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THE DEACON IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

From its inception in the sixteenth century, the Church of England has kept the historic threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon. The deacon is therefore provided for in its ordinals and regulated in its canon law. Until comparatively recent times, the diaconate has been seen almost exclusively as a preparatory year for priesthood. The roots of the current growth of a distinctive diaconal ministry can be traced to the same nineteenth century influences from Germany which also affected the Nordic Churches. English deacons thus share a common heritage with their fellow-deacons in Finland, Sweden and Norway. However, these influences have led to different outcomes: the deacons of the Church of England come from many backgrounds other than nursing, social work and education, and, unlike their Nordic counterparts, most of them are not paid as deacons.

A number of specific issues relating to the diaconate in the Church of England have been identified during the course of this initial phase of the work of the Anglo-Nordic Diaconal Research Project (ANDREP). For example, in English canon

law and in ecclesiastical legal measures related to it, the deacon is clearly accepted as belonging to the clergy and to the three-fold order of ministry, but, because the vast majority of Church of England deacons in the last four centuries have been ordained to the priesthood after only one year as deacons, the specific identity of a deacon as opposed to that of a priest is far from clear. In practice, many people (both clergy and laity) in the Church of England are still unaware that there are deacons who are not preparing for ordination to the priesthood. Yet the survey undertaken for ANDREP showed that a significant number of people have accepted a permanent deacon's vocation and that they are holding to this vocation, without much effective official support, mostly without payment, often in isolation and in the face of pressure and opposition of various forms and intensity. The Church of England has in fact confirmed them in their diaconal vocation through episcopal ordination, though they are often treated as if they have no proper place or purpose and should just move on to priesthood.

The survey undertaken for ANDREP confirmed that deacons in the Church of England have a vision much wider than their own immediate situation. They have begun to see their vocation and experience as part of a universal phenomenon, in which the Holy Spirit is calling the Church to a new understanding of the diaconate of Christ himself within the Christian body. The Church of England has recently acknowledged that there have been new insights into the meaning and purpose of the diaconate which must be taken into account. At the General

Synod meeting in November 1998, it was decided 'to ask the House of Bishops to set up a working party to consider the concept of a renewed diaconate and to report to Synod'.¹

In theological terms, the ANDREP survey has raised a number of issues which require further research and clarification. The relationship of the diaconate to the *diakonia* of the whole church, and the ecclesial role of the deacon in relation to the Kingdom are two of the specific areas indicated in the contemporary English context. A third area requiring clarification is related to the distinction between order and ministry: although it is canonically quite clear who is a deacon and who is not, there is a practice for some lay ministers to style themselves 'diaconal ministers'. This nomenclature is not officially in use in the Church of England, and unofficial use of it is a potential source of theological misunderstanding.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The legal position is quite clear: the diaconate has a recognised status in the canon law of the Church of England as the third major order alongside episcopate and presbyterate. This is the case whether the order of deacon is used as a transit location for candidates who are ultimately destined for ordination to the priesthood or whether it is the permanent office of those who are not going to be priests. The order of deacon is one and the same. There are not two diaconates. There are however two

¹ Diocesan Synod Motions, in Proceedings of the General Synod, November 1998, p. 878.

different ways in which the diaconate is used. As a result the custom has grown up of referring to deacons who are not going to be ordained to the priesthood as 'permanent', 'distinctive' or 'vocational' deacons. This is meant to distinguish them from 'transitional' deacons, who will spend one year as deacons before being ordained as priests. Following the practice common in other churches, particularly the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA), where deacons are now comparatively numerous, many of the so-called 'permanent' or 'distinctive' deacons of the Church of England prefer to be called simply 'deacons' and to use the term 'transitional deacon' for those who are to be ordained to the priesthood. This is the usage which this paper adopts. Some may well argue that the Church of England, inheriting its practices from the mediaeval church, has been ordaining deacons to the priesthood for as long as it has existed and that a case has to be made for the assumption that the 'permanent' diaconate is the normative diaconate. Others may contend that a deacon does not cease to be a deacon when ordained to the priesthood and that therefore every deacon is a 'permanent' deacon, even when subsequently ordained to the priesthood. Such arguments must be examined elsewhere and in their own context.

From the Reformation to the nineteenth century

The diaconate in England has been affected, both positively and negatively, by a variety of political and social events which have determined the life and history of the Church of England as a

whole. At the Reformation, the *ecclesia anglicana* sought to reform itself according to what was perceived to be the order of the undivided church of the early Christian period. Successive Books of Common Prayer, whose usage was required by law through Acts of Uniformity, were drawn up from 1549 onwards, with rites of ordination for bishops, priests and deacons attached. The Preface to the Ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, which is still authorised for use (though rarely if ever used today) expresses the Reformation understanding when it confidently asserts that it is:

evident to all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests and Deacons.....²

In its determination to continue the historic ministry of this threefold order, the Church of England differed from most of the other churches of the Reformation on the continent of Europe and also from the precursors of the free churches in England.

Despite the Church of England's intention to retain existing practice, and even to return to ancient roots, no specific consideration was given to the nature or purpose of the diaconate, or to its need to be reformed in the light of contemporary circumstances or more ancient models. This is perhaps surprising: there were questions about the nature of the diaconate in the

² The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons according to the Order of the Church of England, attached to the Book of Common Prayer of 1662.

western Church at this time, as the deliberations of the Council of Trent and the events which led up to them were to show.³ The English Church ultimately retained the mediaeval concept of order, with its emphasis on the primacy of priesthood. A transitional diaconate, usually lasting one year before ordination to the priesthood, continued to be the norm. The final rubric in the 1662 Ordinal laid down that :

here it must be declared to the Deacon, that he must continue in that office of a Deacon the space of a whole year (except for reasonable causes it shall otherwise seem good unto the Bishop) to the intent he may be perfect and well expert in the things appertaining to the Ecclesiastical Administration. In executing whereof, if he be found faithful and diligent, he may be admitted by his Diocesan to the order of Priesthood,⁴

The canon law puts the position slightly differently, saying that the purpose of the diaconal year is that 'trial may be made of (the deacon's) behaviour in the office of deacon before he be admitted to the order of priesthood'.⁵ This is still in force. Although minor orders were abolished in the Church of England at the Reformation, this canon indicates that the mediaeval practice of using time in one order to train a candidate for admission to the next order had been preserved in the case of the diaconate. The resulting short time of one year (sometimes in practice less) between diaconal and priestly ordination, and

³ See Echlin, E. *The Deacon in the Church*, Alba 1971, p.97 et seq. for an account of an attempt to reform the diaconate at the Council of Trent and its antecedents.

⁴ Ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer of 1662.

⁵ See Canon C3 *Of the Ordination of Priests and Deacons*, para. 8.

the specific purpose for which it was intended to be used, meant that a distinctive role for the deacon did not become established in the Church of England. The 1662 Ordinal refers to the diaconate as an 'inferior' order and expresses the hope that the deacon might later aspire to higher ministries.⁶

The traumatic effect of the Reformation on religious life in sixteenth century England has been documented in recent years by a number of historians.⁷ The seventeenth century witnessed further upheavals and, by the eighteenth century, a Protestant monarchy was well established and patterns of worship in the Church of England had changed. The Eucharist was celebrated less frequently. Deacons had always been authorised to officiate at morning and evening prayer, at baptisms, marriages and funerals, and these had by this time become the most frequently used services of the English Church. The distinction between the deacon and the priest was not made clear by the role or functions which each performed. Alongside the customary transitional deacons, there were a few deacons who did not proceed to ordination to the priesthood after one year. These were deacons who were employed in royal households, or as teachers in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.⁸ The

⁶ This phrase is to be found in one of the post-communion prayers, after the last collect, in the Form and Manner of Making of Deacons, Book of Common Prayer, 1662.

⁷ E.g. Bennett, G. *The Englishman's View of the Clergy*, in *To the Church of England*, pp. 111-123, Churchman Publishing, 1988, Collinson, P. *The Religion of Protestants*, OUP, 1982 and *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, Macmillan, 1988, Duffy, E. *The Stripping of the Altars*, Yale, 1992, Foster, A. *The Church of England 1570-1640*, Longman, 1994, and MacCulloch, D. *The Later Reformation in England 1547-1603*, MacMillan, 1990.

⁸ Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, was one such deacon.

holders of such posts had to be clerks-in-holy-orders but not necessarily priests. It was also the case that :

in the eighteenth century, episcopal visitations searched out curates who had failed to proceed to the priesthood and occasionally discovered men who had been deacons for many years, either because of the fees involved or because they feared an examination by the bishop's chaplains.⁹

The Oxford Movement and the Evangelical Revival in the nineteenth century occurred at a time of rapid urban growth caused by the Industrial Revolution and at a time of great social need in the rural areas of England. During this period, new developments affected the diaconate but led to no clearer view of it. The overall pattern maintained was that of the transitional diaconate, exclusively for men. Parishes influenced by the Oxford Movement adopted a form of worship which recognised the role of the deacon in the eucharistic liturgy, though that role was often taken by a priest, just as the role of the sub-deacon (a minor order abolished in the Church of England at the Reformation), was often taken by a lay person. Parishes influenced by the Evangelical Revival continued to treat the transitional deacon as a minister without specific role, liturgical or social. In the Church of England as a whole, the canon law did not make sufficient distinctive provision for deacons. With a great deal of its provision applying equally to everyone in holy orders, whether bishop, priest or deacon, distinctions between

⁹ *Deacons in the Ministry of the Church: A Report to the Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England*, 1988, p.16.

deacon and priest were blurred, and the idea was reinforced that the deacon was a priest-in-waiting.¹⁰

The monastic and religious life in England had been brought brutally to an end in the sixteenth century. Under the influence of the Oxford Movement, it was revived. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a small number of religious communities for men, whilst women's communities were much more numerous. These new communities made a significant contribution to the worshipping life of the Church, and to the social needs of the rural poor and of the population in the rapidly growing urban areas, through education, health care and social programmes for the homeless, hungry and otherwise needy people of Victorian England. Study of the development of the diaconate in the universal Church has suggested that one of the reasons for its decline was that it became subsumed into the monastic and religious life by the twelfth century in the East and much earlier in the West. The point has also been made that, wherever the diaconate is suppressed as an order in its own right, it reappears at least partially through other forms of Christian life and practice, of which the religious life is one. Furthermore it often reappears at times of great social fragmentation, such as the period immediately after the Second World War.¹¹

¹⁰ For information on the lack of definition of the deacon's position in the canon law, see Bursell, R. *Liturgy, Order and the Law*, Clarendon 1996, *passim*.

¹¹ The members of the Deacon Circle emanating from Dachau at the close of the Second World War envisioned a renewed diaconate as one of the answers to the needs of a disintegrated Europe. Their initiative led eventually to the renewal of the permanent diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council.

Nineteenth century influences

More detailed research is required on the relationship between the German and Nordic diaconal developments in the nineteenth century and on the setting up of a ministry of deaconesses in the Church of England at about the same time. Potentially this could help clarify the confusion in current thinking about the differentiation between order and ministry in the Church of England in relation to the diaconate. It might also indicate how the question of the diaconate became so bound up with the issue of women's ministry and ordination. In brief, the Church of England created a group of women ministers which it called deaconesses. They were not made deaconesses with the same rite which was used at that time for (male) transitional deacons. Some deaconesses claimed they had a direct relationship with the deacons of the early Church and the contemporary order of deacon. This claim was never officially accepted, and it is clear that the impetus for the creation of the deaconess came from the Kaiserswerth model.

Kaiserswerth and the English Deaconesses

The influence of the Kaiserswerth deaconess movement came to be felt in England from about the 1850s. Founded by Theodor Fliedner in 1836, Kaiserswerth very quickly became successful and influential over a very wide ecclesiastical and geographical area. Florence Nightingale, who later became such a key figure in the development of nursing and public health in England and in the delivery of nursing care in the Crimean War, received

some of her nursing training there, though she did not become a deaconess. A cameo picture of Kaiserswerth in 1861 is given by Janet Grierson in her history of the deaconess in the Church of England:

In 1861 the Kaiserswerth Institution already numbered 120 probationers and 220 deaconesses, some of whom lived in the Mother House, while the rest were distributed in 83 out-stations, at home and overseas. Candidates could choose whether they wished to become nursing-sisters or instructing-sisters, but all received religious instruction and shared in the devotional life of the house. The nursing training was given in private homes and in the institutions attached to the Mother House, notably a general hospital, a hospital for the insane, and a 'refuge for released female prisoners and Magdalens'. The instructing-sisters were trained in the Infant School and Orphan Asylum which belonged to the Institution. In the various out-stations a similar pattern was followed. When their training was completed, most of the deaconesses worked in institutions, but a number also served more directly under the pastors of parishes, who allotted them district visiting, Sunday School teaching and other forms of parochial work. Many went overseas.¹²

In 1862, Elizabeth Ferrard, who had 'visited Kaiserswerth and afterwards worked in a sisterhood at Ditchingham'¹³ 'was admitted by Archbishop Tait as the first full deaconess of the

¹² Grierson, J., *The Deaconess*, CIO 1981, p.19

¹³ *The Ministry of Women*, SPCK 1919, p.187.

English Church'.¹⁴ Dr Tait, a Presbyterian by birth and upbringing, was at that time Bishop of London and a strong opponent of the Oxford Movement. Elizabeth Ferrard had however been impressed by the religious life of Ditchingham, and the deaconess institution of which she became head subsequently reorganised itself to become the Deaconess Community of St Andrew, with a Mother Superior, Chapter and Daily Office.¹⁵ Other deaconesses were trained, lived in or worked from the diocesan training institutions which were set up from the 1860s onwards. Three of these at least were constituted as 'deaconess communities under rules which differ little from sisterhoods'.¹⁶ Deaconesses remained unmarried and by the end of the nineteenth century were widely accepted in the Church of England.

The ecclesial status of deaconesses was never finally determined. A committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1919 appears to have concluded that they were ordained into holy orders. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 viewed this conclusion with great caution. Nevertheless, the service for the making of a deaconess came to be described as an 'ordination'. This usage was problematic, because there was no precedent in English for using the word 'ordination' for any other purpose

¹⁴ *The Ministry of Women*, p.187. NB Grierson, p. 21, uses quite different language, saying that Elizabeth Ferrard was 'set apart as the first episcopally ordained deaconess in the English Church since the Reformation'.

¹⁵ The Community still exists, though arguably, as some of its dwindling number of members have been ordained to the priesthood, it is no longer a diaconal community.

¹⁶ *The Ministry of Women*, p.187.

than to designate the admission of ministers to the orders of bishop, priest and deacon. The first deaconess foundation stated that 'the object of the Institution is the renewal of the primitive Order of Deaconesses in the Church of England, for the purpose of engaging in works of Christian usefulness',¹⁷ and many women who subsequently became deaconesses evidently believed that they had been admitted to the third order of ministry. Nevertheless the Lambeth Conference of 1930 described the order of deaconesses in the Church of England as *sui generis*, and effectively denied that the deaconess and the deacon belonged to the same order. It has become quite clear, during a recent survey of deaconesses ordained as deacons since 1987, that few see a difference between the ministry they held before their ordination as deacons and the ministry they now exercise. However, when legislation was enacted in 1987 to enable women to be ordained to the diaconate, the Bishops of the Church of England did not institute conditional ordination for those who were already deaconesses. Existing deaconesses who wished to become deacons were ordained to the diaconate.

With hindsight it can be asked why the Church of England did not consider reforming the diaconate more radically in the nineteenth century, according to the models of the early Church. The works of the Greek and Latin Fathers were by then an important influence in Anglican theology. Familiarity with the patristic theology of order could have led to a re-examination of the way in which the Church of England had continued to

¹⁷ Grierson, p.21.

maintain the mediaeval attitudes to order and ministry which it had inherited. The growing social problems of the late nineteenth century might also have been expected to stimulate the Church to ask how in that new context it should be understanding and using the orders which, as the 1662 Ordinal confidently stated, had been 'since the time of the Apostles ... in Christ's Church'.

The nineteenth century developments of the religious and monastic life and of the ministry of deaconesses were both a pragmatic response to the demands of the contemporary situation and a series of attempts by gifted and dynamic individuals, supported by a number of diocesan bishops, to pursue their own visions. As the deaconess movement grew from strength to strength, the Church of England as a whole was able to avoid any attempt to reconcile its internal Catholic-Protestant tension and clarify its views on order. It continued to maintain in its formularies that a threefold order of ministry was a necessary part of its catholic and universal identity. At the same time, it made no effort to explore the real nature of the diaconate as a distinctive order of ministry and to develop it accordingly. The result of this failure was that there entered into the life of the Church of England an exclusively female lay ministry, bearing some features of the diaconate, but later to be described as *sui generis*. Though continuity with the diaconate of the early Church was sometimes claimed for it, the nineteenth century ministry of deaconess had its immediate roots and its theology in an ecclesial communion with a church polity

alien to that of the Church of England. As such, it sat awkwardly alongside the ordained ministry which the Church of England considered to be essential to its identity.

No equivalent group of male ministers was ever created, and it was not until the 1980s, in the Diocese of Portsmouth, that the diaconate came to be revived as a permanent ministry for men. The number of male deacons has increased but the diaconate is still widely perceived as a ministry for women. The perception is strengthened by the fact that many deacons are not paid, and for some reason the idea is still current that women should be more ready and able to do unpaid work.¹⁸

From the Reformation period to the middle of the twentieth century, the strengthening of the geographical parish as the local worshipping unit with which people identified, and the supremacy of the priest in the parochial setting, gave rise to the understanding that priesthood was the primary and normative ordained ministry. Deacons (exclusively male and, with very few exceptions, transitional) were peripheral and temporary figures in the Church's life. Deaconesses (by definition female), when they appeared on the scene in the middle of the nineteenth century, were involved in nursing, in education and in parishes, where they became social workers with a Church base, and were not regarded as the equivalent of deacons.

¹⁸ By comparison with this situation, it should also be noted that most of the deacons in the Roman Catholic Church of France are married non-stipendiary deacons who are in paid secular employment. All are male. The majority of the deacons of ECUSA, male and female, are also not paid by the Church, and this seems to be the case in other parts of the Anglican Communion, though the local reasons may not be the same as those which apply in the Church of England.

Bishops were remote presences, at least until the coming of the railways, which enabled them to travel more easily around their dioceses. The diocese had by then ceased to be regarded as the local Church. A form of congregationalism, supported by the legally established system of clerical freehold,¹⁹ was already rife in the Church of England.

The Twentieth Century Renewal

The origins of the renewed interest in the diaconate in the Church of England in the latter part of the twentieth century are also insufficiently researched. The restoration of the permanent order of deacon in the Roman Catholic Church, begun at the end of the Second World War and finally achieved twenty years later at the Second Vatican Council, no doubt acted as a stimulus in ensuring that the diaconate was at least discussed in the Church of England. A flurry of discussions and published papers was also produced by the World Council of Churches in Geneva in the late 1960s.²⁰

¹⁹ Clerical freehold is the system by which parish priests may be appointed with absolute security of tenure. For various reasons, the practice is not quite as common as it once was. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it has left in the Church of England a perception that the incumbent of a parish is independent of any accountability. There is legislation in place to deal with pastoral breakdown between priests and their parishes, and with gross misconduct, but it is nevertheless very difficult indeed for a bishop, parish or diocese to remove a priest who has freehold and who refuses to go. No such system protects the position of parish deacons.

²⁰ E.g. *The Ministry of Deacons: World Church Studies No.2*, Geneva 1965; *The Diaconess: World Church Studies No.4*, Geneva 1966, and *The Role of the Diakonia of the Church in Contemporary Society*, Geneva 1966.

In 1971, the Church of England's Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry (ACCM)²¹ commissioned a report on the diaconate, which was published in 1974.²² Its terms of reference appear effectively to have pre-empted the possibility that the diaconate would be considered in its own right. The members of the working party were specifically instructed, in the second of their terms of reference, to 'bear in mind the need to secure the stronger witness of the Christian laity in the secular world'.²³ A deacon in the 1990s would be most likely to regard that instruction as a *sine qua non* of any discussion on the diaconate. The tenor and context of the 1974 report and its recommendations appear to confirm that it arose there from the assumption that, if the ministry of the deacon were allowed to flourish, it would automatically limit and detract from the ministry of the lay person

The Introduction to the 1974 ACCM Report recognised that 'in many Christian communions and in many parts of the world, there is today a revival of interest in the diaconate'. It went on to link this revival with the 'rediscovery of the serving role of the whole people of God and of the diaconal function of the whole Church'.²⁴ Perhaps even more significantly for its

²¹ Later the Advisory Board of Ministry (ABM) and recently renamed Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council.

²² *Deacons in the Church: the Report of a Working Party set up by the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry*. CIO 1974.

²³ *Deacons in the Church*, p.3.

²⁴ *Deacons in the Church*, p.1.

results, the working party members deliberately disregarded the view that, for the sake of ecumenical relations, it was 'unwise for the Anglican Communion to make any alteration or adaptation of the traditional threefold ministry'. They said that they simply did not agree with such a view, and, 'wishing neither to enlarge the scope of the diaconate, nor merely to perpetuate the present situation', they found themselves 'driven to recommend the third course of action, namely the abolition or discontinuation of the diaconate in the Church of England'.²⁵ They justified this recommendation by claiming that the removal of the order of deacon would leave a clearer picture of the 'diaconal responsibilities' of lay people and of 'the work and functions of the ordained minister'.²⁶ Quite how they thought this would happen is not clear from the report's contents.

The text of the report reflects the kind of understanding of the deacon's servanthood which some scholars have never held and which has been called seriously into question by more recently published work on the New Testament sources.²⁷ Furthermore, though the members of the working party claimed that their work was addressed to the Church of England, they were audacious enough to say that they had 'also borne in mind the needs of the Church in other parts of the world, not least in other parts of the Anglican Communion, and (we) believe that our conclusions are valid and appropriate for the wider Church as

²⁵ *Deacons in the Church*, p.24.

²⁶ *ibid*, loc. cit.

²⁷ For example, by the work of John N. Collins in *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, Oxford, 1990.

well as for the Church of England'.²⁸ Other parts of the Anglican Communion do not seem to have agreed with this, as the growth of the diaconate in several places, particularly in the Episcopal Church of the USA, has shown. The 1974 Report was presented to the General Synod of the Church of England, and the Synod took note of it but did not accept its recommendations. The Report's preface writer reminded readers that its 'arguments and recommendations are those of the working party itself, and should not be taken as representing the agreed policy of the Council' (i.e. ACCM, the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry).²⁹

The diaconate became important very shortly thereafter, because of the role it could be made to play in the debate on the ordination of women to the priesthood. In 1975, the General Synod decided that there were 'no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood'.³⁰ From that time, as the campaign to ordain women priests intensified, the diaconate acquired an unexpected usefulness, as a result of the Church of England's practice to ordain all candidates for priesthood first to the diaconate. For some, it came to be valued as the route through which women might more easily attain their goal of priesthood, and for others, it came to be seen as a place where women's aspirations might conceivably be contained.

²⁸ Deacons in the Church, p.6. The Report contains no record of there having been any consultation with other parts of the Anglican Communion.

²⁹ *ibid*, p. iii.

³⁰ See GS 829 *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*, published by the General Synod of the Church of England, June 1988 for the context of this decision.

In 1987, legislation was enacted which permitted the ordination of women to the diaconate. Many women, some of them parish workers or deaconesses, were waiting to be ordained to the priesthood. They were ordained to the diaconate and, within a very short time, there were about 1000 women deacons in the Church of England. Many did not intend to remain deacons. Women deacons were given paid posts more readily than they are now; many were able to keep the paid posts they had held as deaconesses and lay workers. A special category of seats on the General Synod was created for women deacons and just as quickly abandoned once women could be ordained as priests. The Church press carried a variety of advertisements of posts for deacons, now so rare as to be virtually non-existent. Evidence suggests that when legislation was enacted in 1992, to enable women to be ordained to the priesthood, it was expected that all women deacons would wish to avail themselves of this option. Some did not wish to do so, but a number of them were left with no real choice, if they were to remain in employment or if they wished to apply for posts other than those which they already held. Some decided to continue as deacons, and their decision in many cases has not been without cost. It is noteworthy that a significant number of women deacons currently working in parishes are married to priests, which in many cases has facilitated their acceptance into a parish, though the price has often been the sharing of one stipend for two people's work.

The overwhelming majority of ministerial opportunities now open to deacons (male or female) carry no stipend at all. Understandably not everyone can afford to work substantial hours for nothing more than the reimbursement of travel expenses incurred whilst on duty.

Many deacons do not see the diaconate as specifically a women's ministry issue. Statistics gathered before 1987 give the number of non-transitional male deacons as 14, and in 1990 as 29.³¹ Those gathered in 1997³² indicate that 25% of deacons active in the Church of England at the moment are male. Whilst this may amount to no more than about 20 deacons, it is interesting to note that in a situation which has built-in disincentives (for example, very little possibility of being given a paid post), and a history of linking diaconal ministry to women's opportunities for more than a century, a 25%-75% ratio nevertheless exists.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

In Finland, Norway and Sweden, detailed statistics on the diaconate are collected centrally and are readily available. By comparison, statistics about deacons in the Church of England are very difficult to obtain. There is no single, full and reliable source of information, because the Church of England does not keep separate data on deacons.

³¹ See Hall, C. (ed.), *The Deacon's Ministry*, p.5 and footnote.

³² In preparation for the Anglo-Nordic Diaconal Research Project Survey described below.

Survey of Deacons

The data collection exercise for the ANDREP survey was completed in various stages and produced 105 names and addresses. A detailed questionnaire was sent to these deacons between July 1997 and October 1998. Of the total of 105, 20 were either inactive for reasons unknown, or regarded themselves as retired, or were waiting to be ordained to the priesthood and therefore decided not to complete the questionnaire. Of the remaining 85, two have died since 1997 and two have been ordained to the priesthood. The remaining 81 deacons may be regarded as the active core of deacons currently working in the Church of England. 66 (81%) of this group completed the questionnaire. However, one declined to complete the questionnaire 'for personal reasons'. Of the respondents, 26% were male and 74% female. Whilst the total figure of active deacons is not large, it nevertheless represents a considerable increase on the figure for (non-transitional) deacons prior to 1987, and the number is certainly growing. It has been seen to grow much more rapidly in English dioceses where ordination to the diaconate is positively presented as a viable option for both men and women. The experience of ECUSA suggests that once diocesan bishops give their support, an increase in the number of deacons follows.

No further responses are being included in the survey, but supplementary information is still being sought, using the relevant parts of the same questionnaire, as and when additional deacons are located or ordained. A follow-up survey of three groups of

deacons ordained in 1987–88, 1992–3 and 1997–8 has also been set up, with a view to mapping their progression. The initial responses received in the period October 1997–October 1998 have been analysed, and the analysis used to support the following account of the current state of the diaconate in the Church of England.

1. DEPLOYMENT

Numbers

By comparison with the 80 deacons estimated to be in active ministry in the Church of England, there are 13,104 priests.³³ The Bishops of the Church of England usually ordain deacons twice a year, at Petertide (the end of June) and Michaelmas (the end of September). Ordinations are held in diocesan cathedrals, and deacons and transitional deacons are ordained using the same rite. Sometimes priests are also ordained in the same Eucharist, sometimes not. There is of course a specific rite for ordination to the priesthood.

Of the respondents to the survey, which reviewed the number of ordinations between 1975 and 1997, 28% were ordained in 1987, the year in which women were first ordained to the

³³ Figure supplied by the Statistics Unit, Church House, Westminster and calculated as at 31 December, 1998. The total of 13,104 is made up of priests in the following categories: 9636 stipendiary full-time, 131 stipendiary part-time, 1838 non-stipendiary ministers (NSM) and 195 ordained local ministers (OLM), all in parochial ministry, and 1304 priests working in sector ministries. The total in parochial ministry is 11,800. See GS Misc. 561, available from Church House Publishing after July 1999. By comparison, the figure given for lay people whose names are on the electoral rolls of parishes in the Church of England is 1,324,700.

diaconate, and 64% later than that. 11% of respondents were ordained in 1996, which was the first year when deacons from the Dioceses of Portsmouth and Chichester were ordained from the only specifically Diaconal Formation Programme available in the Church of England, at the Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry in Chichester. This may account for the rise in numbers in that year. Of the total number of respondents 15% said they were single and 53% married, though the return on this last question lost considerable accuracy because 29% of respondents did not answer the question: the term 'civil status' seemed to be unfamiliar. They were spread over 26 of the 43 dioceses in the Church of England (excluding the Diocese of Europe), with the largest concentrations in the dioceses of London (13%), Chichester (16%) and Portsmouth (19%). 15 dioceses had only one deacon, and 17 had none.

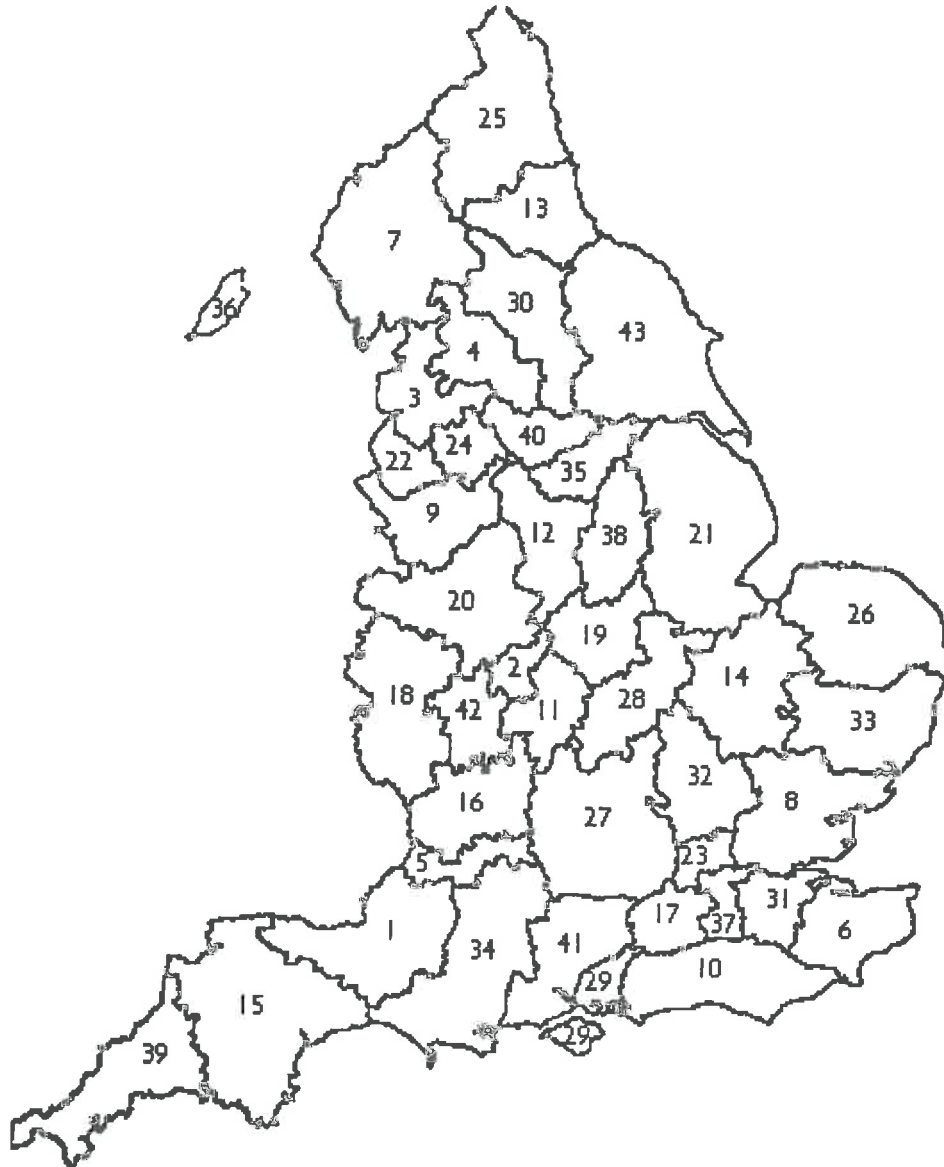
Deacons who responded to the survey had been ordained in one of 23 of the Dioceses of the Church of England; one of them had been ordained in the Church in Wales, and one in ECUSA. The most significant clusters of ordinations had taken place in the Dioceses of London, Chichester, Portsmouth and Chelmsford. 26% had been deaconesses before ordination as deacons, whilst 11% had been authorised lay workers or Readers. 63% had had no authorised lay ministry (Accredited Lay Worker, Youth Worker, Reader or other ministry) before ordination.

Posts held by deacons and distribution of tasks

The Church of England does not practise ordination *in vacuo*. Every candidate ordained to the diaconate must have an appointment, paid or unpaid, to take up immediately after ordination. In most cases, the first appointment is to a parish, and the first parish is known as the 'title parish'.

Of the deacons who responded to the survey, 51% had held full-time Church appointments and 52% had held paid Church appointments. Whilst these figures seem to suggest that a high proportion of deacons have held full-time paid appointments, it has to be remembered that 26% of the respondent group had previously been deaconesses. Full-time paid Church appointments were available for deaconesses and for women deacons before 1993, the year in which women began to be ordained to the priesthood. Such appointments are now much more rarely made. For example, in Chichester and Portsmouth, the two dioceses with the highest concentration of deacons, there is, at the time of writing, only one deacon in each diocese in a full-time paid Church appointment, though there are other deacons, spread over a number of dioceses, who work on a full-time basis in a non-stipendiary (unpaid) capacity.

Map showing the Dioceses of the Church of England



Key to map showing the dioceses, the numbers of deacons and location of the Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry's Diaconal Formation Programme.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Bath & Wells | 23) London - 8 |
| 2) Birmingham | 24) Manchester |
| 3) Blackburn | 25) Newcastle - 1 |
| 4) Bradford | 26) Norwich |
| 5) Bristol - 1 | 27) Oxford - 2 |
| 6) Canterbury - 2 | 28) Peterborough - 1 |
| 7) Carlisle - 2 | 29) Portsmouth - 12 |
| 8) Chelmsford - 4 | 30) Ripon - 2 |
| 9) Chester | 31) Rochester - 1 |
| 10) Chichester - 10 ① | 32) St Albans - 2 |
| 11) Coventry - 2 | 33) St Eds & Ipswich |
| 12) Derby | 34) Salisbury - 1 |
| 13) Durham - 2 | 35) Sheffield - 1 |
| 14) Ely | 36) Sodor & Man |
| 15) Exeter - 1 | 37) Southwark - 1 |
| 16) Gloucester | 38) Southwell - 1 |
| 17) Guildford | 39) Truro |
| 18) Hereford | 40) Wakefield - 1 |
| 19) Leicester | 41) Winchester - 1 |
| 20) Lichfield - 1 | 42) Worcester - 1 |
| 21) Lincoln - 1 | 43) York |
| 22) Liverpool - 1 | |

Chichester ① Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry
University College Chichester

A total of 67% of the respondents had held part-time posts. 31% of deacons had at one time or another, been obliged to accept non-stipendiary posts when they would have preferred a paid post. This had happened more than once to six of the respondents.

On receiving the questionnaire, three deacons responded that it was impossible for deacons to fill it in, because deacons did not 'fit' the progression of appointments and the pattern of ministry which was usual for transitional deacons and priests. They were three of a group of six deacons whose ministry did not 'fit'. They were right to expect that the ministry of deacons might be much more varied and not tied so closely to previously set patterns. They were wrong to presume that their expectations were already being met on a large scale. The reality is that the Church of England has not yet thought creatively about the style and patterns of ministry most appropriate for a deacon. Deacons are still being 'processed' ministerially in the same way as assistant clergy who are ordained to the priesthood. Parochial appointments are the norm, though a small number of deacons also have diocesan responsibilities, as Assistant Diocesan Directors of Ordinands or Vocations Advisers. Two of the respondents had substantial involvement in social responsibility, another in industrial chaplaincy. One worked full-time as a hospital chaplain and three in academic posts in higher education. One had a ministry which involved communicating the Christian faith through drama and dance, and another through art. One was a minister in secular employment, living out the

diaconate through her work as a freelance consultant in health and safety at work. The overall picture of diaconal deployment might be disappointing to anyone hoping to find that the Church was using all the innovative and creative possibilities offered by the diaconate, yet in what many respondents wrote, it was clear that alternative perceptions and models were developing from the parochial bases in which deacons were placed.

Deacons in parochial appointments undertake a varied combination of pastoral, educational, liturgical and social duties. 35% of respondents who were parish-based worked more (in many cases considerably more) than 35 hours a week, that is more than an amount of time regarded as full-time in many types of employment. 21% worked between 15 and 25 hours a week, that is, in many cases, half time or more.

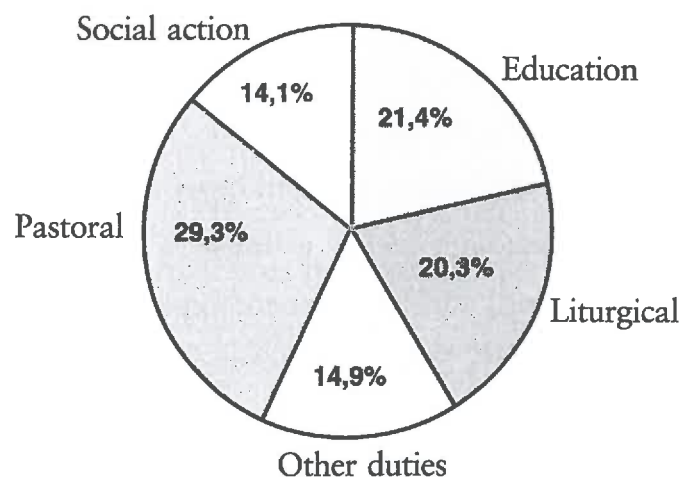


Chart indicating how the deacons divided their time between their different areas of work.

When asked to list the opportunities they had had to develop new work, most deacons listed projects which were parish-

based and of short-term duration. A few had been able to develop work across a deanery or diocese. Very few had national or international ecumenical involvement, though in terms of qualifications and experience, many were evidently well-equipped for this, as they were for a much wider scale of activity and responsibility than that which they seemed to have.

2. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Parochial clergy (deacons or priests) in the Church of England function in either a stipendiary (paid) or non-stipendiary (unpaid) capacity. The stipend is the equivalent of the salary paid to an employee, but stipendiary clergy are self-employed for income tax purposes. The point is often made that the stipend is not a salary. It is not the going rate of pay for a certain number of hours of work at an agreed level, according to a job description. It is an amount of money on which a priest or deacon can live whilst carrying out duties which have no agreed duration and often very little definition. Stipend rates vary from diocese to diocese. For stipendiary clergy a house is also provided in addition to the stipend, and parishes are expected to reimburse expenses of office in full. Stipendiary clergy's council tax (a tax to the community in which they live) is paid by their diocese or in some cases by their parish, and the cost of some of the items they need for their official work may be off-set against income tax. Non-stipendiary clergy normally receive expenses of office from the parishes in which they work but do not usually receive other payments, allowances or exemptions.

The following options are, in theory, open to deacons seeking parochial appointments:

- full-time parochial appointments with a stipend, expenses and housing
- full-time non-stipendiary parochial appointments with expenses of office
- part-time non-stipendiary parochial appointments with expenses of office

In all the above cases, the appointment would be as assistant curate. The title 'Parish Deacon' is sometimes used. It is of recent origin and has no legal standing. Although it suggests that the person to whom it refers is in a different position from the transitional deacon in the first year after ordination, the fact remains that stipendiary deacons in parochial appointments continue to be regarded as junior clergy, however experienced they are, whatever responsibilities they take, and however long they have been ordained. The word 'deacon' itself still carries the connotations of 'trainee' or 'beginner' in the parochial context. In theological terms, deacons should strictly speaking be directly responsible to their bishop, but in day-to-day practice, if they are parish deacons, they are accountable to parish priests and dependent on the priests' vision for the parish and for their own involvement in it.

Deacons in sector ministries (hospitals, schools, prisons, or other sectors) are paid by those who employ them. Deacons who are in academic teaching posts or in other forms of secular

employment are in the same situation. As far as the Church is concerned, they are non-stipendiary ministers. They require a bishop's licence, as all clergy do.

Contracts and financial status

Stipendiary parish deacons, like other parochial clergy, are paid by the diocese. Their expenses of office are reimbursed by the parish, as are those of non-stipendiary deacons. Only 13% of survey respondents had found their present appointment by answering an advertisement. 54% had been directly appointed by their Bishop or indirectly by him through the diocesan structures. 87% had never been in open competition for an appointment. A high percentage (88%) thought their duties were commensurate with their gifts, but the survey return gives no way of knowing how many were actually capable of much more than they imagined they could achieve. Of those who had tried to move to other appointments, 76% had found the Church's assistance to them inadequate.

The ministerial specification is normally the document which the Church of England uses to indicate what is expected of clergy in the appointments they hold. 59% of respondents had a ministerial specification. In the case of newly ordained deacons, specifications had been agreed with the parish priest and the Diocesan Director of Ordinands. Bishops had been involved in only 15% of cases. In a further 26% of cases, specifications had been drawn up with the parish priest alone. However, 47% of respondents did not identify the person(s) with

whom the specification had been agreed. 20% of respondents said that no one was responsible for ensuring that the specification was reviewed, and 13% said they themselves were responsible. 51% said their specifications were reviewed annually. 14% did not know how frequently they were to be reviewed.

Regulations Governing Ministry

The life of the deacon is regulated by the canon law of the Church of England, which also applies to bishops and priests. Most canons apply equally and without distinction to all three orders.³⁴ At ordination, the deacon takes the Oath of Allegiance to the monarch.³⁵ Also at ordination and at every subsequent change of appointment, deacons take the Oath of Canonical Obedience to their diocesan bishop³⁶ and make the Declaration of Assent.³⁷

Two canons outline the manner of life expected of all ordained ministers and the form of dress they should adopt. These brief canons place all clergy of the Church of England under the obligation to say Morning and Evening Prayer daily, to 'celebrate the Holy Communion or be present thereat, on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days', to be 'diligent in prayer

³⁴ See Leeder, L., A Legal Perspective, in Hall, C. (ed.), *The Deacon's Ministry*, pp. 123-135.

³⁵ Canon C13 *Of the Oath of Allegiance* The repetition of this oath is required in some cases of change of appointment, but not invariably.

³⁶ Canon C14 *Of the Oaths of Obedience*.

³⁷ Canon C15 *Of the Declaration of Assent*.

and intercession, in examination of the conscience and in study of the Holy Scriptures and such other studies as pertain to their ministerial duties'. Ministers are not to take up occupations or habits or recreations which 'do not benefit their sacred calling', which impede the carrying out of their duties or 'tend to be a just cause of offence to others'. They must 'at all times be diligent to frame and fashion their lives and that of their family according to the doctrine of Christ'. The dress of a bishop, priest or deacon (here named separately) should be suitable to their office and except for 'purposes of recreation and other justifiable reasons, shall be such as to be a sign and mark of their holy calling and ministry as well to others as to those committed to their spiritual charge'.³⁸ The canon on the dress of ministers is taken by many to indicate that clergy should wear the form of dress which is recognisable as belonging to them, that is the clerical collar and the black shirt and suit. Theirs is a public ministry, not a job with defined hours, and except for times of recreation or other good reasons which may apply from time to time, they should be prepared to be identified. Many deacons, male and female, wear the same black clerical dress as priests, and some on occasion adopt the green clerical dress common in the Nordic countries to identify the deacon. At the same time, evidence indicates that some clergy in the Church of England have difficulty wearing clerical dress at all, sometimes, in the case of priests, to the point of presiding at the Eucharist in casual clothes.³⁹

³⁸ Canon C26 *Of the Manner of Life of Ministers* and C27 *Of the Dress of Ministers*.

³⁹ This practice is in contravention of Canon B8 *Of the Vesture of Ordained and Authorised Ministers during the time of Divine Service*.

No ordained minister can practise without the licence of the bishop of the diocese. There are many different types of licence. Some are of fixed duration, some without term. They usually mention the appointment which the minister holds, for example 'assistant curate' of a named parish, member of staff of a named theological college. Some licences are general licences, which are not tied to a particular appointment. The licences of parochial clergy may specify that they must reside within the parish boundaries: it is not common for parish clergy, particularly stipendiary clergy, to live outside the boundaries of their parishes. Although it is issued by the bishop of the diocese, the licence normally entitles the deacon or priest to accept invitations to undertake work (for example, preaching or retreats) in other dioceses. 'Permission to officiate' is a lesser form of licensing, most often given to retired clergy. Holders of permission to officiate are normally allowed to officiate within the borders of their own diocese only. Licences vary very much in type, wording and conditions laid down, which makes it impossible to categorise them.

As theological fashions and attitudes to ordained ministry come and go in the Church of England, the canon law acts as a stabilising influence. Because of its background in the mediaeval church, it preserves a theology of stability of order which is of ancient origin in the Church, but which is constantly at risk in a task-orientated age. Thus Canon C1 underlines the fact that the diaconate is not to be taken up and later set aside, in the words: 'No person who has been admitted to the order of

bishop, priest or deacon can ever be divested of the character of his order'⁴⁰

3. SELECTION AND FORMATION

The candidate for the diaconate in the Church of England is identified and put forward from within the Church community in a variety of ways. Basically, there are three phases: (1) the potential candidate is identified in the parish or other place where they worship and is recommended to the diocese, (2) the candidate follows the discernment procedures required by the diocese and is sponsored by the bishop for a selection conference, (3) the selectors recommend (or do not recommend) the candidate for training.⁴¹ At any point in this process, it may in theory be decided that the candidate should not proceed any further. The bishop's sponsorship is required before a selection conference, and it is the bishop who decides, on the basis of the selectors' reports, whether he will permit the candidate to proceed to initial ministerial education, either in a residential theological college or on one of the other forms of educational course approved by the House of Bishops.⁴²

⁴⁰ Canon C1 *Of Holy Orders in the Church of England* See Leeder, op.cit. for further information.

⁴¹ 'Recommendation for training' is the official terminology used by the Church of England's Ministry Division. The terms 'education' and 'formation' are however preferred and used in many places in preference to 'training'.

⁴² The Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry receives locally selected and funded diaconal candidates, who are sponsored by their bishop, onto its Diaconal Formation Programme but has not yet applied for bishops' recognition to receive nationally recommended and funded candidates for diaconate and priesthood.

During the formation programme, reports on the ordinand are submitted regularly to the bishop, and his agreement is again required for the ordination to take place.

Selection Criteria

There are at the moment no specific selection criteria in the Church of England for deacons. The Ministry Division documentation speaks of requirements for 'ordained ministry' without any differentiation between the ministry of the deacon and that of the priest. Of those who responded to the survey, 74% said they were not told the selection criteria before the selection conference. 70% of respondents to the survey said they had attended national selection conferences. As 26% had attended selections before they were appointed as deaconesses and had not been asked to attend again before they were ordained to the diaconate, this indicates that 44% had attended selection conferences where they would have been in the same groups as candidates for priesthood. The remaining 30% had been selected in local or inter-diocesan conferences set up specifically for candidates for the diaconate. More diaconal candidates are now being put forward for national rather than local selection conferences, and sponsoring dioceses have begun to request national criteria. There is also a need for the selectors to learn to distinguish a vocation to the diaconate from a vocation to the priesthood. Because the Church of England practises cumulative ordination, the differences between these two ministries have become seriously blurred. Some people now favour direct

ordination to the priesthood, but the theological implications of this have not yet been considered in the Church of England context.⁴³

Discernment of Vocation

Discernment of vocation is the process by which the church decides whether the candidate is truly called to the office and work of a deacon. It normally begins in the congregation where the prospective candidate worships. For 74% of survey respondents, this was their parish congregation. Others first had their vocation discerned at the college at which they were studying, at their place of work, or elsewhere in the diocese where they were living. 41% saw a diocesan vocations adviser to discuss their vocation, and 41% saw a bishop's examining chaplain. 43% saw more than one diocesan official in addition to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, before their case was put to the diocesan bishop. A few took part in a diocesan selection procedure before receiving episcopal sponsorship for a selection conference.

Selection conferences are also part of the discernment process. They may be organised nationally (by Ministry Division) or locally in a diocese. Sometimes two dioceses may combine to organise a local selection conference. For a number of years, until 1997, Portsmouth and Chichester Dioceses operated an

⁴³ See Hallenbeck, Edwin (ed), *The Orders of Ministry: Reflections on Direct Ordination*, 1996, published by the North American Association for the Diaconate, for a review of some of the current thinking in ECUSA.

annual joint selection conference for diaconal candidates. The programme of the local conferences was of the same length (3 days) and type as national conferences, and, in order to secure parity of standards, care was taken to invite selectors who also took part in national conferences. From 1998, diaconal candidates from those two dioceses are being sent to national selection conferences. Whilst this is a welcome development from many points of view, the implications of it remain to be seen, for it means that candidates for the diaconate will be attending the same selection conferences as candidates for priesthood. Unless specific selection criteria for deacons are drawn up by Ministry Division, and unless bishops' selectors are briefed on how to discern diaconal as opposed to priestly vocations, there is a risk of serious confusion of the nature of two very different vocations and of irrelevant comparisons between candidates for the diaconate and candidates for the priesthood.

The individual and group exercises, together with the communal worship held during a selection conference, are designed to help the selectors to assess the candidates' pastoral sensitivity, theological and educational ability, spiritual maturity, and discipline in prayer and worship. The decision on each candidate must be unanimous. The selectors' recommendation to the sponsoring bishop is a 'recommendation for training', not at this stage a recommendation for ordination. The final decision, however, rests with the bishop, and if the selectors fail to recommend a candidate for training, the bishop may decide to

overturn their decision. Alternatively, he may decide to allow the candidate to attend another conference. The normal waiting period between one conference and another is two years. Two is usually the maximum number of conferences a candidate is allowed to attend.

Only a very small number of respondents said that the conference from which they were recommended for training was the second one they had attended. 61% were interviewed by their bishop before they attended the selection conference. Following the selection conference, only 25% were seen by their bishop before they commenced an initial ministerial education course. 40% were seen whilst they were on the course. A much higher proportion of candidates (76%) were interviewed by their bishop immediately before ordination. Such interviews are often held during the course of the pre-ordination retreat, too late to form any effective part of the final selection of the candidate. This indicates a high level of delegation of episcopal oversight and decision-making to Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and to reports received from the formation institutions.

Education

Different terms are in current use to describe the courses of study which ordinands follow. As has already been noted, in Ministry Division selection parlance, candidates are 'recommended for training'. The process through which deacons or priests are prepared for ordination and through which they

continue to be equipped for ministry once they are ordained is often called formation. This term describes a process of growth and development which is considered to be life-long and to contain elements of education and elements of training, which interface with each other. However it has to be said that the distinction which is normally made in other professional circles (e.g. education, medicine, nursing, social work) between training and education is not consistently applied within the Church of England.

The House of Bishops of the Church of England currently gives recognition to 11 residential theological colleges, where stipendiary and non-stipendiary candidates for ordained ministry are trained on a full-time basis. These colleges are grouped in eight 'centres' in England plus one in Wales. In addition, the bishops recognise 12 regional courses for the training of stipendiary and non-stipendiary candidates over the age of 30. Each of these is sponsored by a group of dioceses. 16 dioceses in the Church of England have to date decided to mount Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) Schemes, for the training of locally selected candidates as locally based ordained ministers, almost invariably priests. These receive bishops' recognition, as do a limited number of so-called 'mixed-mode' schemes, which either combine elements of the educational styles of colleges or courses, or combine college or course training with extended training in a parish setting.

The only specific diaconal formation programme currently developed in the Church of England is at the Bishop Otter

Centre for Theology and Ministry, Chichester, where candidates for the diaconate follow a programme leading to a Higher Education Diploma in Theology and Ministry, continuing to a BA degree after that, if they wish. The programme has many elements which are specific to the diaconate, as well as elements which diaconal candidates share with other students who are following the Diploma and BA courses for other purposes. The Church of England ordinands on this course and deacons who have completed it and moved on to complete the BA come currently from the dioceses of Chichester and Portsmouth, and most are studying part-time. Candidates study alongside a number of Orthodox, Methodist and Church of England deacons who have received initial ministerial education elsewhere and have come to the Centre for the specifically diaconal formation they did not receive during pre-ordination education. Deacons who trained elsewhere have usually been obliged to follow the same education programme as candidates for the priesthood. Depending on the date, this may have varied from a course which carried no qualification at the end of the study period, to a course which led to a Higher Education Certificate or Diploma validated by an institution in the higher education sector. Some ordinands convert their diplomas to first degrees (BA or BTh) before or after ordination. It is current practice in the Church of England for the episcopally recognised initial ministerial education of ordinands to be undertaken ecumenically, although only two churches, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, currently participate with the Church of England in this endeavour.

Following their selection conference, 85% of the ANDREP survey respondents had been required to have initial ministerial education before ordination. 15% were deemed for various reasons to have had sufficient appropriate education already. 25% had followed the Diaconal Formation Programme at the Bishop Otter Centre, Chichester. The remainder had attended 14 other institutions in a variety of locations in England, and 1 deacon had received ministerial education to MA level in the USA.

Whilst 13% of the respondents had no previous qualifications when they were selected for training, 55% already held degrees. There were statistically significant differences between the training courses recommended according to the candidates previous qualification levels. Although apparently capable of degree level education, 42% of candidates who already held first degrees (e.g. BA, BSc.) in other disciplines were not offered degree level education before ordination. The same was true of 70% of candidates who already held higher degrees (e.g. MA, MSc., MPhil, PhD). Of the 34% of the candidates who were recommended for IME, which did not lead to a degree, a strong trend was apparent showing that more women were recommended for this type of education than men. (Females 37%, Males 27%)

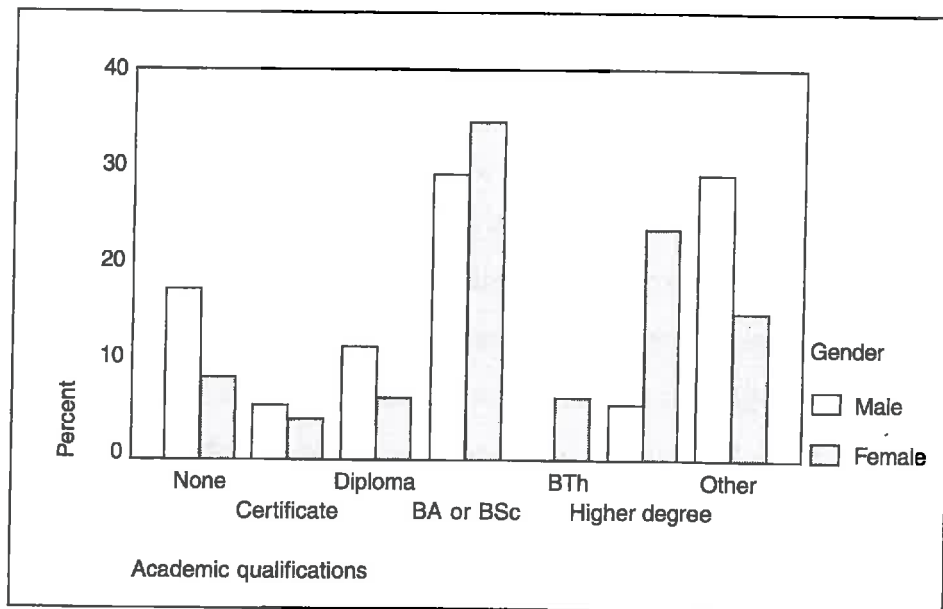


Chart showing prior academic levels of candidates to the diaconate.

The evidence might be interpreted as suggesting a trend of less investment in the education of female deacons than in the education of male deacons, though it is likely that a number of personal circumstances may have led to the disparity of initial ministerial education received. What is clear is that the minimum initial ministerial education required by the Church of England does not necessarily take into consideration the educational capability which an ordinand may previously have demonstrated.

Following their initial ministerial education and ordination, clergy in the Church of England take part in programmes of post-ordination training (POT) and continuing ministerial education (CME). The former usually runs for the first three years after ordination. It varies from diocese to diocese. As there

is no agreed initial ministerial education curriculum throughout the Church, it is difficult to mount POT programmes which begin where the initial ministerial education programme left off. Clergy who are non-stipendiary ministers and are in paid secular employment are not always free to attend POT programmes which take place during the day, when stipendiary clergy are more likely to be free. Although 81% of deacons surveyed had completed the POT programmes on offer in their dioceses, 83% had found that programme designers had not borne their particular needs in mind.

CME seems to be organised more often than not on an individual basis, i.e. there is not a common programme which all clergy in a diocese follow. Different dioceses have different ways of organising CME: in some cases an annual sum of money is set aside for each member of the clergy, in others individuals ask for funding support when they wish to undertake some sort of further training or education. In one diocese, substantial funding might be spent on assisting clergy who are qualified to Diploma level to extend their qualifications to a BA; in another diocese, clergy might be funded for sabbaticals, MAs or higher degrees by research, for courses in child protection or in some other ethical area which is of current pastoral and social importance. Not all CME courses lead to a qualification. Many are short-term diocesan courses, conferences or clergy study days. Of the deacons surveyed, 64% said they had received CME funds and 36% had not. As 75% had been ordained for three years or more (that is beyond the 3-year period usually

encompassed by POT), this might appear to be an indication that a very high proportion had completed some form of CME. However, it should be remembered that some dioceses use the term CME for any ministerial education from ordination onwards, including the three-year period which other dioceses call post-ordination training. Diocesan CME budgets were not the only sources of funding used: 31% of respondents had obtained funding from other external sources.

41% had no plans for further study, and another 13% said they 'might' undertake some. Of the remaining 66% who did plan to undertake further study, 5% specified that they were hoping to complete a BA, 5% an MA, 13% an MPhil/PhD and 9% a course in spiritual direction. One deacon expressed an interest in a management course.

4. AUTHORISATION

There is a variety of legal requirements to be met before a deacon may be ordained in the Church of England. Candidates must be at least 23 years old, unless a faculty⁴⁴ has been obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury. They must be baptised and confirmed,⁴⁵ and not suffering from any physical or mental disability which, in the bishop's opinion, would make them unfit to exercise the deacon's ministry.⁴⁶ If a candidate is

⁴⁴ A faculty is a form of ecclesiastical permission to allow something which is not allowable as a matter of right.

⁴⁵ Canon C4, *Of the Quality of such as are to be ordained Deacons or Priests*, paragraph 1.

⁴⁶ Canon C4, paragraph 2.

divorced and has a spouse who is still living, or is married to someone who is divorced and has a spouse still living, a faculty is required from the Archbishop of Canterbury (for candidates from dioceses in the southern province) or from the Archbishop of York (for candidates from the northern province).⁴⁷

Provided that the legal requirements have been met, the bishop of a diocese has absolute discretion as to whom he ordains and whom he chooses not to ordain. Candidates must be examined in 'scripture, doctrine and discipline 'be of virtuous conversation and without crime', of good repute and 'such as to be a wholesome example to the pattern and flock of Christ'.⁴⁸ As already noted above, they are required before ordination to make the declaration of assent, take the oath of allegiance to the monarch and the oath of canonical obedience to the diocesan bishop.⁴⁹ They are also required to have an ecclesiastical office to take up and in which to exercise their ministry. This is called a 'title' and is usually a parochial appointment. In certain circumstances, exemptions from this requirement may be allowed, for example for ministers who are to serve as university or school chaplains, who are members of the staff of a theological college or members of a religious order.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Directions made jointly by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York pursuant to the Power in Canon C4 Paragraph 3A, in *The Canons of the Church of England*, p.184.

⁴⁸ Canon C4, paragraph 1. See Leeder, L., *The Diaconate in the Church of England, a Legal Perspective*, in Hall, C. (ed), *The Deacon's Ministry*, p.124.

⁴⁹ The texts of the declaration and oaths are to be found in Canons C15, C13 and C14 respectively.

⁵⁰ Leeder, p. 125.

Terminology and Rites

The ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 refers to the making of deacons⁵¹, the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops. This ordinal is rarely used today. In the ordinal of the Alternative Service Book of 1980, reference is made to the ordination of deacons, the ordination of priests and the ordination or consecration of bishops. The Church of England currently uses only the word 'ordination' for the rite at which deacons are created, and there is no reason to believe that this use of term will change. That having been said, diametrically opposed understandings of what ordination is and implies exist side by side within the church. They stem from radically different ecclesiological positions.

The laying-on of hands by a bishop, the act by which admission to the threefold ministry has traditionally been conferred in the universal church, is a symbol which has led to confusion in the Church of England, because its use has not always been confined to the ordination of bishops, priests and deacons. It was used by the bishop at the admission of deaconesses⁵² until the decision was made in 1987 to admit no more women to that ministry. It has on occasion also been used by bishops when admitting candidates for the lay ministry of Reader. The Greek language gave to the early church two words which were etymologically closely related and which were used to refer to two radically different kinds of laying-on of hands. The one (*χειροτονία*) re-

⁵¹ The reference to the 'making of deacons' was not intended to imply that deacons are not ordained.

⁵² This usage was provided for in Canon D1, paragraph 1.

ferred to the admission to an order of ministry (diaconate, presbyterate or episcopate), and the other (*χειροθεοια*) signified a commissioning to a ministerial task which was not necessarily of permanent duration. The effect of the former could not be undone, the effect of the latter was reversible by episcopal decision.⁵³ Consequently, there is the potential for confusion or divergence of interpretation, as there was in the case of the deaconess, about the nature of the act being carried out and the nature of the minister being created by it.

Accountability

By ancient tradition, the deacon is directly accountable to the bishop. In theory, this direct accountability is still exemplified in the practice by which only the bishop of the diocese lays hands on candidates for the diaconate at their ordination.

The deacons of the diocese are his deacons, wherever they exercise the diaconal ministry, and in theory he may recall and redeploy them at will. In practice, in the modern context, there may be little contact between the bishop and the deacon. Parish priests are inclined to forget that they themselves function in the bishop's place, a fact which becomes immediately obvious when the bishop visits a parish and takes his rightful place as president of the eucharistic assembly. Many deacons in parishes have little in their day-to-day lives to remind them of their direct relationship to the bishop. 73% of respondents in the

⁵³ See Fitzgerald, K. *The Characteristics and Nature of the Order of the Deaconess*, in Hopko, T. (ed.), *Women and the Priesthood*, SVS Press, 1983.

ANDREP survey said that they were accountable to the vicar (parish priest) of the parish to which they were licensed. Two of these respondents said they were accountable to the vicar and the bishop. One respondent said they were accountable only to the bishop. 21% claimed to be accountable to some other person whom they did not specify.

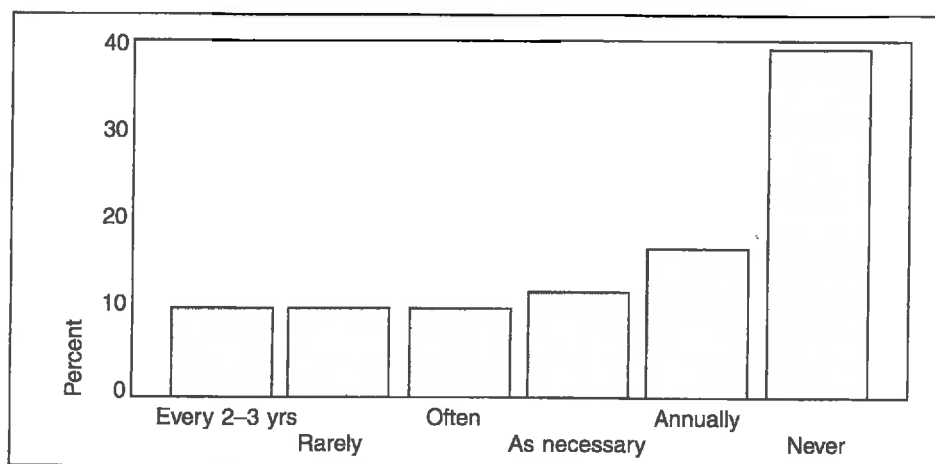


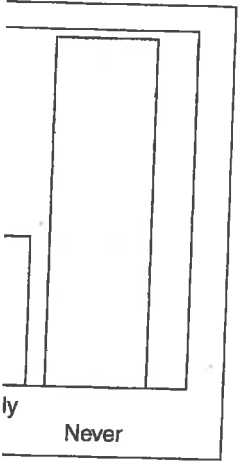
Chart showing the frequency with which deacons saw their bishop to discuss their work

5. RELATIONSHIPS AND STRUCTURES

Appraisal

In general employment practice, the person to whom an employee is accountable (their line manager, where that term is used), is responsible for the appraisal of their work. The increasing use of non-stipendiary clergy (deacons and priests) over the last 20 years has brought into ordained ministry people from a wide variety of professions and work backgrounds, who are well used to being appraised and to being responsible for

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appraising others. Side by side with them, older clergy and clergy who moved into ordained ministry at the earliest possible age,⁵⁴ before they had had any appreciable work experience, are often extremely cautious and fearful about accepting any kind of appraisal or oversight of their work.

Since at least the 1970s, various forms of appraisal, often called ministerial review schemes, have been in existence in the Church of England. Dioceses are responsible for creating such schemes, where they exist, but they are not obliged to create them. This results in very uneven practice over the Church as a whole.⁵⁵ Some dioceses have good effective schemes; some have difficulty in constructing schemes and getting their clergy to use them; others have no review scheme at all. Deacons are particularly affected by this state of affairs. They already lack effective and regular episcopal oversight of their work. They may be directly responsible in their day-to-day work to priests who are not effectively accountable to anyone else. They may be working in non-Church posts where there is a good appraisal system, but entirely lack any kind of appraisal of the diaconal element of the ministry which they exercise.

88% of the respondents to the survey said they had the opportunity to develop their own work. Of 58% who said that their

⁵⁴ According to Canon C3, *Of the Ordination of Priests and Deacons*, candidates for ordination to the diaconate must be at least 23 years old, unless they have acquired a faculty from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Candidates for priesthood must be at least 24 years old at ordination, unless they have a faculty from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

⁵⁵ See Eastell, K (ed.), *Appointed for Growth: A Handbook of Ministry Development and Appraisal*. Pages 22 to 37 give a survey of current use.

work was appraised, only 25% said that this was done formally. 28% said that their appraisal was an informal procedure, and 2% said it was done informally with their bishop. Only 44% of the work appraised was appraised annually or frequently. Responses on the appraisal they had experienced in other posts outside the Church structures indicated that 58% had been formally appraised in another situation. A very high percentage (87%) of the total of respondents thought that appraisal was necessary for all work undertaken.

Given the ecclesial structures of the Church of England and the theological understanding of accountability, it might perhaps be expected that deacons would have their work appraised (by whatever method the diocese adopted) by the bishop, or in a large diocese by an area bishop or suffragan bishop, and that priests might have their work appraised by their archdeacon.⁵⁶ However, a structure which drew the lines of accountability so clearly would be likely to meet with opposition. In some dioceses ministerial review schemes are set up in such a way as to involve external consultants, thus avoiding close scrutiny of clergy's work by their immediate ecclesiastical superiors. It could be argued in defence of this practice that the dispersed authority which exists in the Church of England militates against any close lines of accountability, and that in any case the 'immediate ecclesiastical superior', whether archdeacon or bishop, may not have any close involvement in the day to day

⁵⁶ In the Church of England, an archdeacon is a priest who, under the bishop, is responsible for an area within a given diocese. The duties of this office are varied but generally involve clergy discipline and the care of church property.

work of the minister they would be reviewing. There is a particular difficulty in making provision for bishops' work to be reviewed. For comparison's sake, it should be noted that the Church of England does not follow the Nordic practice of making parochial clergy accountable to parish boards.

Support structures

Deacons often speak of the sense of isolation which arises from the experience of exercising a ministry which is poorly understood and for which there is no clear appraisal or support structure. They are dispersed over the country in a way which makes it difficult for most of them to have regular contact with each other. 17% of deacons surveyed said that they knew of no other deacons in their diocese (though in some cases there were others). 34% knew of only one other deacon (when in some cases there were in fact more in the diocese). For whatever reason, some deacons have shown no interest in being in contact with other deacons. For example, a number who did not respond to the survey are also known not to belong to the Diaconal Association of the Church of England (DACE), a voluntary association to which deacons and other ministers may belong. Nor do they respond to other invitations to meetings of deacons within their diocese, or take part in deanery or diocesan events at which other deacons are present. A number of these are to all intents and purposes retired, but were active in diaconal affairs before that. The motivation of the rest is unknown.

Overall, 34% of deacons who responded to the survey had regular meetings with other deacons. 57% belonged to the Diaconal Association of the Church of England (DACE). The percentage of deacons who had no contact with deacons in other churches was very high (85%). Only 27% had taken part in the regional discussion groups which had worked towards the three Windsor consultations. (See Section 7 below.) 91% had not attended an international conference of deacons, though 48% said they were familiar with the diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church, 32% with the Lutheran and 21% with the Reformed diaconate, 15% with the Orthodox and 7% with the Moravian diaconate. 74% said they had no knowledge of the diaconate in other parts of the Anglican Communion, and 89% had no knowledge of it in the developing world. 15% had worked as deacons outside the UK, in USA, South America or Europe.

6. DEACONS' SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Evidence suggests that deacons perceive their order and the ministry they exercise in a wide variety of ways. In some cases, the understanding has its origin in the nature of a previous ministry held (for example, that of deaconess or lay worker). Ordination to the diaconate has not always brought a new perspective to self-understanding. In other cases, particularly where the deacon has had the opportunity of specific learning about the diaconate or contact with deacons in other churches, self-understanding has been modified. The development of the

diaconate in the Church of England has now reached the point where a consolidation of understanding is needed. Some deacons emphasise the need for a variety of forms, models and concepts of the deacon's ministry to exist side by side. Others would like to ensure that such a variety is developed within the framework of a basic commonality of theology and praxis. Deacons have a responsibility to understand as much as they possibly can about the order into which they have been ordained, and to be as educated as possible theologically. Many are very conscious of these responsibilities.

How does the Church perceive them?

There is no substantial indication that the ministry of the deacon is now well understood in the church at large. As successive annual ordinations take place, the Holy Spirit continues to add to the ranks of those who are willing to live out Christ's servanthood, to search for a deeper understanding of what that means and to accept the vicissitudes of the ministry of prophecy and challenge which it involves. Men and women with a fresh enthusiasm annually join their fellow deacons in the demanding daily process of educating priests, bishops and laity, answering the same questions over and over again, explaining themselves and the significance of the ministry they exercise. Comparison with the developments in ECUSA during the last twenty years suggests that it may be at least another ten years before the diaconate begins to be more widely understood in the Church of England.

Some deacons have had difficulty in being accepted as deacons. There are a number of reasons for this, among them a widespread assumption, which does not seem to have been substantiated in any published evidence, that a strong diaconate would automatically undermine the ministry of the laity. Another reason lies in the unease with which some priests view the growing number of increasingly well educated deacons, many of them women, who are capable of professional independence. However, in some cases at least, the lack of acceptance of deacons does not seem to arise from an attitude towards the diaconate itself but from a lack of acceptance in some parts of the Church of England of the notion of ordained ministry as a whole.

Many deacons who responded to the ANDREP survey said that they would like to see a wider official acceptance of the existence of their order as a separate ministry with its own value and purpose. They had grown impatient with the constant pressures placed on them to be ordained to the priesthood, with patronising assumptions that they had not yet thought their vocation through properly, had not yet had enough experience, or were simply not yet confident enough to take the next step 'forward' to priesthood but would take that step in time. Many said that they would like the diaconate to be taken seriously and fully established as a permanent ministry, that they would like the deacon's ministry to be positively affirmed, not defined negatively by the tasks a deacon cannot do (e.g. preside at the Eucharist). Some said they would like the diaconate to cease to

be used as a way through to the priesthood, and they would like priests to stop taking the deacon's liturgical role, for example at diocesan liturgies where there are deacons who could exercise that role themselves.

As the survey established, deacons give a great deal of service, much of it unpaid. Their comments on their situation indicated that they were not seeking respect for themselves but would like to see respect for the service function, properly understood, within the Church. There was a strong view among respondents that more stipendiary posts should be created for deacons, and that job advertisements in the church press which ask for a priest should ask for a deacon when that is just as appropriate or more so. Many found the custom of treating deacons as perpetual assistant curates unsatisfactory. They would like to see a serious attempt to use deacons more appropriately and creatively, with less emphasis on automatic deployment into assistant curate posts in parishes. Some deacons said they would welcome a greater use of diaconal gifts and skills in diocesan structures: that they would like to be considered for appointment or election to senior positions of responsibility on cathedral chapters, bishops' councils and the like. One deacon asked for an honest acknowledgement by the Church of England that it pays mere lip service to the threefold ministry and does very little indeed to enable it to exist in reality. Others asked for a revival of the old relationship between deacon and bishop, together with a strong lead from bishops in taking the order of deacon seriously and an attempt by priests to under-

stand and accept the validity of the diaconate and its complementarity with other orders and ministries.

A number of the deacons surveyed thought that the Church should adopt an official policy of encouragement of the diaconate, particularly encouraging men to see it as a possible vocation for them; they wanted a more positive approach from ABM (Ministry Division, as it now is), and national guidelines for discernment of diaconal vocation, accepted by all bishops, Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and selectors. Some also wanted specific selection conferences for deacons, with selectors appropriately trained for this. With very few exceptions, they favoured education for deacons to the same academic standard as priests, and a requirement on all theological colleges and courses to include diaconal formation in their curriculum for all ordinands, with an attempt to make the diaconal year more diaconal in character for those who were eventually to be ordained to the priesthood. There was a further suggestion that the wide variety of forms of ministry appropriate to deacons should be reflected in a variety of possible routes through formation courses, which valued the contribution brought to the diaconate by candidates who had already been trained as teachers, nurses, counsellors or youth workers. In order that the diaconate might be better understood, and recognised as a ministry which focuses on the apostolic task of the Church in relation to the coming of the Kingdom, some felt that more support should be given to learning and research.

From the above responses, a picture begins to emerge of deacons' self-understanding and of the way they believe the Church perceives them.

What are the expectations laid on deacons by the church, parish congregations, other deacons, clients, employers and other members of society?

The expectations laid upon deacons are difficult to assess. The evidence that many deacons have given of their own experience suggests that they think the Church of England expects deacons to die out or to come to their senses and be ordained to the priesthood. The canon law indicates that the deacon is expected to meet the same requirements of moral and spiritual life as the priest and the bishop. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the church community has great difficulty in understanding what a deacon is and thus of knowing what to expect from such a minister. The sad fact of the situation is that most people are too ready to presume that they know all there is to know about the diaconate. They are extremely reluctant to ask or to show any interest in learning that there are new ways of looking at deacons and that new inspiration is being given by the Holy Spirit to the Church. Employers of deacons who work in sector ministry will expect them to carry out the duties for which they are employed, whatever these may be. Other members of society will have difficulty knowing what to expect.

The expectations laid on deacons by their fellow deacons is an area which is becoming more problematic as the diaconate grows and faces all the difficulties it has to face. Whilst some deacons are happy to continue to serve in the parishes in which they have lived and worshipped before and since their ordination, others are seeking alternative ministerial opportunities with a different relationship or none at all to the parochial structures. The Church of England's various ministerial education and training programmes are becoming more academically and practically demanding than they used to be. This has begun to cause apprehension among some deacons who were trained on other types of programmes. There is a need for a generous approach on their part and a willingness to accept that the deacons who are currently being educated have other learning opportunities and should be encouraged to take those opportunities, because the Church is changing and the ministerial context is not what it was when the first deacons were ordained. There is also a need for more deacons to gain qualifications which will enable them to teach at higher education level, so that in time deacons will all have the opportunity of being taught by other deacons in their initial ministerial education. The situation is very much as it once was in the nursing profession, in the days when all the education of nurses was provided by doctors and hardly ever by other nurses. The same attitudes are surfacing in relation to deacons as those which came to the fore when university degrees for nurses were first proposed, that is the need for a university education for a deacon is questioned, even seen as a threat, by some.

7. THE WAY AHEAD

Several factors are likely to affect the position of the diaconate in the Church of England in the next decade. Deacons are currently few in number but their great strength lies in the natural facility of the diaconate, demonstrated already in a variety of historical contexts, to engage in mission and outreach in a fragmenting society and to act as a unifying force within the Church. The deacon is a kind of *passe-partout*, interpreting the world to the Church by active engagement in both, exemplifying that vital link between the Eucharist and the world in the context of the coming final reign of God, and relating naturally to deacons in other Christian traditions. There is further strength to be drawn from the ecumenical context, in which the number and dynamism of diaconal developments is so great that it can appropriately be described as an 'escalating phenomenon', as it has been elsewhere in this book.⁵⁷

The series of ecumenical meetings of deacons at St George's House, Windsor, which led to the Windsor Statement of 1997, brought Church of England deacons into close contact with the Methodist Diaconal Order and with deacons in the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Together they were able to request the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland (CCBI) 'to consult with its member churches about the suggestion that :

⁵⁷ See Sven-Erik Brodd, *An Escalating Phenomenon – The Diaconate from an Ecumenical Perspective*.

CCBI member churches be invited to work together on an understanding of the diaconate, a) to gain an overview of the diaconate in the churches today and b) to consider the issues raised in the report 'The Windsor Statement on the Diaconate, October 1997'.⁵⁸

It was subsequently agreed within CCBI that member churches should be invited to set up a working group on the diaconate. Member churches' responses⁵⁹ to this invitation were overwhelmingly positive. The necessary decisions for the setting up of a working group are expected to be made in November 1999, which means that the group may begin operating some time in 2000, with every hope of genuine ecumenical interchange.

It is hoped that the Church of England will play a positive and enthusiastic part in the CCBI working group, thus giving more of its members the opportunity to come into contact with developments and practice in other churches. The major weakness of the diaconate's position within the Church of England lies in the fact that few people in key positions seem to be aware of what is happening ecumenically or to understand the significance of the world-wide ecumenical developments which have been taking place over the last fifty years. Too few bishops of the Church of England are active in recognising the diaconate, and, as experience in other places has shown, their active in-

⁵⁸ The Windsor Statement on the diaconate, 1997, was collated and printed by the Methodist Diaconal Order.

⁵⁹ Responses came from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Church of Scotland, the Church in Wales, the Congregational Federation, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Independent Methodist Churches, the United Reformed Church, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Russian Orthodox Church.

volvement is necessary for the continuing full and effective presence of the historic threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon.

Although the witness of individual deacons, few as they are, must be part of the evaluation of the diaconate for the Church of England, it should not be allowed to be determinative. It has become increasingly apparent to churches which are engaged in ecumenical dialogue that the justification of the diaconate does not lie ultimately in the work being carried out by existing deacons, however valuable that may be, but in the nature of the Church itself, which for its fuller expression demands a threefold order of ministry and manifests the elements of this even in Christian communities which have no orders of ministers called explicitly bishops, priests and deacons. In other words, even if the Church of England had so allowed the diaconate to lapse into disuse that it had not one deacon exercising the diaconal ministry, a strong ecclesiological case could still be made for it to build up an order of deacons.

There are signs that attitudes in the Church of England are not what they were in 1974, when the abolition of the diaconate was recommended to the General Synod. In November 1998, after a long process of preparation within the Diocese of Ely, and a major consultation on the diaconate (in January 1998) organised by the Advisory Board of Ministry (as it then was) and the Council for Christian Unity, the Bishop of Ely introduced a motion from his diocese to the General Synod, re-

questing them to set up a working party to consider the diaconate. After a very positive debate, the motion was passed in the following slightly modified form:

That this Synod,

- a) mindful of the changing patterns of ministry within the Church of England since the diaconate was last considered; and
- b) conscious of new insight about diaconal ministry arising from discussions both ecumenical and within the Anglican Communion,

request the House of Bishops to set up a working party to consider the concept of a renewed diaconate and to report to Synod.⁶⁰

The motion draws attention to the fact that there is an ecumenical and pan-Anglican context to be taken into account, which is a hopeful sign for the outcome. The working party has been set up and its report is expected some time in 2000. It includes two ecumenical observers, one from the Methodist and one from the Roman Catholic Church. Much depends on the theological method which the working party adopts, and the extent to which it allows political agenda or the ever present preoccupation with financial constraints to influence its findings.

The final factor in the way ahead for the diaconate in the Church of England is undoubtedly in the domain of education and research. The Anglo-Nordic Diaconal Research Project is

⁶⁰ Diocesan Synod Motions, in *Proceedings of the General Synod*, November, 1998, p. 878.

at the time of writing the only university research project in England working specifically on the diaconate. The support which this has received from the Porvoo Contact Group is an indication of intention to honour the commitments given in the Porvoo Declaration in every possible way, including the obligation to come to a common understanding of diaconal ministry. At the moment, the Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry, at University College Chichester, is the only English teaching and research centre in the university sector (or in the Church of England's Theological Colleges and Courses) with specific programmes of teaching and research on the diaconate. If the kind of work that it does is replicated more widely and given appropriate official recognition in the next decade, this will be a further indicator that the diaconate is finding a clearer way ahead in the Church of England, because it will mean that the need for a specific diaconal formation throughout the Church of England, supported by research and extensive ecumenical involvement, has been accepted.

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