



LETTER OF AGREEMENT FOR A DEACON THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL GULF COAST

A vocational deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Church to be a model of Christ's servant ministry for all people. As agents of God's compassion and reconciling grace, deacons are missionaries to the world and messengers to the Church of the world's needs, hopes and concerns. Deacons are living symbols of Christ's presence as they embody Christ's servant ministry and point to the presence of Christ in those they serve

The Right Reverend J. Russell Kendrick, Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, and The Rev. _____, [Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge] of _____ Church in _____ agree to the appointment of The Reverend Deacon _____ to serve in said church as a Deacon and subject to the terms set forth in this Letter of Agreement. The term of this agreement shall be valid from ____/____/____ (m/yr) to ____/____/____ (m/yr) after which time, it may be renewed. However, the Bishop may end the assignment at any time. For special circumstances, other leave may be arranged. Such leave shall be authorized by the Bishop in consultation with the Deacon and the priest in charge.

The Deacon accepts the following principles of Diocesan ministry:

- 1) All ministries of the Diocese are exercised under the oversight and care of the Bishop, with the assistance of presbyters and others. The Deacon serves directly under the Bishop.
- 2) All ministries within the church are exercised under the authority of the priest in charge.
- 3) The fundamental ministry of the Deacon is to hold before the Church, the character of the whole ministry of the Church as service and of its ministers, lay and ordained, as servants.
- 4) The ministry of the Deacon includes working in harmony with others in the Diocese and in the local church, especially with the Bishop and local clergy, lending support and seeking always to build up the whole body of Christ.
- 5) Street clothing is considered normative for Deacons. Deacons may wear clerical attire in appropriate liturgical, clinical and pastoral settings.
- 6) In written address, the Deacon shall use The Reverend Deacon N.N. and in speech, Deacon N. shall be the proper address.
- 7) The role of a Deacon in the governance of the church is determined by the Ordinal, Constitution, and Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Deacons have seat and voice at the Diocesan Convention. Deacons may serve on Diocesan commissions and committees.

PARTICIPATION IN LITURGY

The Deacon agrees to participate on a regular basis in the roles and functions appropriate to a Deacon and to assist in the liturgies assigned for Deacons in the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer.

- a. At the Great Vigil, carry the Paschal candle and chant the Exultet (the Deacon's prerogative, BCP 284)
- b. Read the Gospel at celebrations of The Holy Eucharist (BCP 354)
- c. Prepare the table for Holy Eucharist and place on it the gifts of bread and wine (BCP 354, 407)
- d. Announce the Dismissal.
- e. Rubrical preference for the Deacon to call the people to confession and prayer (BCP 360)
- f. Water portion of Holy Baptism is a local church option (BCP 307)

- g. The Deacon may occasionally preach, but only at the invitation of the priest in charge and the approval of the Bishop.
- h. It is appropriate for the Deacon to lead Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer Compline, or other offices of the church. This includes doing so at the main service [s] on Sunday if requested to do so by the priest-in-charge.
- i. The Deacon may lead the Reconciliation of the Penitent using the same form as laity.
- j. It is appropriate for the Deacon to lead the *Ministration to the Sick* or the *Ministration at the Time of Death*.
- k. The Deacon may not preside at a marriage. At the request of the priest-in-charge, the Deacon may participate in the service: Deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, and read the Gospel
- l. The Deacon may, at the request of the priest in charge, officiate at a funeral.
- m. Any liturgy not associated within the context of the church assigned must be approved by the Bishop.
- n. The Constitution and Canons of the Church make provision for deacons to preside at certain liturgies in the absence of a bishop or priest. The rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer make clear that these functions of presidency can be done only with the permission of the bishop. In the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, the *written* permission of the Bishop is required.
 1. Celebration of Holy Eucharist and Distribution of Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament
 2. Marriages
- o. Other Liturgical Duties agreed to by the Deacon and the priest in charge [describe below]:

OTHER DUTIES IN THE CHURCH

The Deacon expects to devote _____ hours a week working within the parish including his or her work with the following groups or committees: [*Duties may or may not include pastoral care including visitation of the sick, oversight of the Eucharistic Visitors, etc.*]

Duties:

At the discretion of the priest in charge, the Deacon may be given seat and voice at Vestry meetings.

Problems arising that affect the welfare of the congregation and known to the Deacon are to be brought to the attention of the priest in charge, and the counsel/advice of the priest are to be followed. If a deacon is unable to follow such advice, the problem is to be taken to the Bishop whose advice the Deacon is to follow.

MINISTRY OF THE DEACON OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

The Deacon shall bring the needs, hopes, concerns of the world to the Church, serving all people, particularly the poor, the weak and the lonely. It is expected that the Deacon has a ministry to such people that is identified as part of their congregational responsibilities. This work may include assignments made by the bishop.

Name of Ministry

Location

Supervisor

PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY OF DEACONS

The Deacon shall participate actively in the community of Deacons of the Diocese and shall annually attend clergy events as possible. The Deacon's presence at the Diocesan Convention is expected.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Deacon agrees to participate in continuing education annually as required by the canons of The Episcopal Church. (Title III, Canon 7, section 5). Participation in Clergy Conference and other study days offer opportunities for meeting continuing education obligations.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Deacon will submit a written report and evaluation of his or her ministry annually in November to the diocesan bishop (Title III, Canon 7, section 4b). The report will be received by the Bishop and a copy will be provided by the Deacon to the priest in charge of the congregation to which the Deacon is assigned.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE BISHOP

The Deacon agrees to bring to the Bishop's attention conflicts, concerns, disappointments or changes in life circumstances that interfere significantly with his or her ministry as a deacon. When a problem arises and it cannot be addressed in community or requires immediate individual attention, the Deacon should schedule a meeting with the Bishop.

SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE DEACON BY THE CHURCH

Although the work ministry of a Deacon is non-stipendiary, the church entering into this letter of agreement with the Deacon agrees to provide the following support for his or her ministry:

- 1) Continuing education support at a level agreed upon by the Deacon and vestry.
- 2) Support for attending annual Diocesan Convention.
- 3) Travel reimbursement at a rate agreed upon by the vestry for work associated with the church ministry.
- 4) Establishment of a Deacon's Discretionary Fund.
- 5) Vacation of four weeks annually.

Since a Deacon's ministry is always discretionary, a formal rite for the celebration of new ministry is not appropriate; however, some liturgical recognition of the beginning and ending of a deacon's work in the life of a congregation is important.

REVIEW OF MINISTRY

The Deacon shall hold a mutual review of ministry annually with the supervising priest in charge. The purpose of this meeting is to bring clarity to the Deacon's vision of her or his ministry; to clarify expectations on all sides: to put future conflicts in manageable form; to establish written goals for the Deacon's work for the coming year, and to revise as appropriate this letter of agreement. Problems that cannot be addressed through this review process should be brought to the attention of the Bishop

RESIGNATION AT AGE 72

In compliance with the canons of The Episcopal Church, a deacon who reaches the age of 72 while this agreement is in force must submit his or her resignation to the Bishop. The Bishop may request the Deacon to execute a letter of agreement, but the term of that agreement may be no more than one year.

TERMS FOR THE EXPIRATION AND RENEWAL OF THIS AGREEMENT

When this agreement expires, the Deacon is expected to enter into a new agreement after consultation with the Bishop and the priest in charge. The agreement automatically expires when the priest in charge of the assigned congregation resigns or leaves. A Deacon who wishes to continue functioning liturgically, must execute an interim agreement. The agreement may be amended at any time by the mutual consent of the Bishop and Deacon, after consultation with the priest in charge or such other persons whose work is affected. Also, a change of assignment can be initiated by the Bishop or requested by the Deacon, priest in charge or other supervisor at any time.

Date: _____

SIGNATURES:

_____ Bishop of the Central Gulf Coast

_____ Deacon

_____ Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge

_____ Senior Warden

Note: Copies of this agreement are distributed to:
Diocesan Bishop (permanent file)
Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge of the congregation
Deacon
Senior Warden of the Vestry