

MINUTES OF THE 2ND MEETING OF DEACONS CALLED BY BISHOP DAVID BANNERMAN, BOARD ROOM,
DIOCESAN OFFICES, DIOCESE OF THE HIGHVELD, 03 AUGUST, 10H00 – 12H30.

Present: Deacons Barbara Morrison (Boksburg), Gwynne Lawlor (Wakkerstroom), Dunstan Manentsa (Wattville), Votile Mpipa (), Pieter Wesseloo (Springs).

Apologies: Deacon Phill Laurings (Cathedral), Bishop David Bannerman.

Absent: Deacon Lulama Ndebele (Thokoza)

Note: The meeting was originally scheduled for Distinctive Deacons only, there seemed to have been a lack of clarity in the notices sent, leading to some confusion, with the result that ... to the benefit of the outcome of the meeting – a transitional deacon (Rev. Votile Mpipe) joined the group. The Bishop was unavoidably detained and could not join the meeting. In the absence of the Bishop, there was no formal agenda. It was therefore agreed to discuss points raised both in the previous meeting and in the feedback report from Diakonia. Deacon Phill had been approached prior to the meeting for his feedback.

1. **The meeting was opened in prayer by Deacon Barbara Morrison at 10am.**
2. **Expression of thanks for Prayer support.** Deacon Gwynne Lawlor thanked her fellow deacons for their prayer support during her trip to Berlin. Deacon Dunstan suggested that we needed to pray for each other at all times.
3. **Feedback from Diakonia World Assembly, Berlin.** As the report on the Diakonia Assembly 2013 – “Healing and Wholeness for the World”, Berlin, had been sent to the Distinctive Deacons, it was decided to move on to a discussion on points raised in the report.
4. **Discussion**
Discussion centred on 5 points: 1. **diaconal ministry**, 2. **the role of the deacon** (including confusion within parishes and diocese about the liturgical role of the deacon), 3. **the composition of a body of deacons in our Diocese** and 4. **forming an Order of Deacons of the Highveld**, 5. **Outreach programmes and social responsibility and social justice programmes of our Diocese..**

4.1. Under point No. 1 of the report, the 4 “P’s” of **diaconal ministry** as the agents of Christ, resonated with the Highveld deacons: The priestly (as in intercessory prayer for the Church), pastoral, prophetic and professional (agents for change and transformation in our times) service to which deacons are called. The expression of ministry in these 4 aspects they acknowledged as being closely linked to the individual giftedness of the each deacon, an expression and celebration of the diversity of their servant vocation through and in Christ for the Church. Some deacons spoke about their own expression of ministry within their own parishes (pastoral, social outreach etc.)

4.2. The role of the deacon, and recognition of the role of deacon, specifically the liturgical role of the deacon was hotly debated. Issues experienced worldwide and reported in the feedback on Diakonia Berlin had resonated with the Highveld Deacons!

It would seem that this is one of the most contentious and painful issues for deacons in our Diocese. It became apparent that there was some recognition within the Diocese and across parishes of some aspects of this role, **but** no consensus. This leads to a fair amount of confusion and a sense of insecurity for the deacons regarding their role. The deacons believe that direction from the Bishop would be useful.

This then led to a thorough discussion of the diaconate within the Diocese and whether or not the transitional deacons should be part of a grouping of deacons within the Diocese. The consensus was that the transitional deacons **should** be part of such a grouping as a valuable part of their formation – needing to be **thoroughly and wholeheartedly diaconal** in their ministry before being ordained as priests. It was believed that if the office of deacon is treated as a “waiting room” for the priesthood, it devalues the office of the diaconate and has negative implications for **vocational deacons** in particular and the servant-ministry of the Church as a whole.

4.3. The composition of a body of deacons in our Diocese. The input of the transitional deacon (Votile) together with the views of the majority of distinctive deacons (Piet, Barbara, Dunstan) present, led to an agreement that a body of this nature be formed – consisting of transitional and distinctive (vocational) deacons, meetings to take place 3 – 4 times per year - if the Bishop so agrees. It was felt that the Warden of Deacons should be the Bishop of our Diocese.

4.4. Order of Deacons of the Highveld. There was agreement that an Order of Deacons of the Highveld be instituted – if the Bishop agrees. Should there be agreement to such an Order, it was agreed that Diakonia Worldwide and DRAE (Diakonia, Region Africa and Europe) be joined, which would carry an annual fee of 4 Euro per person (approx.. R50 per person per annum at current exchange rates). It was further agreed that to save on banking costs, this be paid for a period of 3 years in advance. The foundation document to be the pamphlet on Highveld Deacons as agreed upon after the last meeting. It was furthermore agreed to open an account through the Diocese to build up sufficient funds to send one delegate of this Order to Diakonia Worldwide every four years.

4.5 Outreach programmes, social responsibility and social justice programmes of Diocese. It was believed that these could be headed up by ordained deacons (e.g. HABSR, Siyalalela, etc.)

5. Conclusion of meeting. After ascertaining that the Bishop would not be able to join us, those present requested Deacon Gwynne to give feedback to Bishop David. The meeting was closed with the Grace at 12h30.