

24/8/2019

MINUTES OF REGIONAL MEETING OF THE REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF ANGLICAN DEACONS

The Chaplain of Highveld Deacons, Archdeacon Basil Matthews welcomed all present, especially the Wared and delegates from the Methodist Order of Deacons, and opened in prayer.

ATTENDANCE:

Chaplain of Highveld Deacons: Archdeacon Basil Matthews (Chairperson)

Deacons from Pretoria Diocese: M.K. Seomana, M. Maya.

Deacons from Christ the King Diocese: M. Swart, Beauty (Sesi), Sylvia Smith. A. Mosehla, J. Motlanjane, M.S. Dlamini, J. Ndugane.

Methodist Deacons: Warden of Deacons Douw Grobler and Ans Grobler, Quinton de Beer.

Deacons from Highveld Diocese: N. Dudula, E. Hlanyane, P. Wesseloo, G. Lawlor

APOLOGIES:

Deacon F. Takis (Swaziland. FOV Rachel Muller (Diocese of the Highveld).

Deacon B. Morrison

1. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING:

The Minutes were read and accepted. (Proposer Dcn P. Wesseloo, Secunder Dcn E. Hlanyane).

Matters arising from the Minutes included a brief discussion on Transitional vs Permanent Deacons (Para 4.).

2. OVERVIEW OF WHERE THE DIACONATE IS NOW IN ACSA AND IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

MOD SOUTHERN AFRICA: The Warden of MOD, Douw Grobler spoke on the history and development of the Methodist Order of Deacons, which started 124 years ago with the Order of Deaconesses. In their report to the Exco of DRAE for the Jubilee Conference, it was noted that the Order of Deacons has grown greatly in its diversity. It also noted that it has the potential to greatly increase the mission capacity of the church. The Methodist deacons do not bless the sacraments, nor do they baptize. However, many of them are stipendary.

The Methodist Deacons of Southern Africa have clarity on their ministry pathway: Ordination to Word and Sacrament (Presbyters) or Word and Service (Deacons). They have a much more stringent and well-defined path to ordination. Their preparation includes: Minimum of Nat. Dipl. In Theology, School of Vocation (3 x 3 day workshops), 4 year period of probation (practical training). There is also an Annual Deacons Convocation they attend.

Educational requirements for a Methodist deacon are the same as for a presbyter. Neither of the two ministers attend a seminary.

ACSA DEACONS: It was agreed that there was still no clear understanding of the role and function of the Permanent Deacon, that it is a constant and disempowering battle for identity, and a need to shift perceptions. Karl Jung was quoted: You need to tell people who you are Otherwise they will tell you!

However, in the last seven years some small and incremental gains had been made in restoring the diaconate in the Highveld Diocese and in ACSA. There had been 3 ACSA Conferences, supported by the Archbishop (in Dioceses of Grahamstown, Highveld, False Bay Diocese). The Permanent Diaconate has regained two places on PSC (Provincial Standing Committee) with a right to speak but not to vote, and one place on Provincial Synod. A Liaison Bishop (Bishop Charles May was appointed to oversight and to champion the Diaconate). A Motion was passed at the previous PSC to look into the diaconate and report back to the coming Synod, but nothing much appears to have been done.

The Anglican Deacons are still battling to find a foothold and to be recognized as a relevant and necessary vocation within the Anglican Communion of Southern Africa. Within some of the Dioceses the Permanent Diaconate is growing (Christ the King, False Bay, Grahamstown) in others it is diminishing (Highveld Diocese), in others it has recently disappeared entirely (Cape Town) and in most it has never really existed. Much work still needs to be done.

In all cases ACSA deacons are non-stipendary, and in some cases they do not even get financial assistance to cover their church or ministry related travelling costs.

There is still no consensus or guidelines on the training of deacons, or their preparation for ordination. Instead this appears to be piecemeal and dependent on local practice (in the parish) and in each individual Diocese. No minimum standards have been agreed upon.

3. ACSA PROVINCIAL CONFERENCES OF DEACONS, PAST AND FUTURE.

Past conferences, it was agreed, had been important in highlighting the gaps in understanding the distinctive ministry of the deacon. It also allowed for fellowship and support of deacons by deacons, as well as by priests and bishops. It was noted that the next ACSA Provincial Conference would be hosted by the Grahamstown deacons. Information would be sent out when plans are formalized. A verbal invitation was extended to the Methodist deacons present.

4. LINKS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS, MEMBERSHIP OF DIAKONIA/DRAE.

The Highveld Deacons are members of DRAE. A brief description of this inter-denominational organization was given.

Deacon Emily gave a brief power-point presentation report-back on her attendance at the 25th Jubilee Conference of DRAE in Scotland and on her role as voting member at DRAE Scotland.

The Methodist deacons are also members of DRAE.

Deacon Douw Grobler, Warden of Deacons of Methodist Church, also shared some insights, as did Dcn Gwynne Lawlor, who currently represents the members of Diakonia DRAE in this area (Tanzania to South Africa).

5. FEEDBACK ON ROLE OF DEACONS IN THE VARIOUS DIOCESES BY DEACONS FROM EACH DIOCESE.

In this discussion some incidents of exploitation of the Anglican deacons emerged, e.g.. Dcn E. Hlanyane (Highveld) noted that she served 4 priests and as a non-stipendary found herself often doing more than they did, and possibly more than a deacon was permitted to do. Some of the Highveld deacons spoke about being deliberately sidelined or actively excluded. In other cases their ministry was appreciated and used effectively. CtK deacons spoke about tensions between priest and deacons, but that the working relationship improved with greater clarity. They mentioned incidents of intimidation and the Chair gave a description of his own diaconate and discussed the problem of exploitation. He wondered whether the Bishops were aware of this exploitation of deacons in their Dioceses and said we would need to reflect on this.

6. CURRENT DIACONAL MINISTRIES IN THE VARIOUS DIOCESES AND DENOMINATIONS

Those present reported on how they exercised their ministry in a variety of ways. The Anglicans were more involved with liturgical ministry and all of them were non-stipendary thus limiting the amount of time and resources they had at their disposal. The Methodists were involved with church work, as well as outreach and service, and were able to achieve a considerable amount as diaconal work in the Methodist Church is remunerated. Both denominations reported being given opportunities to preach in their churches.

Dcn Quinton de Kock (MOD Benoni) spoke about his work with the unemployed, disciple-ing them and equipping them with small business skills (140 people from Benoni to Swaziland), thus addressing the unemployment rate, linking it to what it means to live out our faith. By partnering with business economic empowerment is made possible. He oversees an aftercare centre in Etwatwa consisting of 50 staff and 350 children. Extramural activities and mentorship is run by volunteers. A gym programme (9 children qualified), a Marimba ministry in which the group came 2nd in a concert, work with addicts and their families in Malawi, where support groups were started and solidified, as well as partnering with another organization offering a mad-message children's ministry, are all part of his work.

Dcn Mankopane Seomana, Anglican Deacon in the Pretoria Diocese, is newly ordained. She assists at Eucharist, is Sacristan, prepares candidates for baptism and confirmation, is chaplain to one of the guilds (St Agnes), and distributes food and clothing on a monthly basis to the needy. She is non-stipendary.

Dcn Minnie Swartz ministers in a CuC Church. Three denominations have taken it in turn to lead the congregation (Presbyterian from 1981, Anglican from 1984, Methodist from 1992 ... they now have 2 ministers). The emphasis here is on accepting differences and celebrating similarities – Unity – One Body. She helps the minister, and sometimes conducts Communion Services with the pre-sanctified. In outreach their community has partnered with Helping Hand.

Dcn Alice Mohsehla (Anglican – Christ the King Diocese) related well to what Dcn Hlanyane had shared. She has a multiple ministry and spoke about 16 days of activism and the candle light services.

Dcn Pieter Wesseloo (Anglican- Springs) is fully engaged with liturgical and training duties in his church. He also is involved with Kwasa school, where 300 meals a day are provided, and homes for boys and girls.

Concerns were raised about discord between layministers and deacons, because of lack of clarity of duties and responsibilities. It was noted that “good” Lay ministers are often coerced into ordained ministry. Sometimes they then became “bad” or inadequate priests. There seemed to be little emphasis on what God was calling a person to do with their lives and little assistance in discerning their vocation – clerical or lay. The focus currently in some of the dioceses of ACSA seemed on the sacramental and not on a missional vocation.

7. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON WAY FORWARD FOR BUILDING STRONG DIACONATES AND FEEDBACK TO PLENIARY

CUC LINK: The option of Anglican and Method deacons joining forces under the banner of CuC (Church Union Commission) was mooted. The Warden of the Methodist Deacons had already broached the idea

with leaders of the Methodist Church and had been given the verbal go-ahead. The Anglican deacons would pursue this through decision-making bodies in Dioceses and Province (Provincial Synod?). This would make sense because both denominations minister in similar geographic areas.

This would open up a whole field of missional opportunities because of an outward focus.

WAY FORWARD TO GROW THE DIACONATE IN ACSA

For such a time as this: It is time now to be a deacon and we must never give up, remembering 2 Cor: 4 We need:

- To seek agreement on minimum standards of discernment, training and formation of deacons in the Province (N.B. This was raised at the last regional meeting, taken to PSC and this has still not been attended to.).
- Greater clarity on role and function of permanent deacons in the Anglican Communion of SA and work towards part-time remunerated employment
- To look at a 4 year period of formation and training similar to Methodist Church

For example: 1. Discernment process (FOV 1 year), 2. A formational process (4 year candidature). 2. A theoretical component, e.g. diploma in ministry (Theology, yes, but also practical subjects such as project management, leadership training, counselling, community skills etc. and presentation, interpersonal and preaching skills. Of utmost importance is familiarity with technology). 1 year of probation before ordination.

8. WHAT NEEDS TO BE TAKEN TO PROVINCIAL SYNOD.

A follow up needs to be made on the Motion passed at 2018 PSC, relating to the diaconate. (Bishop Dino Gariel/ Fr Keith Griffiths) Has anything transpired in this respect? To be followed up by Dcn G. Lawlor. After which some of the points raised under vocational training for deacons could be pursued.

Deacons, newcomers and visitors were thanked and the meeting ended with the Grace.
P.S. The report presented on CuC by Deacon Minnie Swart will be forwarded separately).