THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST TEXAS GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

(November 11, 2025)

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely...You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world...At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself." (The Ordination of a Deacon. BCP, p.543)

Introduction.

Beginning in 2025, and after study by a task force which reported to the 2025 Diocesan Council, the Bishop of West Texas is reintroducing the ministry of the permanent Diaconate in West Texas. This ministry is not new in West Texas. Deacons served in West Texas for many decades in our early history. The Diocese has also always had transitional deacons. These persons were ordained to the diaconate and later ordained to the priesthood. The majority of the ministry of a permanent deacon takes place outside of a congregation's walls. Deacons serve out in the community, and often among the marginalized. One goal of reintroducing the ministry of deacons in West Texas is to assist congregations in reengaging service and ministry in their neighborhoods and communities. As the Diaconate is reintroduced in West Texas, this document is intended to provide both organizational and canonical guidelines for those in the permanent Diaconate.

Accountable to the Bishop.

All deacons are directly accountable to the bishop and are at all times subject to the pastoral direction and supervision of the bishop. (Title III, Canon 7, Section 1 & 4) Deacons are not to serve in congregations of this diocese without the consent of the bishop.

A Bi-Vocational Ministry.

Deacons in West Texas serve in a bi-vocational ministry. This means that they do not receive a salary from the church for their servant ministry. The principal ministry of a deacon is in the world, and deacons are expected to have significant ministry to the poor and marginalized outside the walls of the church.

Compensation.

While deacons do not receive a salary for their ministry, it is expected that a deacon serving in a parish will not have a financial burden because of their ministry.

a. Each congregation should contribute to the deacon's continuing education expenses. The minimum suggested is $1,200.
b. Expenses related to retreats and meetings where the deacon's presence is required should be fully reimbursed.
c. Expenses related to the use of a deacon's personal vehicle for parish business should be reimbursed at the level established by the diocese.

d. Each deacon will be paid $25 per month and the congregation will pay the 18% Church Pension Fund assessment for the deacon. This gives the deacon access to many Church Pension Group programs and retiree health coverage.

Appointments.
The deacon will be assigned to a parish, mission, or worshipping community chosen by the bishop in consultation with and with the agreement of the priest-in-charge. The assignment may, or may not, be in the same congregation which raised up the deacon for ministry. The bishop recognizes that the geography of West Texas is vast, that deacons serve in bi-vocational ministry and have employment and professions outside of the congregations they serve. The priest-in-charge will have oversight of the ministry of the deacon in all matters concerning the congregation. (Title III, Canon 7.7)

Not Permanent.
It is understood that a deacon's assignment to a congregation is not permanent. The diocesan norm will be a 3-year assignment. Assignments may be less than 3 years and may also be extended for good cause.

Not in Charge of a Congregation.
A permanent deacon may not be in charge of a congregation or other community of faith. (Title III, Canon 7.4c) With permission of the bishop, a deacon may serve as chaplain in a hospital, prison, or other institution. (Title III, Canon 7.4.d)

Letters of Agreement
Once a deacon is assigned, they are required to have a letter of agreement with the congregation that is signed by the Senior Warden/Bishop's Warden, the priest-in-charge and approved by the bishop. The letter of agreement should include provisions for reimbursement of expenses.

Diocesan Council & Clergy Conference
Deacons have seat, voice and vote in the Councils of the Diocese of West Texas. Active deacons are invited and encouraged to attend Clergy Conference as their schedules allow. Deacons are invited and encouraged to attend convocational clericus meetings as their schedules permit.

Vestries and Bishop's Committees
Deacons do not have voice and vote in vestries or Bishop's Committees. They may be invited by the priest-in-charge to give reports or to attend.

Reports
in January of each year a deacon shall submit a written annual report of their activities and ministries to the Bishop.

Retirement

Upon retirement age (72 years), a deacon must resign from all positions of active service in this Church. Retired or resigned deacons are not to serve in congregations of this diocese unless the bishop assigns them to a term not to exceed twelve months in accordance with the Canons (Title III, Canon 7.7) This term may be renewed.

Deacon's Masses.

At this time, deacons in West Texas are not permitted to preside at the altar or distribute pre-consecrated bread and wine in public worship without a priest or bishop as the celebrant.

Oversight of Eucharistic Ministers

Deacons are responsible for the training and oversight of Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors. (Title III, Canon 4.6-7) Deacons may prepare a curriculum or training program for this purpose.

Continuing Education

Deacons are required to have 20 hours of continuing education annually. Clergy conference fulfills part of this requirement. If a deacon needs assistance finding appropriate continuing education, the deacon should contact the Bishop Suffragan.

Standing Committee

Because of their unique relationship to the bishop diocesan, a deacon may not serve on the Standing Committee.