matters of eco-justice.

Other Deacons may have a more parish-based ministry, but this is likewise always mission-shaped and outward-facing, as the next examples indicate:

Case Study 3

L had been a lifelong and active member of the church, being seen by others as “one who shows concern for the neighbourhood and has the ability to interpret its needs to the congregation”. Since being ordained Deacon, L works as a parish nurse in the field of ophthalmology, giving attention and health advice to anyone who requires it. L describes this straddling ministry thus: “I love the analogy of being on the doorstep; bringing the needs of the world to the church and taking the church into the world. As a Deacon I have a foot in both places; the church and the world. I act as interpreter for both groups.”

Case Study 4

N, who is part of the Ministry Team at a busy city centre church, sees the role of Deacon as being ‘a bridge between church and world, interpreting each to the other.’ N is to be ‘sent’ by the congregation to assist a Workplace Chaplain, newly appointed by the local ecumenical partnership. ‘This will allow me to go deep into our secular world to bring wholeness and meaning.’ N adds, ‘*Diakonia* has inevitable tension between being a lamp and being hidden (Matthew 6:1a and 5:16). I see resolution in the distinction between following my own path and going where sent; this frees me to be a light which can empower all the baptised to do likewise.’

In other Provinces, the professional skills of the Deacon are recognised and ‘commissioned’ by the church. While there are indeed Deacons in Scotland who work in secular caring agencies, their ministry in these arenas has not yet been ‘owned’ by their home congregation – unlike this example from another part of the Anglican Communion.

Case Study 5

P is Vice-President of a large mining company and seeks to minister to those who are weighed down by fear: of unemployment, office politics, lack of fulfilment. P seeks to create an environment where people are encouraged to let these burdens go and also leads discussions between mining/engineering colleagues and environmental groups which encourage mutual respect and reconciliation. Less than 5 months after ordination as Deacon, P was sent as agent of both church *and* secular employers to provide help following a serious Himalayan helicopter accident and led prayer for the bereaved and injured.

Each of these ministers is contributing to the mission of the church nationally, across a diocese or locally. This resurgence of interest in the diaconate is not about clericalising the laity or simply adding more robed figures on a Sunday to an already-stuffed sanctuary; rather it is a timely expression in symbolic and visible form of the mission-shaped outreach of the people of God. That this is an exciting and worthwhile vocation is evidenced by the number of people – of both genders – currently approaching DDOs or Diocesan Ministry Officers in our own Province to enquire about the diaconate: three in Edinburgh, one in Glasgow and a swathe of candidates in Moray.

In the latter diocese, moreover, a successful Vocations Day has given rise to a process of consultation and discernment. The majority of diocesan clergy have responded positively to the idea of developing a ‘college of Deacons’ and there is now a group of men and women exploring a diaconal vocation. At this early stage the following markers have been suggested –

- that this must be a distinctive diaconate and not something that can slip into transitional.
- that the Deacons are a "college" in company with the Bishop
- that they may be called as preachers but this is not a distinctive part of the ministry and would be seen as a training addition not a given.

This work has now been adopted by the Faith & Order Board as a pilot project and will receive the input and support of Provincial Officers.

4. In Conclusion...

We live at a time of massive change in church and society; we are grappling with new challenges and opportunities for mission in an increasingly multicultural context. This discussion paper suggests that the language of *diakonia* and the diaconate itself offer us ways both of understanding this challenge and of engaging with change in the light of the gospel. It suggests that this is the right moment for our church to engage in a vigorous exploration of what a renewed and distinctive diaconate would ask of us.

We offer suggestions for discussion and action both at the grassroots level of our church and also in our Boards and Committees.

One: *That we should review the following aspects of our life –*

- a) *The criteria we use for recruitment, discernment, training and deployment of clergy.*
Should the distinctive diaconate be an option offered to those exploring their vocation? In what ways might a discernment process for the distinctive diaconate differ from that for those journeying towards the priesthood? What are the different training requirements for the two Orders of ministry? How might Deacons be deployed at diocesan and congregational level?
- b) *The liturgical role of the Deacon in our liturgy.*
In what ways might *diakonia* be more clearly expressed in our liturgical life – especially in those congregations where there are no Deacons?
- c) *Our Ordinal.*
Does our Ordinal adequately express a theology that encompasses ordination to a distinctive and lifelong diaconate? Are there implications for what the Ordinal says about Priests and Bishops?
- d) *Our social action and engagement.*
Recognizing that *diakonia* belongs to the ministry of Christ and therefore to the whole church, what priority should we give to social service and prophetic action, and how might we better equip our congregations to engage in this aspect of mission?
- e) *Our Canon law.*
Do our Canons adequately allow for the work and office of distinctive Deacons?

Two: *That we should seek dialogue with other Scottish churches on their understanding of the diaconate.*³⁵

Three: *That we should explore openly what financial implications, if any, a renewed diaconate might have for the SEC.*

The Diaconate Working Group, through the Faith & Order Board, offers this paper as our contribution to the wider conversation about Mission and Ministry currently alive in the Province. We believe it offers creative opportunities both to reclaim our traditions and to do something new for the twenty-first century.

- ¹ *Truly Called by God to Serve as a Deacon*, The Report of The Bishops Working Group on Distinctive Diaconate, General Synod Office, 1987
- ² *For Such a Time as This. A renewed diaconate in the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 2001.
- ³ *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church: biblical, theological and contemporary perspectives*, The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, GS Misc 854 Archbishops' Council, 2007
- ⁴ See especially 'Theology and Ministry. A paper offered by the Doctrine Committee to the Board for Mission and Ministry,' General Synod Office, 2010
- ⁵ *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy*, General Synod Office, 2011
- ⁶ *Eucharistic Presidency. A Theological Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod*, GS 1248, Church House Publishing, 1997, p30
- ⁷ John Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, OUP, 1990
- ⁸ *op cit* ¹
- ⁹ *ibid*, 9, 10-11
- ¹⁰ 'The diaconate as ecumenical opportunity,' Hanover Report of the Anglican Lutheran International Commission, 1996, section 76
- ¹¹ The Communion of the Porvoo Churches, *The Second Consultation on Diaconal Ministry*, Oslo, April 2009
- ¹² 'The Permanent Diaconate,' RC Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, 1987; Methodist Faith and Order Committee, Report to Conference 1993; Bratislava Declaration, Conference of European Churches, 1994; Hanover Report *op cit* ⁹; SCIFU Report on the Diaconal Working Party 2001.
- ¹³ Sven-Erik Brodd, 'An escalating phenomenon' in *The Ministry of the Deacon 1*, Anglican-Lutheran Perspectives, 1999, p42
- ¹⁴ *ibid* p42
- ¹⁵ World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order Paper 111, Lima 1982, WCC, Geneva 1982
- ¹⁶ Occasional Paper 2: Meissen Agreement Texts, Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England 1992
- ¹⁷ Together in Mission and Ministry: The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe, Church House Publishing, 1993
- ¹⁸ Occasional Paper 5: The Fetter Lane Common Statement, Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, 1996
- ¹⁹ 'The diaconate as ecumenical opportunity,' Hanover Report of the Anglican Lutheran International Commission, 1996
- ²⁰ 'The Windsor Statement on the Diaconate'. Ecumenical Diaconal Consultation, St George's House Windsor, 1997
- ²¹ Barry Rogerson, 'Debate at General Synod of the Report *For Such a Time as This*', General Synod of the Church of England Proceedings, 2001, 597; *op cit* ¹, pp 1-2
- ²² Barry Rogerson, 'Social Welfare and Justification by Faith,' unpublished lecture – source and date unknown, page 11
- ²³ John N Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990. Collins argues that nowhere in the New Testament is diakonia used to describe only menial, lowly or humble service. On the contrary, he suggests that the word is used to describe the fulfilment of a task commissioned by God or the church. This may be lowly but it may not. So, in Mark 10.45 Jesus describes his commission from the Father 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonesai*) and to give his life as a ransom for many.' There is a full and helpful discussion of recent scholarship (including J Collins) in The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church, Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives*, GS Misc 854, 2007
- ²⁴ The Communion of the Porvoo Churches, *The Second Consultation on Diaconal Ministry*, Oslo, April 2009, section 4
- ²⁵ *ibid*, section 6
- ²⁶ Church of Norway, *Plan for diakonia*, Church of Norway National Council, Oslo, 2009, translated into English by Ovind Ostang and Ivan Chetwynd, page 5.
- ²⁷ *op cit* ⁷
- ²⁸ *Prayer and Action*, Scottish Episcopal Church, 2004
- ²⁹ Some of the case studies used in this section are drawn from our SEC experience, some from research done by Freda Alexander during her training for the diaconate on a visit to North America in 2008.
- ³⁰ *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England GS Misc 854 Archbishops' Council 2007, 86
- ³¹ *Truly Called by God to Serve as a Deacon* The Report of the Bishops' Working Group on Distinctive Diaconate. General Synod Office 1987, 11
- ³² *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy* General Synod Office 2011; page number not yet inserted as still in draft form
- ³³ *op cit* i, 71
- ³⁴ *op cit* ii, 11
- ³⁵ In fact a Symposium involving five other denominations as well as the Anglican churches of the British Isles took place in March 2012. The papers submitted are now available under a separate cover. They indicate considerable convergence of practice and understanding and offer the SEC much food for thought.

APPENDIX ONE

DEACONS AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The Rt Revd Brian A Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh

19th April 2011

[NOTE: This is a discussion paper. It does not reflect current policy in the Diocese of Edinburgh, and has not been discussed within the committees of the diocese.]

As a theological preamble to this paper, it is my belief that changes and developments in ministry and vocation are not necessarily occasioned by the development of a *general* strategy which is then applied to a complex network of situations. Rather, developments of significance are more often made when we discern that someone has a *particular* vocation in ministry, arising out of present reality, which the current structures in the Church are not recognising appropriately.

This paper is not the place for a full discussion of the theology of ordination, but let it suffice to say that ordination involves an openness to training and formation (initial and continuing) within a mutually expressed *lifelong commitment between the individual and the church*.

We are often being asked to consider the place of Deacons in the life of the Church. One difficulty of having a broad discussion on this is that this particular ministry has developed very differently in different branches of the church.

There are some churches, notably the Scandinavian Lutheran churches where the permanent diaconate is well developed, and exercises a significant pastoral role within the community. This takes place within the context of a church, historically well funded by the state, and to which are entrusted significant pastoral and social tasks by that state.

On the other hand, the tradition within Anglican churches in Britain has been that the ministry of the Deacon is a transitional one. The Deacon generally functions as an assistant in a Parish, and would ordinarily move onto being a Priest after twelve months as a Deacon. In some situations people are discerned as having a “permanent” vocation to the diaconate, but that again *usually* takes place within the context of being a Parish assistant.

Of course persons in the ‘permanent’ diaconate can move to other roles, (chaplancy, training etc.) as can those in the ‘permanent’ priesthood.

Within the life of the Diocese of Edinburgh it is becoming clear that there are very specific ministerial tasks being demanded within the Diocese, which correlate with the fact of some persons discerning a vocation to a ministry that is by them tending to be described, in embryonic form, as Diaconal. Ministerial need, and vocational awareness appear to be harmonising. Can we describe this situation?

Within the Diocese, there are currently a number of tasks being undertaken with reference to congregational development, in relation to conflict within congregations, and pastoral care of individual clergy and laity. Within this broader network of what we might call a ministry of local *Episcopé*, various people are exercising their skills in a very significant way. We make use of a number of clergy and laity in facilitating this work. However, some persons (lay) are now beginning to discern within themselves as others a calling to a lifelong commitment to *working in this area of pastoral care, service, and organisational healing*.

Such a ministry would not be confined within an individual congregation. It would take place on a Diocesan palette, and effectively be an *off-shoot of the ministry of the Bishop*. It could be argued that this is simply a ministry that any Priests or lay people could fulfil as delegates or commissaries of the Bishop for that purpose. But it could also be argued that there may be persons discerning a particular vocation to a commitment, which is not that of a Priest, but is not lay, having as it does the lifelong character and formational demand of someone in “Holy Orders”.

It does seem to me that there is a diaconal role being shaped by the current turbulence within a changing Church. In the example I am using, it is being reborn through the need to address the conflicts that arise from the society within which that Church is embedded.

Such Deacons would be persons of *a very high level of training*. They would not be persons who were appointed to the role of the diaconate “on the way” to a more mature priestly ministry. They would be persons trained and committed to sharing in the ministry of the Bishop, but not through operating *within* the network of Charges, rather through the sharing in the ongoing *Episcopé* of that network of Charges in Diocese. Someone whose vocation was to this diaconate might not be a person who would either wish to be appointed as an Incumbent, or who would make a suitable Incumbent. They would be on a totally different ‘track’. Deacons and Priests would be two permanent resources at the ‘disposal’ of the bishop for the care of the Diocese.

The idea is worth debating and considering. To have within the Diocese a team of up to a dozen highly trained Deacons capable of addressing issues of conflict and pastoral care *at a high level*, and who have expressed *a lifelong commitment* to this task in the name of the Church, could be a major mission resource for the future.

Conceiving matters this way immediately suggests a confluence of the idea of ‘transitional Deacon’ and ‘permanent Deacon’ Both ministries are in their own way exercised with a direct responsibility to the Bishop. The ‘transitional Deacon’ is someone ‘in training’ with an accountability to the Bishop that will in the end be expressed through the Bishop admitting them into Priest’s order. The ‘permanent Deacon’ is someone with whom the Bishop share’s in the task of *Episcopé* within the diocese as a whole.

Footnote One on Ecclesial Systems.

The above paper speaks of Deacons (permanent) and Priests being on two different ‘tracks’. We can amplify this using terminology developed by Wesley Carr in his book “*The Priestlike Task*”

Carr talks of any organisation having within it three ‘systems’. He calls these the Management system, the Service system, and the Control system.

- The Management system consists of those who are charged with fulfilling then primary task of the organisation. (If we were thinking of a car manufacturer it would be those actually involved in making cars.)
- The Service system consists of those who support and assist those in the Management system. (This might consist of the factory health clinic, the cafeteria, those administering salary and pension arrangements.....etc.).
- The Control system consists of those determining the policy being carried out by the organisation (The Board of Directors would decide which model of car to discontinue, where to place funds for research, which brand to develop etc.)

Relating this to the church Carr talks of an Apostolic system, a Diaconal system, and a Synodical system. In each system we would expect currently to find both lay and clerical members.

- The Apostolic system consists of those charged with mission, the propagation of the gospel and the practice of worship in congregations. It comprises the Bishop together with incumbents, chaplains, and teams of laity within a congregation with whose they share this work.
- The Diaconal system consists of those charged with supporting those in the Apostolic system. It has in the past generally been seen as consisting of administrators, lawyers, architects etc..... In general this area would traditionally have been seen as concerned with the *'temporalities'* of church life – buildings and finance.
- Within the church the Synodical system is the one corresponding to the Control system in secular structures.

However the question arises as to whether there is to be discerned, (probably to be seen as part of the 'Diaconal system') a calling which is *spiritually supportive of those in the Apostolic ministry*, and in its own distinctive and important way concerns the *'spiritualities'* of life together. This would be to characterise 'permanent Deacon' as persons called to exercise a 'spiritual ministry' sharing *Episcopé* within the church with a direct responsibility to the Bishop

Within the framework we are (in considering a vocation to a permanent diaconate) considering the possibility of a *distinctive spiritual vocation* seeking to minister among the *spiritual issues arising within a Diocese*.

Footnote Two on Deacons and Lay Readers

Once we put matters in the way we have done so above, one issue that has often troubled those considering the idea of a permanent diaconate gets a straightforward solution. The question often faced is "*What is the difference between a 'permanent deacon' and a 'lay reader'?*"

In the above framework a Lay Reader is a lay person whose ministry lies within the Apostolic system in a charge. He/she engages in a preaching and teaching ministry, alongside the incumbent, within the charge. The Lay Reader is an 'apostolic' minister charged with teaching and preaching responsibilities.

On the other hand the Permanent Deacon works within the Diaconal system, serving the charges and those who minister within them (Ordained and lay) and working in part as the pastoral arm of the bishop.

The bishop, in our system presides over the Synodical (Control) system, but operates within the diocese in the Apostolic task with the priests and laity in the charges, and in the Diaconal task with those who have *sensed their vocation* as lying in this area.

Footnote Three

I am conscious that in the brief notes above the concept of a 'permanent diaconate' as outlined is strongly focussed on service to and within the church. Some would argue that Deacons ought to be seen as the ministry within which service by the church of the world is focussed. This is the Scandinavian model. I am not proposing to settle this issue one way or another. I offer these notes as a contribution to a conversation that tries to give weight to the three questions: "*What ministries does the SEC require?*", "*Do we see signs of persons coming forward with a vocation to such ministries in our life together?*" and "*Among those ministries do we recognise what I have described above as a ministry whose time has come?*"

APPENDIX TWO

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do we need a renewed distinctive diaconate?

This issue is very much alive in the wider Church. Within the SEC's *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy*, there is a realisation that a renewed diaconate would be a tool for mission. The diaconate is embedded in our tradition and a renewed diaconate would embody within our life and liturgy the imperative to proclaim the Gospel through word and action. Deacons might work with their Bishop in a wider diocesan role.

2. The current model of Bishop/Incumbent/Curate (Deacon) does not fit the renewed Diaconate model

Agreed. But that does not mean that a renewed diaconate would not have a central role to play in the mission of the SEC. Selection and training criteria would need to be reassessed and a permanent diaconate would not preclude those who wished to follow the more "traditional" route of a Deacon who undertakes a curacy before being ordained Priest. There would need to be a move from viewing Deacons' formation through a priestly prism. For those involved in discernment and selection it would offer a wider range of ministries but a clearer definition of the priesthood and the diaconate would be required

3. Will not Lay Readers feel that their role is being usurped?

The roles of Deacon and Lay Reader are different and complementary. Lay Readers are solidly trained lay theologians, whose skills are focussed upon an apologetic and hermeneutical role *within the gathered congregation*: teaching, preaching and catechising new believers. Deacons, as this paper has demonstrated, have a very different focus to their ministry, standing on the margin between church and world, and symbolising the *diakonia* of the whole people of God in what they do liturgically: preparing the altar, serving at the altar, ensuring that the intercessions are said, dismissing the congregation. Not only is there room for both, but also need.

4. Would Priests feel that their ministry is being devalued and undermined?

Again, the ministries of Priest and Deacon are complementary. The revival of the diaconate would lead to a clearer definition of all three Orders of ministry.

5. If we have more Deacons won't this mean that the Church will become over-clerical and the ministry of lay people be diminished?

Deacons work to enable others in mission and in the liturgy. If anything, a well-trained diaconate should help lay people to be better equipped to live out their baptismal promises – to grow in understanding of their faith and to share in the mission of the SEC.

APPENDIX THREE

The 2nd Consultation on Diaconal Ministry in May 2009 commended the following work to the Porvoo Churches –

All churches

- To continue to exchange information and developments in thinking on *diakonia* and the diaconate
- To collaborate in further study on the forms of admission to, and the canonical context of, the diaconate
- To collaborate in the education and formation of those who will exercise *diakonia* as the focus of their public ministry

Lutheran churches

- To define more clearly those areas of ministry that are understood as belonging to the diaconate
- To clarify whether, and in what sense, Deacons are understood as being ordained in each respective church
- To explore possibilities inherent in the role of the Deacon in liturgy

Anglican churches

- To develop ways in which the element of *diakonia* in the mission of the church may more explicitly be understood and named as such
- To develop an understanding of the diaconate that is not automatically associated with junior ministerial status
- To recognise and affirm the diaconal aspect of the vocation of Priests, and describe it explicitly
- To consider how the vocation of those who are called to distinctive diaconate may be discerned, and how they may be encouraged and supported

How to use this document

As part of its response to the Porvoo Communion's Recommendations, the Faith and Order Board, through the Diaconate Working Party, wishes to listen to what the Scottish Episcopal Church at large thinks about *diakonia*, the ordained diaconate and the proposals outlined in this paper. It therefore recommends that the report is studied and discussed in a variety of ways –

- **by diocesan mission and ministry committees** as they seek to discern future patterns of ministry provision at diocesan and regional level, especially in the light of the Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy (WCMMP)
- **by Vestries** as they co-operate with and assist Rectors in all matters relating to the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the mission of the whole Church
- **by Readers** as they gather in diocesan or provincial groupings and continue to work on defining their particular calling in and for Christ's church today
- **by congregational groups**, ideally in partnership with their ecumenical neighbours, as together they seek to grow ever more mission-shaped in their local context
- **by individuals**, reflecting on what they have read in this paper and on their own experience of 'diaconal ministry' whether as a lay person or ordained.

The companion document of collated papers from the March 2012 Ecumenical Seminar outlines the positions of other denominations in Scotland regarding *diakonia* or the diaconate, and may thus be of help. This document, *Companion Papers to Truly Called...Two* can be obtained from Elspeth Davey at the General Synod Office (address below).

The questions below and overleaf are offered to guide these discussions; please send your written responses – either individually or as a collation of your group's discussion - to Elspeth Davey, General Synod Office, 21 Grosvenor Crescent Edinburgh EH12 5EE or e-mail to ChurchRelations@scotland.anglican.org by the **31st January 2013**.

The Diaconate Working Group would welcome your responses either in hard copy or by email

1. Immediate responses

What excited or intrigued you/your group in this report?

What challenged or surprised you/your group?

What has been confirmed in you/your group?

Other reactions?

2. Mission and *Diakonia*

How central is the call to mission in your context?

Where do you recognise *diakonia* at work?

How does the Church currently make explicit her diaconal identity?

3. The revitalisation of the ordained diaconate

Having summarised and discussed the arguments put forward in the paper for the revitalisation of the Order of Deacons, give your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with these.

4. The ordained diaconate and other ministries

What might the restoration of the diaconate mean for the Church's understanding of 'ministry', and how might it affect other ministries, ordained, licensed or authorised?

5. The ordained diaconate in your own context

What

- positive potential
- practical problems

do you envisage if a revitalised diaconate were to become a part of your ministerial context (diocesan/regional/local charge/ecumenical)?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire