

ACSA FELLOWSHIP OF DEACONS - SEP 2019 – JUNE 2020

OFFICE BEARERS:

Chairperson: (Convener of ACSA deacons) Deacon Gwynne Lawlor - Highveld

Vice-Chairperson: Deacon Joan Jones – False Bay

Secretary: -

Treasurer: Deacon Pieter Wesseloo - Highveld

AIMS / VISION:

To grow the diaconate in all the dioceses of ACSA and to enable the deacons to encourage the church universal in word and by example to exercise their calling to meet the needs of the social environments in which each member of the body of Christ has been called to serve.

What are the 5 most important points your organization would want to share with ACSA?

The Fellowship of Deacons exists to give support to deacons and to promote the restoration and growth of the Diaconate as a distinctive vocation (a vocation in its own right) of word and service.

The Fellowship believes that:

1. Throughout ACSA there should be standards of education in place and competencies for diaconal ministry recognized before individual believers are recommended to the Diocesan discernment processes as deacons.
2. That FOVs should draw attention to the distinctive vocation of deacons.
3. That those discerned for ordination should be given clear information as to whether the discernment is to the priesthood or diaconate before selection process (e.g. Board of Ministry).
4. That these roles of deacons and priest need to be clearly articulated, agreed to and made available to clergy and laity in all Dioceses and their parishes.

NOTE: These points have not changed since the ACSA Fellowship of Deacons Report was submitted to Provincial Synod last year and to PSC the year before. Other than in three or four dioceses, there has been very little done so far to achieve these points.

What would you describe as 5 challenges or opportunities that your organization would want to share with ACSA?

1. The Diaconate presents an opportunity to expand the mission of the Church in the world, for such a time as this, especially during and post Covid-19.
2. The Diaconate is still seen merely as a stepping stone to the priesthood rather than a distinctive vocation in its own right in most dioceses of ACSA.
3. While deacons should recognize and embrace their role relative to the role of the priest within the overall ministry of the Church, some bishops and priests still appear reluctant to engage with the revitalization of the distinctive diaconate.
4. Educational requirements of deacons need to be in line with requirements for their specific ministry in the world to the Church scattered on behalf of the Church gathered.
5. Since Provincial Synod, when Bishop E. Daniels was appointed to take over from the

Commission appointed at the previous Provincial Standing Committee (Sept 2018), work has started to investigate the ministry of the permanent diaconate.

The terms of reference decided upon are as follows: 1. The Office of Deacon. 2. The Ministry of the Deacon. 3. The Vocation of the Deacon. 4. The Formation of the deacon. A meeting was held with Liaison Bishop of Deacons (Bishop Charles May) and with Bishop E. Daniels. There is as yet nothing to report back to Provincial Standing Committee.

PROJECTS:

1. Restoration of ACSA Diaconate through ACSA Conferences for Deacons every second year, Regional Meetings of Deacons in interim years, and Encouragement of Diocesan fellowships is ongoing but has had varying degrees of success.

2. A successful Regional Meeting was held in September 2019 with the Pretoria, Highveld, Pretoria and Christ the King diocesan deacons. Guests invited included the Methodist deacons in this region. The possibility of working interdenominationally on projects was discussed.

3. Wider Regional representation: Ongoing interaction with other diaconal organizations interdenominationally through DIAKONIA- DRAE (Region Africa Europe):

An ACSA deacon from the Diocese of the Highveld continues to represent Methodist, Lutheran and Anglican deacons of Region 6 (Tanzania to South Africa including Madagascar) on the regional board of the international organization of DIAKONIA World. Due to Covid-19 restraints, the Exco meeting of Diakonia Region Africa Europe, scheduled for July 2020 has been cancelled. Instead, a virtual Exco meeting will be held on 09 July, 2020. The ACSA deacons were represented at the Jubilee Conference of DRAE, in Scotland by a Highveld deacon, July 2019.

4. International Representation: It is planned, Covid-19 permitting, to send an ACSA deacon to Australia to the DIAKONIA World 2021 through own funding and funds raised by the ACSA deacons. In the past ACSA deacons were sent to Berlin (2013), Chicago (2017) through own funding, funds raised by the fellowship concerned and requests for funding from DIAKONIA. Information gleaned at these Conferences on ministry of deacons is fed back to ACSA deacons at diocesan, regional and provincial deacons meetings and conferences.

MEETINGS/ EVENTS:

A.G.M: Our previous AGM was at the Provincial Conference of ACSA deacons in 2018. Our next bi-annual provincial Conference is planned for 24-27 November 2020, at St Pius Retreat Centre in East London. It may not be able to take place due to Covid-19. The possibility of a virtual conference is being explored.

Regional and Diocesan Deacons meetings have been suspended for now.

Major Services/ Events: *None recorded.* Renewal of Ordination Vows which normally takes place on Maundy Thursday in the Diocese of the Highveld could not take place due to Covid-19 lockdown. This will have affected the other diaconates in other dioceses too.

FINANCIAL: ACSA Deacons Fellowship Account (Diocesan fellowships encouraged to start own accounts – at this stage, Deacon fellowship contributions currently are made only by Highveld Diocese).

Current Balance: R 14 731.38*	Expenses: See explanation.
Subscriptions: discuss at next AGM	Project 1: currently self-funded
Fundraising: n/a	Project 2: currently self-funded
Donations: n/a	Project 3: funded by DRAE and deacons
Other:	Project 4: funded by DIAKONIA and deacons
* Balance acquired after expenses of ACSA Deacons conferences (2015, 2016 and 2018) offset against registration fees received.	
Other Expenses: R N/A	
Travelling: paid for by dioceses or self-funded	
Admin: Supported by individual diocese	
DRAE and DIAKONIA World fees currently paid by Highveld Deacons.	

COVID-19
<p>1. How is Covid-19 impacting on the Order of Deacons: The inability to meet every three months in the Diocese of the Highveld has meant that we have been unable to connect as a group to discuss issues common to us, and support each other. Each deacon is operating independently of the others. <i>This may apply to other dioceses too.</i> <i>Also, there have been no new distinctive deacons ordained this year so far.</i></p>
<p>2. What ministry is taking place during lockdown : This differs from diocese to diocese, parish to parish and from deacon to deacon: Assisting with food parcel distribution, soup kitchens, clothing and blanket distribution (with necessary permits and protective clothing); counselling via phone, cellphone, or WhatsApp video or zoom; composing and sending out daily lockdown homilies (Natal deacon); keeping contact via WhatsApp and other social media with youth organizations, lay-ministers and parishioners. Recording Sunday services, or showing them live on social media. Spiritual Direction using various platforms. Delivering PPEs on behalf of the diocese, etc. Connecting with other church ministers on issues such as planning for Woman’s day and GBV issues. Helping with Parish administration issues and updating parish records. A ministry common to all deacons is that of ongoing intercessory and meditative prayer.</p>
<p>3. Future plans post Covid-19 There is a sense of new beginnings post Covid-19. Although our future plans have not changed from those proposed to previous PSC and Provincial Synods, they have become much more relevant because of our experience of Covid-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To grow, strengthen and promote the diaconate in all dioceses of the Anglican Communion of South Africa through talks and workshops and to engage with our bishops to rekindle the special relationship historically enjoyed between a Bishop and his Deacons to be the face of the Church to the people scattered. • To exercise the deacons ministry of being the helping hand of the Church to the people in need in every parish and diocese of ACSA, where deacons are present and active: • To explore other Provincial initiatives with obvious links to diaconal ministry (e.g. Grow the Church, Church Unity Commission, Green Anglicans etc.) where a sense of a vocation to the diaconate may arise in those engaged in these ministries, be recognized and referred, or engaged to work interdenominationally.

- To initiate and explore denominational and interdenominational links in this way between deacons of different dioceses and of different denominations, so that we may support each other in diaconal ministry and learn from one another.as we seek to exercise our servant leadership calling to promote outreach by the churches in line with the Great Commission – the ministry of all believers.