

Argyll & The Isles Diocesan Synod, March 2013

Indaba Discussion on the Diaconate

Members of Diocesan Synod were asked to discuss in Indaba groups the paper on the Diaconate produced by the Diaconate Working Group of the Faith and Order Board.

Collator's Comments

The content of the flip charts are transcribed verbatim. There was clearly a rich and wide ranging discussion, in my view enabled at the outset by the acknowledgment of the limitations of the document itself and by the encouragement to focus on the relationship between discipleship and ministry. Typically, there are more questions than answers.

Emerging themes

That the diaconate be seen as social/pastoral, 'outward facing' rather than principally liturgical

Questioning of the real benefit of a permanent diaconate particularly in the A & T I context

Confusion of roles and functions

Interest in a diocesan-wide role going out to charges in training/encouraging capacity

That existing informal ministry needs more recognition

That A & T I leaders and members are already carrying out the tasks

The issue of 'calling' and vocation'

A divergence of view about the need for education i.e. some saying 'too much', others saying 'not enough'.

Table 2

Intrigued:

Difficult to distinguish transient/permanent deacons

What's the problem?

Surprised: apparent randomness of choice of e.g. lay leaders

Deacon has grace of office

Mistake to talk about distinctive diaconate

Underlying idea of service – a year is too short for someone heading for priesthood*

Also mistake to divorce lay readers/deacons

Does formalisation change anything? Benefit?

Diaconate at work? :Industrial chaplains; Work of GP, teachers

Table 3

How useful is a deacon in our setting? Could a priest or lay minister fill that role?

Calling – if someone called to that pastoral ministry, would that be helpful?

Deacon would not do much of liturgical tasks

'Disciples' trained to e.g. visiting

Is there an extra level of commitment?

Diocesan role –trainer/supporter or community based social/pastoral

Skills Bank

Table 4

Context is important

Geography of the diocese is important

Possible negative impact when you parachute in

Serve the bishop to serve specific needs

Recognition of people already out there

Could serve to meet the calling of people who want to serve but not as a priest

Table 5

Excite/Intrigue

Orthodox precedent – diaconate right way forward (policy)

Increasingly lay-led church (recognition) (Note: Franciscan –mutual support and prayer fellowship)

Deacons –geographical flexibility (designability)

Diaconate/lay leadership disambiguation (sic)

Diaconate part of ordained ministry (comment)

Much existing work of ministry already non-stipendiary particularly in this diocese (we need numbers of non-stipendiary)

Diaconate a role in itself or prob(ation?) for full priesthood?

A real role or just another name?

Community role (wider) for diaconate

Diaconate could be ideal route for those less suited to priesthood

DIACONATE:SERVING MINISTRY

PRIESTHOOD:SACRAMENTAL

Table 8

Support for idea of new diaconate

Recognise 3 streams:

Priests in training – mostly young

3rd age volunteers (mostly?)

- Some to work in liturgical roles
- Some ministering in outward mission

Barriers to entry

- Too much education
- Not enough recognition of life
- Skills of previous experience
- Not enough status

Education is putting people off

Solutions:

- Should wear dog collar/robes
- Should be responsible to local priest
- Should form a college supervised by bishop
- Use the resource of the third age

Questions re visible diaconate in a secular health & social service system?

Table ?

Response to report:

Wordy! Could be reduced. Meaning lost in length.

Question of stipend. Money comes from?

Why is this an issue? A lot of the church's time taken up with this.

Is this a more out-facing position within the church? Pastoral rather than theology.

Keep it simple.

What effect does this have on existing ordained whose work is mainly pastoral?

Is this strictly for ordination or is there room for a lay deacon? People in communities in this role already.

Table ?

Confusion over role/definition –world facing – liturgical

Lay leader/reader/chaplain –might they be called to this?

Feel poorly trained and supported

Deacon as world –facing minister who also distributes Holy Communion (e.g. Non-conf)
form of NSM

Vocation –ordination

Break sequential model (e.g. Methodists)

Eucharistic focus of SEC – perm(anent) diaconate helps? In Argyll & The Isles?

Table ?

Qu 1

Glad to see interest in this ministry

Concerned: SEC confused about titles/roles of laity; will people confuse the role of deacon

Pleased with idea of people going into the diocese to carry out social mission

Good solution to two problems:

- Lack of bodies
- Easier access –regarding vocation

Qu 2

- Priests/bishops remain deacons for ever
- Paper falls into trap of relegating it as ‘women’s work’

Qu 3

Understanding of ministry

- To attempt to be all things to all men, preaching the word of God
- Working for the Kingdom of God
- Tending to a flock; hospitality; healing; welcoming
- Serving and trying to live a Christ-like life
- To live the greatest commandment: to serve and love God

How does ministry relate to discipleship?

- Does not ministry fall naturally by grace and the Holy Spirit on discipleship?
- Discipleship is following Christ and learning to be like him: ministry is the work Christ ask(s) us to do
- One and the same: if you love Christ you will want to minister

What differentiates ordained ministry? - Organised religion.