1156 Placement and Support of Deacons

The Division of Clergy Personnel

1156 PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT OF DEACONS

1156.1 General Principles

- Direct Action – The Archbishop may take direct action in making an assignment outside the usual process. In some instances, the Board may recommend direct action.
- The Deacon Life and Ministry Board recommends placements for deacons in parishes and special ministry assignments. These recommendations will be made with every effort to coordinate the abilities, preferences of the individual deacon with the specific needs of a particular assignment and the needs of the Archdiocese.
- Division of Clergy Personnel- It is the responsibility of the Division of Clergy Personnel to create and keep current a system of detailed and accurate information on deacons and assignments. It is expected that each deacon will cooperate with the Division by providing all information necessary for assignment purposes.
- In order to meet the ministerial needs of institutions, such as hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, etc., deacons are subject to an institutional assignment in addition to or in place of a parish assignment.
- Requests for deacon assignments should be submitted in writing to the Office of the Diaconate. Agencies and

organizations should include a detailed position description and a statement of qualifications required for the position.

1156.2 Placement Process

1156.2.1 Goals

There are two basic goals of the placement process for deacons:

- to meet the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese by assigning the most qualified deacon available to each vacant position; and
- to respond to the personal needs and the ministerial growth needs of all deacons.

1156.2.2 Objective

The objective of the Deacon Life and Ministry Board is to match, as closely as possible, the needs of an individual parish, institution, or agency with the competence and potential of an individual deacon. Through annual information forms or surveys, personal interviews, and direct contacts with deacons, the Board becomes more familiar with the background, the experiences, and the individual goals of deacons in recommending candidates for ministerial assignments.

1156.2.3 Requirements

- **Qualifications to be considered for ALL Diaconate Positions**
    1. *Spiritual Qualities:* Recognition of a deacon as a man of faith who shares his faith with others in the performance of his ministry; and a spiritual leadership which demonstrates and utilizes belief and prayer as motivating and sustaining influences to inspire faith in all those who come in contact with him.
    2. *Liturgical Abilities:* The ability to plan and carry out effective liturgical celebrations; to prepare and deliver homilies or commentaries on sacred scripture; and to assume a leadership role in forming the prayer life of a

parish community.

3. *Diaconate Abilities:* A willingness to minister to people in response to their needs, especially for the sick, the poor, the distressed, the disadvantaged and the alienated; initiating personal accessibility to people in times of stress and crisis and in the way he organizes services to meet individual and community needs.
4. *Growth and Development:* Pursuit of his personal, spiritual, and professional growth by periodic participation in continuing education, on-going formation programs, and/or private study.
5. *Education:* Skill and demonstrated interest in providing opportunities for faith formation for all levels.
6. *Leadership and Administrative Skills:* Ability to organize ministerial work and assign and supervise it in an effective manner; to promote teamwork and coordinated staff effort; to welcome shared decision-making, and to work with collegial bodies openly and responsively.
7. *Archdiocesan Support:* Willingness to support archdiocesan goals and programs; openness to participate in research and consultation processes by which the Archdiocese studies problems and arrives at recommendations for change.
8. *Experience:* Years of experience as a deacon and service to the Church in other capacities.

- **Qualifications for a Particular Diaconate Assignment**
    1. *Preparation:* The requirements for a particular diaconate assignment to be filled will be prepared by the Placement Committee in conjunction with the Office of the Diaconate in the light of all relevant and available information.
    2. *Evaluation:* The Placement Committee will consider the characteristics of the assignment and the challenges which exist and the goals to be attained. This information may be made available to the Committee and the Board from its

own members, from the Office of the Diaconate, from Chancery officials, and from the vicars or delegates of the Archbishop.

3. *Characteristics:* The requirements of the specific position will then be defined as talents, abilities, interests, and knowledge that a deacon should have in order to fulfill the specific position requirements.

1156.3 The Placement Cycle

1156.3.1 Elements

The essential elements of the placement process include, but are not limited to, information gathering, development of recommendations, clearance, and consultation.

1156.3.2 Information Gathering

Accurate, current, and objective data is compiled about the position to be filled and the deacons available for assignment. The Office of the Diaconate will:

- Receive and catalog requests from deacons, parishes, or agencies seeking assignments or replacements of deacon personnel;
- Identify all current vacancies;
- Prepare position descriptions of current vacancies by requesting pertinent information about the assignment in writing from pastors, institution, or department heads responsible for filling positions; and
- Compile lists of vacancies, position descriptions, and available deacon personnel for consideration by the Placement Committee of the Board.

1156.3.3 Development of Recommendations

Assignment recommendations are then prepared by the Placement Committee for each position and must balance the pastoral needs of the

Archdiocese with the welfare of the individual deacon.

1156.3.4 Clearance

Recommendations proposed by Placement Committee, and accepted by the Board and the Director of Deacon Personnel, are discussed with the administrative authorities of the Archdiocese such as the Archbishop, the vicars and delegates, and the pastors involved in changes of deacon assignments.

1156.3.5 Consultation

In General

No recommendation for assignment will be finalized without personal consultation with the nominees and the pastor and/or staff of the individual parish, institution, or organization. Ordinarily, a deacon is free to accept, decline, or ask for a reasonable amount of time for further consideration. Each deacon maintains the right of direct appeal to the vicars or delegates and/or the Archbishop.

Process

The consultation process occurs in the following manner:

- A deacon is always consulted by the Director of Deacon Personnel prior to the finalization of any assignment. He is given specific information on the position and the Board's rationale for recommending him for this assignment.
- A less than positive response from anyone involved in the process will return the matter to the Board. The Board may ask for further consultation or prepare another assignment recommendation for the deacon.
- Within 60 days after assuming a new position, the deacon is to file with the Office of the Diaconate a completed *Letter of Understanding* (**see Appendix 11**)
- The official appointment of an assignment is made by the

Archbishop through a letter of appointment. The Office of the Diaconate is responsible for publication of appointments in the *Catholic Review* after the official appointment has been made.

Direct Action

The Archbishop may take direct action in making an assignment without the normal consultative process. In some instances, the Board may also recommend direct action.

1156.3.6 Initiating Placement

Beginning the Process – The placement process may begin in any of several ways as an opening becomes known to the Office of the Diaconate through communication with individual deacons or with others.

- **Deacon Life and Ministry Board –** A recommendation for change of assignment may originate with the Deacon Life and Ministry Board. A deacon may be asked to consider reassignment because his qualifications correspond to a particular need or because the Board judges that a different assignment may be instrumental in increasing his competence and experience.
- **Change of Assignment or Interest in Specific Assignment –** Any deacon who wishes to be considered for such a change in their assignment should contact the Director of Deacon Personnel by email or telephone to discuss his interest in a specific position or in a possible future assignment.
- **Individual Deacon –** A deacon himself may take the initiative by asking for a change of assignment. A deacon should discuss his thoughts for a current or future assignment with the Director of Deacon Personnel. A deacon may also ask for a personal interview with the Placement Committee to discuss his request.

1156.3.7 Placement Committee and Board Procedure

Initial Placement Committee Process –

The Placement Committee receives preliminary background information from the Office staff and the Board, and then:

- meets outside of normally scheduled Board meetings;
- reviews the deacon's completed Self-Assessment Form (**see Appendix 12**);
- conducts interviews with the following: (as applicable)
    1. all deacon candidates, seeking advice from their supervisors, and the Director of Deacon Formation and the Formation Team;
    2. all deacons requesting a change of assignment;
    3. all extern deacons requesting a ministry assignment with habitual faculties in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
- develops a slate of assignment recommendations to be presented to the Board; and
- Reports to the Board the rationale for the recommendations which are presented for finalizing all lists of assignment recommendations.

Final Recommendations – Finalizing Assignment Recommendations –

The Deacon Life and Ministry Board is responsible for finalizing the recommendations of the Placement Committee.

The Deacon Life and Ministry Board:

- **Receives the report of the Placement Committee** and asks for clarifications where necessary;
- **Votes to approve, change, or reject those recommendations** made by the Placement Committee; and
- **Returns** all rejected recommendations to the Placement Committee for review and reevaluation.

The Director of the Deacon Personnel presents all Board recommendations to the vicars or delegates and the Archbishop for approval. If approval is denied, recommendations are returned to the Board

with the reason for the rejection and a specific request for reconsideration. However, the Archbishop may exercise the right to make changes in the recommendations.

1156.4 Term of Assignment

The following policy applies to the appointment of deacons:

- **A deacon is usually assigned for an initial term of 6 years.** Following an evaluation (Review of Ministry) and the recommendation of the Deacon Life and Ministry Board, he may be appointed for additional terms.
- Ordinarily, the value of stability in all appointments suggests that a deacon would remain in an assignment; however, circumstances might warrant that a full term not be served.
- **Exceptions:** The Archbishop may make whatever exceptions to the above policy which he deems necessary in individual instances according to his prudential judgment.

1156.5 Visitation Interviews

1156.5.1 In General

The Board, or the Placement Committee on the Board's behalf, will schedule an individual review with each deacon at least once every 3 years. The purpose of this interview is to strengthen the bond of service within the deacon community and to keep individual records as current as possible.

1156.5.2 Process

The deacon to be interviewed will be personally contacted by a member of the Board who is responsible for the interview. The interview will be made at a mutually acceptable time and place and will consist of:

- questions on the status of the deacon's ministry;
- information on what area of the deacon's ministry is working well;
- information on what area of challenge or difficulty presents itself and how this area is being handled;

- information on areas of future growth;
- information on a possible change of assignment; and
- any other areas of concerns that may warrant attention.

1156.5.3 Confidentiality

All interviews are held in strict confidence. No statements made during the interview will be open as a matter for discussion outside of the interview. However, any deacon may review his own personnel folder at a mutually convenient time. All personnel files are kept at the Office of the Diaconate.

1156.6 Letter of Understanding

Aware of their common mission, the deacon and his supervisor seek, through prayer and discussion, to achieve a common vision by which they will direct their collaborative ministerial efforts in a particular setting. They listen to one another with love and respect as partners in ministry and together discern the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The *Letter of Understanding* is intended to clarify the mutual expectations and responsibilities of the deacon's assignment through dialogue between the deacon and his supervisor.

- By detailing the deacon's areas of responsibility, the *Letter of Understanding* will help the deacon, the supervisor, and other staff members to be conscious of their common mission and promote a positive working relationship.
- The *Letter of Understanding* should help to clarify both the supervisor's expectations of the deacon as well as the deacon's expectations of the supervisor.

If the deacon is an employee of a particular parish and also has other ministerial responsibilities at that parish, there may be the need for a distinct employment contract which would be cross-referenced in the *Letter of Understanding*. This *Letter of Understanding* is intended to address only the deacon's ministerial responsibilities which are distinct from his employment with that parish.

Instructions:

When a deacon prepares to begin an assignment, he meets with his supervisor to discuss the services the deacon will provide to the ministry site.

The format of the *Letter of Understanding* reflects the deacon's three fold ministries of Charity, Word, and Liturgy and invites the deacon and supervisor to identify together specific goals for the deacon's ministry. In some situations, consultation with other staff members during the preparation of the *Letter of Understanding* may be appropriate.

The following points should be given thoughtful attention as the deacon and supervisor prepare the *Letter of Understanding*:

Areas of Responsibility:

The extent to which a deacon responds to the three areas of service – Charity, Word, and Liturgy – will vary according to his unique personality, gifts and talents as well as the needs of his particular community to which he is assigned. The *Letter of Understanding* should also indicate those duties which will be conducted wholly, or in part, outside of the ministry site assignment.

Especially with regard to the area of Liturgy, the deacon should assist at Mass, baptize, witness marriages, preside at wake services, benediction, the Liturgy of the Hours, and other appropriate services on a mutually agreeable schedule. A deacon should have the opportunity to preach on a regular basis, subject to the approval of the supervisor and the presider of the liturgy.

As a member of a parish staff, a deacon should be able to participate regularly in meetings of the staff, the pastoral council, and other appropriate collegial bodies. Although work commitments may make it difficult for the deacon to participate in staff meetings, the supervisor and the deacon should make every effort to communicate

in order to share information and obtain input on matters and plans pertaining to the parish. The deacon also shares in the responsibility to initiate and maintain ongoing communication with the pastor and other staff members.

Time:

- In light of the deacon's obligations at work and at home, a total commitment to ministerial responsibilities outside of parish employment may average about 10 to 12 hours weekly.
- Note should be made of the time needed to prepare homilies as well as time in which the deacon may be involved in service outside the ministry site.

The form for the *Letter of Understanding* is found in **Appendix 11**.

1156.7 Wife and Family

The deacon who is self-supporting through his own secular employment and has family commitments will provide diaconal service and ministry in ways which do not conflict with his primary obligation to his wife and family.

A married deacon should share the *Letter of Understanding* with his wife so that she may be familiar with and supportive of the ministerial commitments of her husband.

1156.8 Supervision, Evaluation, Revision, and Renewal

The *Letter of Understanding* is to be one element of an ongoing process of dialogue between the deacon and his supervisor. The deacon and the supervisor should meet regularly so that the deacon may receive support and timely feedback regarding the effectiveness of his ministry as well as to deepen and unify their relationship for the benefit of each other as well as the ministry site.

The deacon and supervisor are encouraged to engage in an annual evaluation session, set in a prayerful atmosphere, designed to affirm the

deacon's past performance and to identify new goals for continued growth and development of his ministry.

The *Letter of Understanding* may be revised at any time by mutual consent of the deacon and the supervisor. It is recommended that the *Letter of Understanding* be reviewed and updated at least every 3 years, at the midpoint and the end of the term, or whenever there is a substantial change in ministry. A revised *Letter of Understanding* is to be prepared and submitted to the Office of the Diaconate.

If a disagreement arises between the deacon and the supervisor, especially regarding the deacon's areas of responsibility, the first step should always be prayerful and open dialogue with each other in the effort to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution. If this is not successful, either the deacon or the supervisor should contact the Director or the Assistant Director of Deacon Personnel so that resolution of the disagreement may be facilitated.

1156.9 Mentoring Policy and Process for Newly Ordained Deacons

1156.9.1 In General

- **First Assignment** – The Archdiocese has long recognized that the first diaconal assignment is an important one. In this assignment a deacon truly learns the "art" of healthy diaconal living. Transition from diaconal formation and preparation to active diaconal ministry is not without its challenges. For this reason, the Deacon Life and Ministry Board has developed a Mentoring Program for recently ordained deacons.
- **Newly ordained**, for this program, is described as those in the first year of their first ministerial assignment as a deacon.

1156.9.2 Policy

- **Participation Required** – Every newly ordained deacon shall participate for at least 1 year in a Mentoring Program approved by the Archbishop in consultation with the Deacon Life and Ministry Board.

- This mentoring process may be continued beyond the first year of diaconal work at the discretion of the deacon and his mentor.

1156.9.3 Role of the Mentor

The role of the mentor is to provide an opportunity to establish a supportive relationship for the newly ordained deacon: specifically to serve as a confidential advisor, guide, and personal resource. The mentor's role is intended to be a clear sign of concern, care, and support and not as an evaluator, reporter, or liaison.

1156.9.4 Contact

Responsibility for initiating and maintaining contact between the deacon and the mentor belongs to the deacon. The deacon meets with his mentor on a quarterly schedule at a minimum. Additional contact can occur at other times.

It is expected that the contact between mentor and deacon will be a positive experience and an aid in the deacon's personal, spiritual, and leadership growth.

1156.9.5 Mentor Assignment

- **Who Assigns Mentor** – The Office of Deacon Personnel will evaluate the personality of the newly ordained deacon including his experience, age, gifts, and talents when considering who to assign to him as a mentor. The Office of Deacon Personnel will also consult with the Deacon Formation Team and the newly ordained deacon regarding the final selection of a mentor.
- **Mentor** – The mentor should NOT be the current pastor of the newly ordained deacon.
- **Skills** – The mentor should be skilled in providing support and assistance to the newly ordained deacon. Great care should be taken in these assignments given their lasting impact on the ministry of the newly ordained.

1156.10 Retired Deacons

1156.10.1 Age of Retirement

The official retirement age is 75 years. Three months before reaching his 75th birthday, each deacon must submit a letter of intention to the Archbishop, to be effective on his 75th birthday. In special circumstances, the Archbishop may defer retirement.

1156.10.2 Request for Retirement

- A deacon shall initiate the request for retirement unless suggested or directed by the Archbishop or his designee. The request for retirement is made in writing to the Archbishop. He may request earlier retirement for reasons of health, family responsibilities or other circumstances which may inhibit his ability to fulfill his diaconal duties.

1156.10.3 Procedure

The deacon will consult with his pastor/supervisor. Following this consultation:

- The deacon will address a letter to the Archbishop stating his reason(s) for requesting retirement and indicating that he has discussed this matter with his pastor/supervisor.
- A copy of this letter should go to the Division of Clergy Personnel.

On approval of the retirement request:

- The Archbishop will notify the deacon by letter that his retirement request has been granted. The letter will also advise him of his continuing rights and privileges as a deacon.
- Copies of the letter will be sent to the Director of Clergy Personnel, the Director of Deacon Personnel, and the pastor/supervisor.

1156.10.4 Early Retirement

If because of health, long-term inhibiting family responsibilities, or other

circumstances, it is discerned that the deacon is incapable of performing his diaconal duties, the Archbishop may suggest or direct the deacon to serve in retired status.

1156.10.5 Retired Status

- On being granted retirement, a deacon is no longer obligated to participate in a formal assigned ministry.
- A deacon who has been granted retired status may volunteer for or be invited to perform specific, limited services which are appropriate to the Order of Deacon. This service is not limited to his former area of assignment.
- The retired deacon will be invited and encouraged to attend all Archdiocesan or local liturgical celebrations, and spiritual and educational opportunities that are available to active deacons by Archdiocesan policy.

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