



Grace Notes

July/August 2020

Listening, Interpreting, and Serving: The Ministry of a Deacon

By Rev. Melissa Howell

“Wait... so, what is a deacon?” my friend asked a few months back, when I told her the date of my June ordination to the transitional diaconate. This is an excellent question, and an important one—so I want to share, as I did with my friend, the important and vital role that deacons hold in the Episcopal Church and in the world.

In addition to immersing themselves in the Holy Scriptures, being leaders in public worship, and making Jesus’s love known to all people in their communities, deacons have two particular ministries that I’d like to highlight. According to p. 543 of our *Book of Common Prayer*, deacons are:

- “to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world”

and

- “to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.”

These two special ministries of interpreting and serving in and between the church and the world are represented by the deacon’s role in our liturgy for Holy Communion. Deacons, when present, always proclaim the Gospel, bid the confession of sin, set the table, and dismiss the people into the world. The English word deacon comes from the Greek verb meaning “to serve,” and to symbolize this, the deacon wears their stole over their left shoulder and tied or pinned near the waist, bringing to mind the towel in the passage from John’s gospel where Jesus “got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water in a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him” (John 13:4-5). It is this

selfless and strong ministry of service to which the deacon is called.

Some people are gifted with a call to be deacon for life and are known as vocational deacons. Others, like me, are transitional deacons, which means we enact the particular ministry of a deacon for six months to a year before ordination to the priesthood. However, the ministry of the deacon never leaves us. In fact, all Christians are called to the ministry of service that the deacon represents. Bishop Alan Gates reminded us of this in his sermon for our June ordination service. He said, “It is not the deacon’s role to carry out the servant ministry of the church *on our behalf*, so the rest of us don’t have to. We may not, we *must* not, delegate to our deacons Christ’s ministry in the world. No, we are to be led by them, called and challenged by them, informed and inspired and equipped by them, for the ministries of healing and justice which are the duty of every one of us.”

I have been thinking about what it means to be a deacon now, today, at this particular time and place, when there is so much listening, interpreting, serving, and healing needed in the world. With multiple ongoing crises intertwined—a public health crisis, an economic crisis, and a crisis of unjust and racist systems—where do we start? It can feel daunting. So, I'd like to invite us, to challenge us, in our mutual and communal call to seek and serve Christ, to start wherever we are. Let's start wherever we are this summer, by praying and listening first for the Holy Spirit, who can help us to discern what our gifts are, and then, how we can use them in service to God and our neighbors. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). We each have different gifts and abilities, and we each come from different contexts, but all of our gifts are from God—all sacred, all holy, and all to be used. A quote posted recently on social media by Viola Davis and shared widely illustrates this same truth:

"Some are posting on social media
Some are protesting in the streets
Some are donating silently
Some are educating themselves
Some are having tough conversations
with friends & family

A revolution has many lanes—be kind to yourself and to others who are traveling in the same direction

Just keep your foot on the gas."

Dear ones of Grace, I am so glad we are traveling, listening, interpreting,

praying, and serving together. I'll see you on the road.

Yours in Christ,
Melissa †

Liturgy & Liturgical Ministry

By Jerré Croteau, Verger

Summer

We are now in the long-awaited Summer season. As I compose this article, the roses in front of our church are beginning their season of bloom. Despite the beauty and warmth of this time of year, we are still in the throes of a pandemic and at the same time struggling with a longing for justice, peace, and healing in our fractured society. In the midst of this confusion and uncertainty, the liturgical year marches on. We are used to changes in our liturgical life during the Summer months, but this year, with all the limitations under which the health crisis restrains us, it is difficult to even forecast what to expect in our worship.

It is the seemingly endless season of Pentecost, termed "ordinary time" for which the color is **green**. As I write, we are still in Stage 1 of the four stages through which we have been advised to go before full, unrestricted public worship can take place. An immediate change as of June 21, will be that the time of the Sunday Virtual Service will be **9AM**. The reasoning is the same as it has been for last few years, it gives families a head start in planning their day in the all-too-brief beauty and warmth of summer. By that time, we will have moved to virtual service to the main church, where it will be anticipation for an uncertain but possible move to Phase 2.

Moving to Phase 2 would require a substantial decrease in new cases of the virus, would limit the number of congregants who could safely attend a service, and require masks, and spacing of individuals or individual families, and would not allow congregational singing. A plan for dividing the seating arrangements in the church has already been worked out—if we are fortunate enough to begin physical rather than virtual attendance. All books and other paraphernalia have been removed from the seating to help prevent surface contamination, and surfaces would require extensive cleaning between services, making the number of services that could take place in any given weekend problematic. Leaflets will be printed with all parts of the service, so that reference to the books will not be necessary. Spiritual Communion will continue during this phase.

It is estimated that perhaps 80 people could attend, with adequate separation, precautions, and ventilation. How one would sign up or express one's desire to attend at any given Sunday is yet to be worked out. Again, this is all dependent on the course of the pandemic itself. It would be tragic and disheartening to go to the next phases, only to have to return to a former one if infections were to spike again.

All this being said, we will continue to worship God virtually in a reverent and hopeful manner, regardless of the necessary physical limitations we self-impose for the safety of all, until such time as we can move to the next stage.



Children's Ministry Program

By Charlene Ryder, Children's Ministry Program Coordinator

Our Church School teachers (Jessica, Erin, Andrea, Courtney, Mimi, Pam & myself), Chris (our Rector), Melissa (our Curate), Brian (our Director of Music), and Billy Boyce all had a wonderful and fun-filled time during our June 7th parade to the church school families. Everyone who participated and everyone who received visits were so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be together as we social distanced 6 feet.

Our June 7th Facebook Live service was a Children's Liturgy. During this service, Chris blessed a new dove kite that will be used in our church processions in the future. We offered a Godly Play Holy Baptism lesson during the sermon time. I thank Isabel for her assistance with this presentation.

I will send Church School updates to the teachers and families as we journey through the stages of reopening our church.

If you have questions, please contact me at any time by phone, text or email: 508-728-4374 or cryder@umassd.edu.

A Prayer of Confession and of Hope

Previously sent to the parish

Almighty God, Source of all that is,
Giver of every good gift:

You create all people in your image
and call us to love one another as
you love us.

We confess that we have failed to
honor you in the great diversity of
the human family.

We have desired to live in freedom,
while building walls between
ourselves and others.

We have longed to be known and
accepted for who we are, while
making judgements of others based
on the color of skin, or the shape of
features, or the varieties of human
experience.

We have tried to love our neighbors
individually, while yet benefitting
from systems that hold those same
neighbors in oppression.

Forgive us, Holy God.

Give us eyes to see you as you are
revealed in all people.

Strengthen us for the work of
reconciliation rooted in love.

Restore us in your image, to be
beloved community, united in our
diversity,

even as you are one with Christ and
the Spirit,
Holy and undivided Trinity, now and
for ever.

Amen.

- Episcopal Standing Commission on
Liturgy and Music

June 2, 2020

Dear friends,

I pray that each one of you share
with me, in some way, heartbreak.
Heartbreak as we, once again, over
and over, witness the physical and

undeniable violence of racism and
white privilege in our country.

I also pray that we have felt
something akin to hope. Hope
manifested as a burning, Spirit-filled
desire to work for the transformation
of our hearts and of our society.

Especially those among us who are
white, that this would push us to
further educate ourselves and to join
the movement that struggles for the
lasting change that this nation so
desperately needs even as it resists.

I pray for hope made incarnate as we
pray not only with our lips but with
our actions, our bodies.

I have begun this word to you several
times, and in the end feel that it is
best to keep it brief. I do want to
offer you two links. The first is an
inspiring essay published two days
ago from our Presiding Bishop,
followed by our own bishops' statement yesterday.

I have found them both to be life-
giving, challenging, and hopeful
words during this time.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/05/31/black-man-i-understand-anger-our-streets-we-must-still-choose-love/>

<https://www.diomass.org/news/diocesan-news/bishops-june-1-statement-violence-and-sin-racism>

Together, let us pray for all those
brothers and sisters of color who
have been looted and lynched these
past 400 years, right up to today.

We pray for all of those (including
myself) who have grown up in a
society where racism takes twisted,
and often unrecognized, root in our
minds and hearts.

We pray for all of those who have

given their bodies to fight against slavery and racism these last four centuries, and we pray for those who are protesting right now throughout our country, even as they are subjected to increasing state-sponsored violence in some of our cities.

We pray for all those who are entrusted with our safety, especially lifting up with gratitude those police who are acting without violence and those who have reached out in solidarity to those who protest.

We pray that, as our Presiding Bishop has written, “frustration (does) not lead to fatalism or despair. We are not condemned to live this way forever.” That we would choose the different, and more difficult, path of love.

Amen.

Chris +

A Message from the New England Bishops

Previously sent to the parish

Dear friends,

As many of you undoubtedly know, President Trump ordered an unannounced and violent attack on peaceful protesters and clergy at St. John's Episcopal Church in D.C., using tear gas, concussion grenades, and rubber bullets, in order to clear the space for an appearance by him in front of the church.

Regardless of where we find ourselves on the political spectrum, the nuances of this are beyond troubling.

Given the level of justified concern that I have heard from you due to

this forced entry onto church grounds, I share yesterday's statement from the bishops of our New England dioceses.

Faithfully,
Chris +

The bishops of the seven New England Episcopal dioceses today issued the following joint statement in response to President Trump's photo op at St. John's Episcopal Church in Lafayette Square, Washington, D.C., characterizing it as "cynical" and calling out "the abomination of continued oppression of and violence against people of color in this nation." The text of the statement appears below.

June 2, 2020

What President Trump did in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square on the evening of June 1 was disgraceful and morally repugnant. Displaying a Bible from which he did not quote, using as a mere backdrop an Episcopal church where he did not pray, and – more callously – ordering law enforcement to clear, with force and tear gas, a path through demonstrators who had gathered in peace, President Trump distorted for his own purposes the cherished symbols of our faith to condone and stoke yet more violence.

His tactic was obvious. Simply by holding aloft an unopened Bible he presumed to claim Christian endorsement and imply that of The Episcopal Church. Far more disturbingly, he seemed to be affecting the authority of the God

and Savior we worship and serve, in order to support his own authority and to wield enhanced use of military force in a perverted attempt to restore peace to our nation.

His actions did nothing to mend the torn social fabric of our nation. Instead, they were a blatant attempt to drive a wedge between the people of this nation, and even between people of faith. No matter where we may stand on the partisan spectrum, we, as Christian leaders called to proclaim a God of love, find his actions repugnant. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, to seek healing over division, and make peace in the midst of violence.

Our church may rightly feel outraged and insulted by having the symbols of our faith used as a set prop in a cynical political drama. The real abomination before us, however, is the continued oppression of and violence against people of color in this nation. Let us reserve and focus the energies of our indignation to serve our Lord Jesus Christ's higher purpose: to extend love and mercy and justice for all, and especially for those whose life, liberty, and very humanity is threatened by the persistent sin of systemic racism and the contagion of white supremacy.

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan, Connecticut
The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas, Bishop Diocesan, Connecticut
The Rt. Rev. Thomas James Brown, Bishop Diocesan, Maine
The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, Bishop Diocesan, Massachusetts
The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, Bishop Suffragan, Massachusetts
The Rt. Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld,

Bishop Diocesan, New Hampshire
The Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely,
Bishop Diocesan, Rhode Island
The Rt. Rev. Shannon MacVean-
Brown, Bishop Diocesan, Vermont
The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher, Bishop
Diocesan, Western Massachusetts

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<https://www.diomass.org/news/diocesan-news/new-england-bishops-respond-one-voice-presidents-cynical-photo-op>

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A Virtual Visit to Grace's Beautiful Front Garden



Special thanks for Jerré Croteau for his efforts!

GIFTS

May-June 2020

Community Breakfast

Gifts of James Bisagni, Donald White, Zelinda Douhan, Norma Bossé, Chuck Cotter & Marilyn Saint-Aubin
Gift of Jerré Croteau **in memory of Paul Alan Donaldson**

Pastoral Rites

Gift of the Logan, Johnson, & Pinard Families **in memory of Earle Needham & Mildred Ann Logan**

Laundry Love

Gift of Edie Lauderdale

Martha's Pantry at Grace

Gift of Linda & Edward Massa **in memory of Maria do Ceu Antunes**

Gifts of Janet Allain, Lisa Thibeault & Martha Silveira, Roberta and Robert Ladetto, Michael & Cynthia Shea, Amy & Brett Nadeau, Marcia & Frederick Anselmo, Lois & Kristine Ainsley **in honor of Alden Taylor's 100th Birthday**

Gift of Carol Cushman **in memory of Ellen Cushman**

Gift of Gerry Lopes **in memory of Norma Lopes**

Gift of the Greater Boston Foodbank FY'20 Capacity Grant Covid-19

Gifts of Joanne Gracia, Maureen & Allen Decker, Robert & Deborah Huckabee, Jean M. Smith, Frank Perrine, Colleen Roy, Janet Wing, James Ring & Merita Hopkins, W. Joan Dalton, James Bobrick, Edie Lauderdale, Jerré Croteau, Joan Swain, Robbie Watkins, Rillis Watkins, Zelinda Douhan, Martha Marie Fuller, Dennis Beck, Phyllis & Fred Figueiredo

Rector's Discretionary Fund

Gifts of Ivy MacMahon, Nancy & David Faria, Alfred Smialek, Larry Correia, Norma Bossé, James Ring, Kristine Ainsley, Donald Driesen, Nancy & David Faria, Larry Correia
Anonymous Gift

Additional Easter Offering

Gifts of Albert Hines, David & WendyJo Jackson, James & Diane Doe, Paula Cabral, Scott Huckabee

Memorial Fund

Gifts of Episcopal Church Women **in memory of Muriel Pehrson and Priscilla Taylor**

Audiovisual Equipment

Gift of Jerré Croteau **in memory of Cecile deBettencourt**

Interchurch Council

Gift of Nancy & David Faria, Norma Bossé

General Fund

Gift of Gerry Lopes **in memory of Norman Lopes**

Miscellaneous

Gift of Rosalyn Alexander & George Reeves **in memory of Priscilla Taylor**

Gifts of Zelinda Douhan, Diana Silva

MID-YEAR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS ARE COMING IN JULY

In July, the church office will mail out mid-year contribution statements. Please review your statement and contact the office at office@gracechurchnb.org or 508-993-0547 if you have any questions or corrections.

Food & Faith

Summer is here! And that means our farmers' markets and farm stands are in full swing, full of delicious locally raised produce, eggs, jams, and beverages, not to mention some beautiful flowers to liven up our homes. For a list of local farms to patronize and support, follow this link: <https://semaponline.org/resources/for-consumers/> or this link: <https://ediblesouthshore.com/farmers-markets/farmers-markets-summeroutdoor/>.

So why eat locally raised foods? What is the benefit? According to SEMAP (www.semaponline.org), local farmers are good stewards of the land. They take into consideration how their farming practices affect the land as they decide what to raise and how to raise it. Also, local food is fresher and tastes better than food that has had to travel hundreds or thousands of miles to get to our local grocery stores, and because it's fresher, it was picked and harvested when it was ripe, which means it has more of the vitamins and minerals that we need to keep our bodies healthy – something important to keep in mind during a pandemic, for sure! And because it has not traveled so far, fewer fossil fuels have been used to get it to our plates. These are all important considerations as we make daily decisions about how to care for the Earth God has given us.

Another way to support our local farmers is to participate in farms' CSA programs. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture, a program through which individuals and families purchase farm shares. After paying one price for a share, folks go to their local farms and pick up what is grown and harvested that week. Contact a farm close to you and see if there are any shares left!

On a different note – one thing that has kept these last months easier to deal with is baking. Unfortunately, all-purpose flour is not always easy to come by these days. So I wanted to share two recipes that rely heavily on oats, one for cookies and one for pancakes, to help stretch whatever flour we have on hand or can find even further. Enjoy!

[No-Bake Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies](#)
[Deborah Madison's Oatmeal Pancakes](#)



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Curate	Rev. Melissa Howell
Director of Music	Brian Roderick
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