

TRULY CALLED BY GOD TO SERVE AS A DEACON

INTRODUCTION

1. The Scottish Episcopal Church began investigating how it “might use the diaconate more properly and beneficially” in 1957. It cannot be said, then, that we are rushing precipitately into action without due consideration.

In those thirty years, great changes have been experienced by Scotland and its Churches, and the pace of change has been accelerating rather than slowing down. In the Episcopal Church, the familiar patterns used to be a stipendiary priest in every charge, quite often with a curate; the expectation of a rather passive congregation (pastoral model: shepherd and sheep); Matins as the main service, with Holy Communion at 8am for the devout minority. These days have gone, and are most unlikely to return. The linking and groupings of congregation, lay ministries, non-stipendiary priests, the parish communion, new liturgies, synodical government – these illustrate how the pattern has changed already. More changes are likely to follow.

So the Diaconate is evolving, not in a stable state, but in a Church that is in a process of change. Faced by all these developments, Bishops (and presbyters) have already had to exercise gifts of sensitivity and understanding, an awareness of feelings of insecurity and uncertainty among their clergy and laity. They have had to deal with fears, doubts and nostalgia. Equal sensitivity will be needed in working out the roles of the new Deacons in the initial period: sensitivity toward the presbyters and congregations whose expectations may be based on past understanding rather than on present realities.

Meantime, the Anglican Consultative Council is urging upon the Anglican Churches of the world that, whereas their patterns of congregational life and of ministry have been based primarily on a pastoral model, it is time to move to a model of congregational life

and of ministry that is primarily missionary. It is clear to this Working Group that the renascent Diaconate has a much more obvious place within a mission-oriented Episcopal Church than it has among the obsolescent assumptions of many of our congregations:

“If the Church cares only for its own members and shows no compassion for human suffering and no outrage at human injustice, the love she proclaims and displays will appear shallow or selfish. If on the other hand the Church only does good works and seeks justice she will fail to speak of God and so fail to make known the one in whose name she has been sent.”²

IF THERE ARE TO BE ...

2. Our answers begin with the factual observation that the Distinctive Diaconate is already in existence in the Scottish Episcopal Church. People have been, and are going to continue being, ordained to the Order of Deacons expecting to serve in that Order without limit of time. Those Deacons who are not expecting to be ordained to the Presbyterate within twelve months constitute the Distinctive Diaconate of our Church. Of these, however, some may be called at a later date to the Presbyterate. But our Church no longer has merely “the emaciated third order so long typical of Western Christendom.”³

WHAT ARE DEACONS?

3. The forthcoming Multilateral report, *Deacons for Scotland?*, argues cogently that it is a false start to begin from the question, “What is a Bishop / Presbyter / Deacon for?” For the questioner then turns to the history of ministerial practice in search of the differentia of the office concerned, and discovers with dismay that he is peeling an onion – there is virtually nothing of which it can be said, “This

² *Giving Mission its Proper Place, Report of the Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group* (Anglican Consultative Council, 1984/5), p 11.

³ *Deacons and the Church*, p 7, section 17.

function has always belonged exclusively to this office”. Nor could a credible ministry (non-stipendiary or full-time) be pieced together out of such functions as might be labelled, “for many centuries distinctive of” or “generally regarded as proper to” this office. Both theologically and pragmatically, it is a sounder to begin from the diaconal service to be given by all the disciples of Christ, a ministry committed to them and required of them by their Baptism:

*“It is all the followers of Christ, not just the tiny minority of them who are ordained, who are charged by Christ to be salt to the world, light to all the world, yeast to leaven the whole lump of dough. In whatever ways the ministries of the ordained are distinctive, the ordained are not (like the Aaronic priesthood) a hereditary group within the People of God; on the contrary, every Christian who is ordained is ordained from among the unordained. The ordained do not cease to share in the privileges and responsibilities that belong to all members of the People of God by virtue of their trust in God, their baptism, and their participation in Holy Communion. The ordained president of the Eucharist does not cease to be a humble communicant like everybody else”.*⁴

It is perfectly possible, and has been found necessary to the discipline of the Church, to demarcate frontiers between one office and another, e.g.,

“No deacon shall be presented to an Incumbency” (Canon XIII, 11).

“... Nothing in this Section shall be held to limit the functions of Lay Readers and deaconesses as defined in the Code of Canons” (Canon XVI, 2).

What cannot be done is to define a clerical office solely in terms of functions that are exclusive to that office, because those who have been ordained continue to exercise both the activities that are proper to all the baptised and those special gifts of the Holy Spirit which

⁴ *Deacons for Scotland?* Pp 36f Cf the section, “The diaconate of all Christian people,” pp 46f.

are being exercised by them before their ordination. A description of what a Bishop / Presbyter / Deacon does in the life of the Church is therefore much fuller than would appear in either a list of the functions distinctive to or characteristics of that office or an extract from the Canon Law of the minimum duties required of such a minister and the limitations upon his/her activities. As our Church's Commission on the Ministry reported in 1972,

“Ordained ministries are particular kinds of the many ministries exercised within the total ministry of the Church ...”
“Ordination is seen as something richer than simply empowering to a separate order, or the transmission of certain grace from one individual to another. It is essentially the placing of a particular man in a particular relationship within the community, the commissioning to a share in the one ministry of Christ.”⁵

4. Further, the Church ordains people to offices within its ministry, and increasing attention is now being paid to the importance of embodying ecclesiastical functions in individual human beings. The Lima Report has stressed that

“The ordained ministry ... should be exercised in a personal, collegial, and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by a person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness.”⁶

The non-episcopal Churches have demonstrated the possibility of redistributing episcopal functions among other ministries, individual and corporate. Yet in the ecumenical movement, it is becoming clear that to do without the embodiment of episcopate in an individual person is a deprivation of the People of God, and the Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland has recommended

⁵ *Varieties of Ministry*, sections 41 and 42.

⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order* Paper No 111 (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982), Ministry section 26.

“the adoption of a form of personal ministry not just at the congregational level but also at the regional level of the Churches’ life and structure, in the interests not just of Church unity but of the Churches’ more effective ministry at every level.”⁷

Similarly, the functions of the Deacons of the Church of the Patristic period have been dispersed among other ministries, lay and ordained. But the argument that because this is so the Order of Deacons ought simply to be discontinued rests upon the false assumption that the Diaconate is a collection of functions. It is not. It is a body of people, of men and women who are Deacons, and whose lives embody, express and propagate the Gospel of the Servant Lord, conveying the presence of Christ:

“It is in being a deacon, not just carrying out a deacon’s work, that he is a sacramental sign.”⁸

This is true whether a Deacon is serving on a stipendiary or a non-stipendiary basis. Just as there is no such thing as a part-time Christian, so a Deacon is a Deacon through all the hours of his or her life.

“The deacon is a serving leader who personalises the church’s care; his or her personal caring qualities are more important than what he/she does. But the practical care is a sacramental expression of the reverencing of persons.”⁹

Deacons among them undertake an immense range of kinds of work, and many successive tasks apiece. What is central to Diaconal spirituality is being totally available to the Church for the sake of the world, after the pattern of the One who said he came, not to be served, but to serve.

⁷ *Christian Unity – NOW is the Time* (The Saint Andrew Press, 1985), section 32.

⁸ *The Church 2000* (Catholic Information Office), cited in the October 1986 draft of the report published as *Deacons in the Ministry of the Church*.

⁹ *Ecumenical Consultation on the Permanent Diaconate*, (Distinctive Diaconate Studies No 17), 1981.

“There are four necessary conditions of an authentic Christian diakonia: willingness to suffer with those whom one serves and to give of oneself; humility as opposed to condescension towards those to be served; not using diakonia as an occasion for domination, privilege and rank; willing to identify with the served to the point of laying down one’s life for their sake.”¹⁰

HOW ARE WE TO USE THEM?

5. The liturgical role of the Deacon is largely shaped by Patristic practice, which has more deeply influenced the liturgical tradition of the Scottish Episcopal Church than that of the Church of England. Not every Deacon exercises every Diaconal function, and where there is a plurality of Deacons the functions are shared, preferably on a rota basis. The functions are:
- i) In connection with the Eucharist:
 - Having charge of the supply of bread, wine, candles and similar supplies
 - Seeing that the Church building is prepared for the Liturgy
 - Taking such steps as will maximise the devotional character of the people’s worship, including keeping order in Church, urging reverence, arranging auxiliary ministrations like doorkeepers, gatherers of the people’s gifts
 - Reading the Gospel
 - Preaching, subject to episcopal licence and local arrangements
 - Leading the Intercessions
 - Presenting the bread, wine, water and the people’s gifts at the altar
 - Assisting in the administration of Holy Communion
 - Ministering the Reserved Sacraments to the sick and house-bound
 - Under the Bishop’s direction (which is, or ought to be, subject to the guidelines of the College of Bishops regarding the precise use of the rite), ministering the

¹⁰ Metropolitan Paulous Mar Gregorios, *One World*, May 1987

Eucharist (distributing the Reserved Sacrament) in the absence of a Bishop or Priest

- ii) In connection with other sacraments:
 - Ministering Holy Baptism
 - Officiating at Holy Matrimony
- iii) In connection with other services:
 - Officiating at Matins, Evensong, Compline, and The Funeral Service

6. The liturgical functions of the Deacon give extensive indications of the kinds of other Church work appropriate to the office of Deacon:

- being responsible for preparations for the Liturgy, as sacristan, organiser of ancillary lay ministries like Scripture readers, those who gather the people's offerings/present the bread and wine at the Offertory;
- aspects of Christian education, including groups, courses and individual tuition for adults, students, young people, enquirers;
- pastoral visiting/counselling, especially of those in hospital or otherwise cut off from the congregation's Sunday worship;
- administrative assistance to the Presbyters or to the Presbyters or to the Bishop;
- acting as chaplain to the Bishop;
- developing missionary outreach on the frontiers of the Church's membership;
- exercising gifts of healing.

This list of examples compiled by the Working Group may be compared with that in a notable American study, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order* (Seabury Press, 1981), p 184, where Dr James M Barnett lists eighteen kinds of work "primarily focused upon ministry to the church's own people", as distinct from liturgical functions on the one hand and "charitable and societal" functions on the other.

No one Deacon could ever be expected to exercise all these gifts and skills appropriate to the Diaconate. It may, however, be generally expected of Deacons that they will both watch out for gifts of the Spirit among the people which are not yet used by the Church, and also try to discern the needs of the Church for lay ministries not yet articulated.

7. Assuming Patristic experience to be relevant, we emphasize that the liturgical role of the Deacon is only the tip of the iceberg. Deacons focus the serving role of the Church, itself a loving response to the perceived needs of the world. Consequently, Diaconal service has always been for the most part community oriented, and must NOT be seen as mainly liturgical. Just as non-stipendiary priests are expected to have a significant pastoral component in their ministry – and would not be ordained solely to preside at the Eucharist – so too it belongs to the essence of the Diaconate to have a commitment to try to meet human need. Unmet human need in 4th Century Caesarea of Cappadocia is not identical with unmet human need in Glasgow in 1987. Diaconal service has therefore comprehended an immense range of activities, many of them pioneering forms of social service (gathering information, developing new skills, anticipating civic or state provision for professional duties and qualifications). The Episcopal Church has rightly criticised *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* for failing to state, in the description of the functions of Deacon (page 27, section 31) that the range of Diaconal functions in the world is so wide that they could not possibly cohere in the work of any one Deacon. Indeed, if presiding at the Eucharist has been a distinctive hallmark of the Priesthood (Bishops and Presbyters) the, characteristic of Diaconate has been the variety of service given in response to the perceived needs of the world.

In the Patristic era, the provision of shelter for the homeless, protection for orphans, emergency food supplies for the hungry, education for the illiterate, medical treatment for the ill, were none of them exclusively the work of Deacons. But Deacons were prominent in the discerning and measurement of the need and the devising of the organisation to meet the need – so much so, that

among the gifts frequently associated with the Diaconate were administrative and financial expertise. The sums of money involved in Diaconal pioneering of new social services – and provided for out of Christian giving – were often very large, and called for accounting skills of a high order.

If this is a depressing thought for a minority Church chronically unable to persuade its members to meet the cost of the Church's own internal life, it must not be evaded, for we have here the primary characteristic of the nature of the Distinctive Diaconate. And in fact, for a Church short of money, our Church is engaged in a surprisingly wide range of responses, of high quality, to human need at various level: at Barrowfield and the Place, the work of a Deacon in Mid – Craigie in Dundee, Episcopalian involvement in housing associations and the Aberlour Child Care Trust, the work of our Church's Drug Project Worker, and the association of Jo James with our Church's Peace Project stand out alongside numerous responses by Episcopalian congregations to human need in their own locality, reaching out to help prisoners and ex- prisoners, single – parent families, unemployed young people, etc.

TO SERVE AS A DEACON IN GOD'S CHURCH

8. It must be stated clearly that Deacons, while being communicant members of congregations, having a liturgical ministry, and dovetailing with the work of Presbyters, 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. Many an individual Deacon may be called to undertake a particular piece of work within a particular congregation, enabling it to fulfil its calling more effectively; but taken together, within the Province or a Diocese, the work of Deacons should be marked by a serving outreach to the world and not be restricted to filling vacancies in existing Churchly jobs.

Since the huge field of service to human need is the primary area of Diaconal ministry, it follows:

- (a) that candidates for ordination to the Distinctive Diaconate may be expected, and encouraged, to come forward primarily from this field of experience, whether for stipendiary or non – stipendiary service;
- (b) that engagement in service to human need is, if not quite a *sine qua non*, the primary evidence Bishops should look for as evidence of vocation to the Distinctive Diaconate; and
- (c) that the existence of the Distinctive Diaconate in our Church may be expected to lead to the discovery of new unmet needs in society and the articulation of new ministries, manly lay, to meet them.

9. At the outset of our Church’s rediscovery of Distinctive Diaconate, we discern five potential difficulties:

- (i) An initial danger is that expectations of the Diaconate will continue to be shaped by parish clergy and vestries familiar with the model of the new curate who is a Deacon because he is serving a one-year apprenticeship for the Priesthood. It will fall to the Bishops, in large part, to teach the Church that Deacons are an order of ordained ministry distinct from Presbyters, and that they are not to be thought of as persons who exist to perform a selection of Presbyteral functions. Presbyters who are to work with deacons will need help to get this right, and to see new development as offering opportunities, not as posing threats. Vestries – especially those with a rapid turnover of membership – will also need help with this.
- (ii) There are Church people, avid for service, who long to appropriate to themselves every Churchly task within reach. By contract, 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.

- (iii) It is an over-simplification to say that in the Anglican Communion, for the most part, the Diaconate has been reduced to a one-year apprenticeship for the Presbyterate. For many of the functions which used to be discharged by Distinctive Deacons have not lapsed, but are distributed among lay people in the Church. For example: (a) "The Deacon or (if no such be present) one of the Churchwardens or some other fit person shall receive the devotions of the people there present in a bason provided for that purpose" (Scottish Book of Common Prayer, 1637/ Scottish Communion Office, 1764). (b) "A bishop may, in view of a large number of communicants or for any other good or sufficient reason, at the request of a Rector or Priest-in-charge give permission to a layman in communion with the Scottish church to assist in the administration of Holy Communion" (Canon XVI, 3). Bishop John Howe spoke for the Anglican family of Churches when (in preparatory work for the 1968 Lambeth Conference) he firmly rejected one solution to the problem of the dispersal of Diaconate functions:

"The present problem may be not so much to recover and restore a true diaconate as to identify and locate it, as being already in existence it exists in the catechists, readers, dedicated nurses, welfare workers, secretaries, and other lay ministries. To ordain these men and women would undo all we have learned about active Christian service and turn them all into ministers."

But if on the other hand our Church is not going to claw back for Distinctive Deacons functions now being exercised in what might be called a distributed Diaconate, neither, on the other hand, should our church acquiesce in a total alienation of such

functions from its expectations of the Distinctive Diaconate in the future. We ought to anticipate a gradual renewal of the connection between these gifts of the Spirit and the Distinctive Diaconate, without looking for such functions to re-devolve exclusively upon Deacons.

- (iv) The newness of the Distinctive Diaconate leaves the Bishops with the responsibility of supervision without being able to refer to an existing code of practice to help them discriminate between imaginative forms of service to be encouraged and undesirable innovations to be restrained. The Working Group, encouraged by the lessons learned in the evolution of non-stipendiary priesthood, advocates the Gamaliel principle, and recommends that the Bishops foster new Diaconal initiatives in ministering to human need, recognising that later will be the time for the Bishops together to appraise Diaconal experiments, formulate general guidelines, and if necessary introduce canonical restrictions.
- (v) Several difficulties might be forestalled if a Bishop, when assigning to a Deacon new work out in the world, were not only to ensure the co-operation of the clergy in whose congregational district(s) the Deacon is to work, but also were to make arrangements for the Deacon to exercise liturgical functions in a congregation in whose district the Deacon either lives or works. It is hoped that a degree of moral support for the Deacon in his/her work will emerge in that congregation. The Working Group notes that some kinds of work – e.g. work with people with hearing difficulties – may be carried out over a wide area, comprehending several congregational districts.

THE DEACON “IN A PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIP WITHIN THE COMMUNITY”

10. There is a Distinctive Diaconate in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and men and women are being called to it without knowing where the evolution of the Diaconate is going to lead them. It can already be discerned that new development is to be expected chiefly in

meeting existing or newly discovered needs in the community in which the Church's life is set. How then are Deacons to relate to the diaconate of all Christian people, and to existing lay, and Presbyteral and Episcopal ministries?

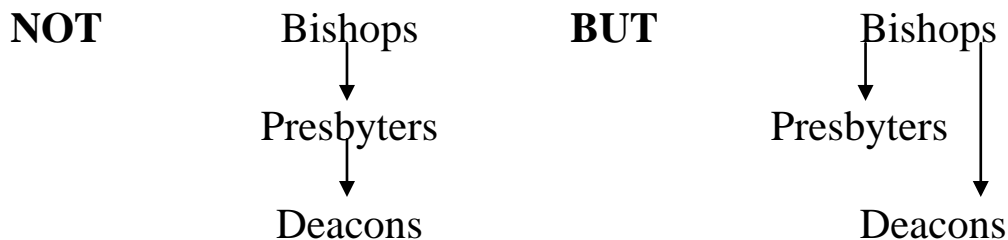
Deacons engaged in one or other of the great diversity of kinds of service to human need will find themselves working alongside caring people of varied Church attachment, of other religions, or of non-Christian outlook. In these relationships, Deacons symbolise and embody the Church's willingness to work with all who seek a better human society, whether or not they are motivated by our vision of the Kingdom of God. They express and spearhead the Church's altruistic commitment to the welfare of human beings, which is distinguished in motivation from the Church's yearning to make all human beings disciples of Christ.

Among the Deacon's co-workers will be Episcopalian lay people who are members of a local congregation or who are putting their gifts and experience at the disposal of the project in which the Deacon works. It is likely therefore that relationships will develop with one or more Episcopalian congregations, whose interest in and moral support for the Deacon could be of great value. Where such interest and support is endorsed by a congregation's Priest-in-charge and Vestry, it is desirable that the link be made visible in a liturgical ministry of the Deacon within that congregation's worship.

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. None of this will happen automatically, but this is what we advise the Bishops to expect and to foster.

A Deacon's liturgical ministry will almost invariably be exercised in association with that of a Bishop or a Presbyter. Where part of a Deacon's work – or the whole of it for a period – lies within an existing congregation's activities, the Deacon will be part of the ministerial team of that congregation, and both the form of authorisation and the financial structure (stipend or non-stipendiary expenses) will relate the Deacon to the Priest-in-charge and to the vestry. Where the Deacon is working, under the Bishop's direction, outwith the activities of an existing congregation, he/she will not be in a Curate-like relation to any Presbyter, and the Bishop will be responsible for more direct support and guidance, in accordance with both the Patristic model and the model worked out by Bishop John Howe in *Deacons and the Church* and subsequently in *Lambeth Essays in Ministry*:



Simply by listing a few changes and groupings known to us, the Working Group has become aware of something of the variety of ministerial patterns in the Province at present. These include, in a parish, a group of parishes, or an institution,

- Two or more stipendiary clergy
- Stipendiary and non-stipendiary Priests
- Stipendiary and/or non-stipendiary Priests with Deacons (stipendiary or non-stipendiary)
- A non-stipendiary team under the leadership of a Deacon

- A Bishop's Deacon, Stipendiary Priests and non-stipendiary ministries working with ordained and lay persons of other Churches in an Ecumenical Parish or Local Ecumenical Project.

This wide variety in the practice of shared ministry poses problems, not least for the Bishops in their pastoral work. Yet it is a sign of the vitality and adaptability of ordained ministries in today's Church, and a promise of the rediscovery of ministry throughout the whole body in tomorrow's. To adopt a policy of simplifying the multiple relationships for the sake of administrative clarity would be to set about quenching the Spirit. The present medley is untidy, but the Church certainly ought to be prepared to live with that for some time yet.

CONTINGENT FEATURES TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM INTRINSIC CHARACTERISTICS

11. It seems clear that, in the initial stages of our recovery of the Distinctive Diaconate, the great majority of Distinctive Deacons will be non-stipendiary, and the majority of these (and probably of stipendiary Deacons) will be female. Both of these features should be recognised to be incidental. When it became possible in our Church to be ordained for non-stipendiary ministry as a Priest, quite a number of candidates were older men whose vocation to the priesthood had hitherto conflicted with the Church's exclusively full-time stipendiary practice of Priesthood. The average age of candidates has dropped since the initial period. In the same way, the gender-bias and non-stipendiary bias in recruitment for the Distinctive Diaconate should be regarded as contingent features of the initial period.

As the Church evaluates the growing experience of those who pioneer Distinctive Diaconate, its future profile will become clearer; and as that happens, more opportunities are likely to come into existence for full-time ministry as Deacons. At the present stage, it is important that the experience of the relatively few full-time Deacons be given due weight. For the next decade, too, in-service training, and getting Deacons to compare notes about their work

(preferably along with Presbyters and lay people exercising ministries) will be even more important for Deacons than it already is for Presbyters.

Unlike the Permanent Deacons of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, the Diaconate in our Church is not restricted to men. Unlike the Deacons of many Protestant Churches on the Continent, Deacons in our Church are neither bound to celibacy nor obliged to share the religious life in community. But candidates are offering themselves for ordination, which is an irreversible and unrepeatable Sacrament. So, like Presbyters, Bishops, and religious orders – and unlike Lay Representatives and members of Provincial Committees – they are committing themselves for service without limit of time: They are putting themselves at the Church's disposal for life, whether on a stipendiary or a non-stipendiary basis.

A PLACE FOR DEACONS IN THE SYNODIAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH?

12. The question of the place of Deacons in the government of the Church is one to which the Working Group offers only a hesitant answer. The essence of the Diaconate is service, not rule. Deacons in the Patristic Church were frequently prominent and influential, and were often chosen for the episcopate (without first being ordained Presbyter). But they were not, as Deacons, entitled to seats in the councils of the Church. The profound influence of Athanasius on the Christological decisions of the Council of Nicea is well-known; but it was exercised in his capacity as chaplain/secretary to the Bishop of Alexandria.

In our view, there is no case for establishing a separate House of Deacons in either the General Synod or the Diocesan Synods. We are content that Deacons are eligible for election to the House of Clergy in the General Synod (Canon LII, 3 and 4), and would oppose the allocation of a specific number of seats to Deacons. We are not of one mind about the right of Deacons to membership of the Diocesan Synod, but none of us desires to embark upon a controversial effort to abolish existing rights. The Working Group

endorses the distinctions made in Canon XIV according to the degree of a Presbyter's or Deacon's commitment to pastoral work. Sections 5 to 10 already apply to Deacons as well as Presbyters, and seem to give the Bishop sufficient elbow-room to authorise a Distinctive Deacon's work in the community – though Canon XXXVIII.7 mentions only a Priest, and it might be advisable to amend it to read “a Priest or Deacon”.

We note that in the election of a Bishop, “the clerical electors shall all be Presbyters qualified as at the date of receipt by the Dean of the mandate to vote in the Diocesan Synod under Canon L, Section 4”, though that section refers to “clergy” and “clergymen,” terms which embrace Deacons as well as Presbyters. We recommend the amendment of Canon IV, I, to give Deacons a vote in the election of a Bishop.

PREPARATION FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

13. The 1968 Lambeth Conference agreed that:

“the diaconate, combining service of others with liturgical functions, be open to:

- (i) men and women remaining in regular occupations
- (ii) full-time church workers
- (iii) those selected for the priesthood”

The third category should not be taken as the last Anglican word on the subject.¹² Questions have been raised about the necessity of a probationary year before ordination to the Priesthood, and current Roman Catholic practice demonstrates an alternative approach. Further Patristic texts do not support the thesis that candidates for

¹² Though ACC-3 advised “that the use of the Diaconate as a period of preparation for the priesthood be retained,” the present Working Group concurs with the conclusion reached by the Committee on Deacons and Lay Ministries, that “it is not necessary that a man be ordained deacon as a preliminary to being ordained priest” (*Deacons and the Church*), p.16).

the Priesthood ought first to be ordained to the Diaconate.¹³ However, the Working Group advises the Bishops to defer consideration of the option of not ordaining to the Diaconate candidates for the Priesthood, until some years' experience has equipped the Church with a code of practice for Distinctive Diaconate.

Meantime, provision is already made for the residential training of those who are going to be stipendiary Priests and stipendiary Deacons, through three years spent at our Church's Theological College. This arrangement is endorsed by the Working Group, especially as the Bishops allow some flexibility in the case of candidates who have already done some theological study elsewhere. A three-year Training for Ministry courses is the standard preparation for non-stipendiary Priesthood, non-stipendiary Diaconate, and non-stipendiary lay ministries. The Episcopal Church has thus some considerable experience in training people for fuller ministry in the Church, with a Provincial code of practice which (as far as training for non-stipendiary ministry is concerned) allows for some variation from diocese to Diocese.

Just as training given at the Theological College is continually modified by the changes in field practice of the Presbyterate, so experience of the Distinctive Diaconate should affect the College course preparing men and women for service in that ministry. Our Church's growing experience of shared ministry (see above, section 10, ad fin, on variety of ministerial patterns) requires those with responsibility in the College and in the courses to develop and adjust training in accordance with the growing understanding of interdependence in ministry, which is shared across the Churches:

*“Training should be of such a kind as to produce interdependent ministry.”*¹⁴

¹³ Bishop John Howe cited six Deacons by name “and many others” who were elected to the Papacy without ever having been Presbyters (*Deacons and the Church*), p.33).

¹⁴ *Education for the Church's Ministry*, ACCM Occasional Paper no.22, January 1987.

We have already said (above, section 11) that in-service training of Distinctive Deacons will be of even more importance, over the next ten years, than preliminary training. We put forward a suggestion made by the Church's Committee on the Diaconate in 1965, that Deacons (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) should be expected to go into retreat annually. The Clergy Work Assessment process now being pioneered will offer a useful contribution to the nurture and care of Distinctive Deacons, and to the development of their ministry.

CEASING TO EXERCISE THE DIACONATE

14. A Deacon, stipendiary or non-stipendiary, who relinquishes episcopal authorisation on moving to another place remains a member of the Holy Order of Deacons, but is not thereby entitled to exercise the functions of his/her order anywhere at choice. Like Presbyters, Deacons require the authorisation of the local Bishop for the proper exercise of their ministry within the Church. Experience has not justified the fears that were expressed about non-use of non-stipendiary priests who moved to another part of Scotland. Deacons, engaging in a wider variety of specialisms, may have more problems in continuing a particular kind of work elsewhere. But flexibility is also part of being a Distinctive Deacon, and there is no reason to be apprehensive about bridges which may not need to be crossed after all. Furth of Scotland, ordination to the Diaconate in the Scottish Episcopal Church is recognised by all Provinces of the Anglican Communion, and far more of them admit women to the Diaconate than admit women to the Priesthood.

Retirement from full-time ministry is related to the provisions of pension schemes, and the eagerness of the Church to have non-stipendiary post-retirement ministries is unlikely to decrease. The Working Group believes it might be advisable for both stipendiary and non-stipendiary ordained ministries to be subject to assessment at least every five years after the age of 65, renewal of authorisation being subject to a satisfactory medical/pastoral report.

HOW ARE DEACONS USED IN OTHER CHURCHES?

15. The use of Deacons in other Churches is a complex subject. Some Protestant Churches regard Deacons as lay persons, and so both deny them aspects of ministerial practice reserved to the ordained, and minimise the distinctiveness of the Diaconate from lay ministries such as gifts of Church administration or membership of a religious order. We single out, as a common feature of their experience which is most relevant to our Church's situation, the fact that Diaconal ministry is plastic to the perceived unmet needs of the community.

Thus the Reformed Churches in the 16th century set Deacons mainly to educational work, the opening and administration of hospitals, and the administration of a measure of financial relief for the poor. The revival of the Diaconate in the Church of Sweden in the 19th century was closely related to the contemporary enthusiasm for new missionary outreach. Today the German Democratic Republic welcomes within its social services the geriatric, psychiatric and general hospitals which are the principal undertakings of the Diaconal institutes of the Lutheran Church in that country.

It follows that our church ought not to try to imitate other Churches' practice of the Diaconate, but rather to emulate their sensitivity to human need in the community in which they are set.

A constant feature of such sensitivity is the compassionate outreach of Christians in ministry to the poor, who lack the means to solve, or even mitigate the ills which engulf them.

A Distinctive Diaconate has been evolving in the Church of Scotland over the last hundred years, overcoming problems of identity, image, and the relation between versatility and authorisation. The Multilateral Church Conversation' Working Party on the Diaconate singled out this development as "full of promise for the future of Scottish Christianity." A policy of regular consultation with the Diaconate Committee of the Church of Scotland might well benefit both Churches. The experience of this Working Group points in that direction.

The Scottish Roman Catholic Church's experience of Permanent Deacons dates from the middle of the present decade, so their Diaconal identity crisis is just marginally further on than the Episcopal Church's. The permanent Diaconate, where the Pope has approved the request of the Bishop's conference for its establishment, is open on a non-stipendiary basis to married men not under 35 years of age and to unmarried men not under 25. There is a three-year course of training very similar to our non-residential Training for Ministry courses, and this Working Group recommends that the possibility of some measure of sharing of courses by the two Churches be explored immediately. The ministry of a Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church, in addition to extensive liturgical functions, may range all the way from having pastoral care of a parish (with a Priest visiting to hear confessions and to celebrate Mass) to serving in Diocesan administration or in a social work-related capacity. The Revd Deacon J R Futers, describing the current situation in writes:

“Deacons in Religious Houses are members of that particular Order and remain subject to their Superiors. The three diocesan deacons are all full-time.¹⁵ The two in the Aberdeen Diocese are not permanently appointed to a specific parish. Like the priests, they can be moved by the Bishop to any part of the diocese where he may have need of them. These two have been granted the full range of faculties and may have both parish and diocesan responsibilities as determined from time to time. Their role will probably be very different from their counterparts in the rest of Britain and be as distinctive as that of other deacons service in the diverse areas of the world at large.”

The Bishops' Conference for Scotland, petitioning for the establishment of the permanent Diaconate, said,

“In the Ministry of Charity the Church has recognised the specific characteristics of the Diaconate. The possibilities are

¹⁵ but post-retiral and therefore non-stipendiary.

therefore virtually limitless – as wide as the Church’s concern and the needs of the human family.”

IN OTHER PROVINCES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

16. Some other Provinces of the Anglican Communion have been talking about Deacons for almost as long as the Scottish Episcopal Church, but have taken action sooner. The Episcopal Church USA, for example, has begun to bring together into a coherent pattern a great diversity of experimental initiatives. The Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Singapore in April and May 1987, noted that:

“ACC-6 asked that the review of the diaconate be a priority study at ACC-7. As there is no material at hand, this cannot be done,” and asked “the Secretary General to assemble material from all provinces about reviews which have been made or are in hand concerning the diaconate, particularly about steps which are being contemplated about ‘a distinct order of servanthood ministry.’ This is to be done by the end of 1987 so that it might be considered at Lambeth in 1988 and ACC-8.”¹⁶

This Working Group, even if it could produce a survey of the Diaconate in the Anglican Communion for inclusion in its report, could not hope either to make it as thorough as that forthcoming from Canon Van Culin or to complete it before his, and asks to be excused from trying to cover the same ground. The ACC study will list practical examples of initiatives in other Provinces, but it is unlikely to reverse the conclusion reached in section 14 above, that the Scottish Episcopal Church should not model its practice of Diaconate on the other Church’s projects, but be like them in discerning and responding to the unmet needs in the Scottish society within which we are called to worship, to witness and to serve. We ask the Bishops to make this report available to the Secretary General of the ACC, with whatever comments they consider appropriate.

¹⁶ Many Gifts, One Spirit, pp 58ff.

The Working Group is grateful to the Bishop of Portsmouth for letting us see both the first draft and the completed report to the House of Bishops of the Church of England, Deacons in the Ministry of the Church, 129 pages long. The report includes a section on the Scottish Episcopal Church, as one of three core samples (the others being the USA and South Africa) of Anglican revivals of the Diaconate. This much larger work encourages confidence in our own study, in that it moves along much the same historical and theological lines. But it sees ministries like those of a Reader and a Church Army officer as “diaconal ministries” (with a small “d”) as being akin to the ordained Diaconate, whereas this Working Group, influenced by the report from the Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland, sees such ministries as aspects of the diaconate of all Christian people, and the Diaconate as distinctive right from the New Testament period. Be that as it may, the English report ends with the recommendation that

“the Church of England make provision for, and encourage, men and women to serve in an ordained distinctive diaconate.”

And adds:

“The future ministry of the Church will be greatly enriched by the restoration of a diaconate after the model and pattern of Christ’s diaconate. He came ‘not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45), to provide an example and support for the diaconal ministry of all – laity, presbyters and bishops. All who follow him are called to be ‘servants for Jesus’ sake’ (2Cor 4:5).”¹⁷

“Too often an attempt has been made to assign tasks to the diaconate because they seem to comprise a reasonable semi-clerical occupation, or because some one must do them and a ‘permanent diaconate’ may be the answer. Rather the starting point should be to discern that the diaconate is one of three holy orders of the Catholic Church: therefore God has a purpose for it; and to discover what that purpose is.”

Deacons and the Church, p 8.

¹⁷ *Deacons in the Ministry of the Church, p 107.*

APPENDIX

THE ROLE OF A BISHOP WHERE THERE ARE VARIETIES OF MINISTRY

By Bishop Patrick C Rodger

Before I tackle my subject proper, may I express my strong approval of the general lines taken by the Working Group in the first draft of their report. The usual approach of Anglicans to any of the complicated questions of ministry today is to ask ‘Who is allowed to do what? To whom is he or she accountable?’ (and how little can we pay him or her for what they do!) I am delighted to see that the Working Group has rejected this approach from the outset – not that these questions do not ultimately have to be answered, but they are secondary, not primary! It is essential to begin where you have, with the ministry of Christ himself in and to the world. Because that ministry is greater than all of us can compass together, it is certainly inclusive and not exclusive. The whole Body of the Church is diaconal, and we are all called to serve in Christ’s name. It follows both that bishops and priests never lay aside a diaconal character, and also that the Christian laity are called to participate in the universal diaconate, as indeed many of them already do in a thousand different ways. As former chairman of the Church of England’s Working Party on the Laity, I should be utterly unwilling to see any kind of Distinctive Diaconate that devalued the existing ministries of lay people whether ‘officially or not’. The diaconate, like the priesthood, is surely intended to be a representative ministry within and to the whole Church; and as such it may well be – and remain – small, but small ought not to mean marginal.

That said, let me address myself to the question set: ‘What is the role of the Bishop where there are varieties of ministry!’ I think that the honest answer is ‘Let a hundred flowers bloom!’ And I can’t remember whether that was one of Mao Tse-Tung’s more successful slogans or the contrary. At any rate, the bishop is usually operating between the pressure of many different vocations to serve the Church – for which, if he has any sense, he will give thanks to God – and a great deal of theological and administrative imprecision, which in 1987 is not, I think, peculiar to

ecclesia Anglicans, though we usually raise it to a fine art. At any rate, there is obviously much overlap between the variously designed ministries, both ordained and lay, and while this may not matter too much, provided Christ's work is being done, it may not be anything to boast about either.

May I begin with two reminiscences (perhaps under the heading of non-academic excursions)? First: in the Manchester Diocese, institutions of incumbents and licensing of curates, deaconesses, lay workers and Church Army officers were not done in the parishes concerned, only inductions by the Archdeacons. All those named were 'done' together once a month by the Bishop at Evensong in the Cathedral (with a good Lancashire tea beforehand). As far as I know, this practice is unique in the Church of England, and it has to be admitted that it owes much to practical convenience. Yet I found some real value in it. To me, and I hope to the others, it symbolised the unity of the ministry in the Diocese – the unity of all those diverse men and women from different jobs and places, starting a new phase of their ministry with the Bishop in their midst and in the mother Church of the Diocese. Representatives of the parishes concerned could and did attend (in small numbers), but one was aware from the usual parish razzmatazz and everyone craning their necks to see the new man or woman.

Secondly, I remember vividly and with gratitude the talks that I used to have with ordinands during the retreat just before their priesting (in sixteen years, I should think some three or four hundred men in all). And I remember, perhaps with a little surprise, how with hardly any exceptions, they told me that they had greatly valued their 'deacon's year' as an induction into a full ministry of Word and Sacrament, and were glad not to have missed that experience. I mention this because we are all wont to pass scorn on the attenuated diaconate of our Church and are anxious to get away from it. Maybe we should; yet the probationary period in some form is surely worth preserving. Nor do I believe it to be the right solution to push the diaconate back into the period of theological training, as some have suggested. The calling of a theological student (a very necessary one) is not at all the same as that of a deacon or a priest, although one frequently leads to the others. The late Dr Billy Greer of blessed memory was much opposed to his students adopting prematurely

clerical habit and attitudes, and time has only convinced me of how right he was.

So much for reminiscences, perhaps unhelpful but true. Now what do I think is the role of the Bishop when the draught of fishes is a hundred and fifty and three, and yet the net is not broken? Let me put it under six headings (the heart sinks when the preacher says it, so let me try to be concise):

- a) Trying to discern where, in our society, the ministry of the Church is needed most and to supply those best able to carry it out.

This may be regarded as the primary episcopal task – but in my experience it is horribly difficult to carry out: partly because money so often seems to be tied up in the wrong place, but also because so few of the Church's ministers (stipendiary or otherwise) turn out to be what the French call *disponible*. They have wives, and the wives have jobs, and the children have O-levels, and therefore they cannot go. Neither do the unmarried clergy often show a desire to flock to Manchester rather than Oxford (compare the rate of retirement to Edinburgh with that to Glasgow!) You may produce historic reports on inner city areas, but unless there are Christians who are actually willing to live and work there, as Lilia Graham and her colleagues did in the Gorbals, and unless the Church actually knows how to uphold and support them week by week in their ministry there, the talk of strategy becomes a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Nevertheless, and in the widest terms, this remains the first requirement of the apostolic role: trying to discern where in our society the ministry of the Church (whether ordained or lay or both together) is needed most and to supply those best able to carry it out.

- b) Keeping the various orders and types of ministers in touch with one another, and preventing them from becoming either imperialistic or defensive about their particular ministry. See 1 Cor 12, v 14ff.

We are already aware of this need, not always fulfilled, as it applies to non-stipendiary ministers and the stipendiary clergy and their

relation to one another. But now we must also consider a question about the distinctive diaconate. For it the deacons are indeed to be distinctive, as we hope, and to engage in some pioneering work in society at the prompting or with the support of the Bishop, how will they relate to their parish priests? The question of liturgical duties enters into this, but does not exhaust it. For we should perhaps take into account that in the eyes of a secularised society, some diaconal work may seem a good deal more important than the ministry of Word and Sacrament (just as many of the British public think Terry Waite more important than the Archbishop of Canterbury). At a time when the Welfare State is going more and more into crisis, this could well be the case. And it will be part of the role of the Bishop who stands at the meeting-point of theology and sociology, to be aware of this situation, and, as I have said, to keep the various ministries in reasonable communication and reasonable balance.

- c) Acting as a channel of information as to what is happening over the diaconate and other ministries in the Anglican Communion as a whole.

Here I obviously have the Lambeth Conference of 1988 and the Bishop of Portsmouth's contribution especially in mind. I am also conscious that 'to act as a channel of information' ought not to mean – though I am afraid it sometimes does – just to confuse the faithful still further by passing on a mass of undigested paper, but rather out of all these deliberations to try and discern an appropriate way forward. In our case, this must presumably be done at Provincial level and there by the College of Bishops.

- d) In the same line, acting as a channel of information as to what is happening about the diaconate and other ministries in other denominations and fostering common study and action with them wherever possible.

It seems particularly appropriate that the diaconate should receive the attention of the Multilateral Church Conversations, because this is one order of ministry which we all approach with a certain degree of humility and desire to rebuild in the conditions of today. The

Working Group is surely right to say that we do not need simply to imitate one another, since we have many different presuppositions and starting-points; but that is not to say that we cannot learn from one another, and at a time when all our ministries (not least those of the Roman Catholic Church) are in rapid evolution and demanding reappraisal. It does not seem to me at all foolish or over-pretentious to be talking about 'a diaconate for Scotland'. See Cheyne, pp 26, 27).

- e) Continuing to promote theological thinking about ministry as a whole, and in particular the union or separation of the ministry of the Word and the ministry of the Sacraments.

I think it is clear that the Reformers in Britain, as on the Continent, were deeply concerned to bring together the ministry of Word and Sacraments, which in the medieval period had become fragmented. Indeed, it has often tended to become fragmented since, in opposite directions within Catholicism and Protestantism, one of the penalties of division. Yet in this century, there has been a welcome recrudescence of attention to Scripture and to preaching in Catholic churches and of sacramentalism in some of the main Protestant churches.

It seems to me therefore that we need to handle with care and understanding those ministries which are (for the most part) non-sacramental. If the distinctive diaconate in particular is by definition, to be a non-eucharistic ministry, then how will it be related to the Eucharist both in the local churches and also where possible in the workplace where a non-stipendiary priest may be the celebrant? This question seems to me crucial in a eucharistic Church like our own and it recalls us to the traditional liturgical role of the deacon.

- f) At the risk of appearing sexist, I must add one more. The Bishop needs to honour and to foster the ministry of women today, whatever form this may take (or be allowed to take).

I have recently been arguing in another place that there is not nearly as much difference between the ministries of the two sexes, in basic

Christian understanding, as the controversialists on both sides of the argument often allege. I believe that to be true. Yet there is no blinking the fact that a distinctive diaconate is likely to be, at least in its early stages, predominantly female. We do not want to return to the bad old status quo ante where nobody knew just what deaconesses were, and it did not matter greatly because they were all women anyway! Now all deacons, male or female, are to some extent dogsbodies, for the diaconate, if you like, represents the authentic dogsbodying element in the life of the Church, which forms a part of the vocation of every Christian, high or low. And it is vital that we should understand and state clearly that to be a dogsbody belongs somewhere to our discipleship as such, and is not a matter of gender, as we have often supposed in the Church.

And to sum up: I venture to affirm that all orders and varieties of ministry (ordained or lay) within a Diocese need to know that their Bishop loves, values and supports them, and that he must (within reason!) be accessible to them all. That this is itself no light matter will be quite evident to you all – that's why you need to keep praying for him. But at the same time, as an apostolic man, he must also remind the various ministries that the internal relationship of the Church – always a fascinating and time-consuming subject – are not the priority of the Kingdom of God, but that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

