**Section 1, Preface**

Baptismal Ministry and Ordered Ministries

Baptism is incorporation into the Body of Christ and as such is a sign of our participation in God’s reign of peace and justice that is already breaking into the world. It is the bringing into being of the people of God, whose mandate is to share in God’s mission of reconciliation in the places where we live, proclaiming and living the good news given by God in Christ.

In Anglicanism and in wider ecumenical circles, there has been growing recognition of the centrality of Baptism as the core of our Christian identity and the basis for our action in the world. The basic ministry of every baptized person is to be found in the baptismal covenant: (1) to continue faithfully in the worship and faith of the Christian community; (2) to resist evil and be ready to repent and return to that community; (3) to proclaim the gospel in word and deed; (4) to seek and serve Christ in all persons; and (5) to do justice, seek peace, and respect every human being. Recently a sixth has been added, (6) to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation, and to respect, sustain and renew the life of the earth.

This basic ministry of the baptized is also the basic ministry of the ordained, lived out in whatever life situation we find ourselves—family, work, daily relationships and activities. Christian ministry is further exercised within the church – in its life of worship, community building and mutual support, spiritual growth and education; and in service in the world—through proclamation of the good news; through service and care where special needs exist, through witness and social change where unjust structures cause harm to people or fail to meet their needs.

All Christians naturally are involved in ministry in their life situation. Some are called and gifted to ministries within the life of the church, relating to worship, education, spiritual growth, community building, and pastoral care. Others are gifted and called to ministries in the world through witness and acts of service, as well as through involvement in shaping the society in which we live.

Through Baptism, the ministry of priesthood, of *episcope,* and of *diakonia* is conferred on all members of the Body of Christ, the Church. The whole community of the baptized is called to proclaim the good news of God in Jesus Christ, to administer the sacraments, and to care for the people of God. The whole community of the baptized is called to preserve faith, order, discipline and unity. And the whole community of the baptized is called to be agents of God’s mercy, healing and justice in the Church and the world. The sacrament of ordination confers specific ministry on some. The various offices and ministries of the threefold Order of bishop, priest, and deacon are for us icons of Christ the High Priest and Servant, signifying to the People of God the ministries in which we all share through baptism.

Ordination is the church’s way of authorizing a person for leadership within the life of the church and in service to the world through selection with prayer and the laying on of hands. The language of “leadership” is recent. In earlier days it was called “ministry,” but the function is similar. Those who lead are persons who bring focus to the life of a community, who initiate and manage its common activities. From their earliest roots, orders of ministry have also been given symbolic and organizational meaning. Through time and usage they have taken on sacramental significance. In this way, priests or presbyters are signs of the church’s gathered, worshipping life, bishops are signs of the church’s catholicity and unity, and deacons are signs of its lively presence in the world, especially where people are suffering or at risk.

All Christians at baptism are called to priesthood, to live together in reconciled communion, to name the presence of grace and the cross in God’s world, to point to God’s transfiguring power, calling attention to the holy in what is ordinary and what is exceptional alike. Some are called, equipped, and ordained to embody priesthood as *presbyteroi* (elders), serving the gathered community, “caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor”, engaging them in eucharistic worship, in community life and learning, in prayer and spiritual growth. As such, they serve as icons of Christ, inviting us into the holiness of God.

All Christians at baptism are called to *episcope*, to strive for unity with one another, to attend to and communicate the Story of God in scripture and tradition. Our episcopal ministry is to ensure order among the ministries we share with others, to be stewards of the talent and treasure given us by grace, to study and learn from the teachings that have been handed down through Scripture and tradition, to participate in the good governance of our gathered life. Some are called, equipped, and ordained to embody *episcope* as bishops, to seek unity, to engage in the study and teaching of Scripture and tradition, to ensure good order and pastoral care within the diocese for the sake of God’s mission. As such, they serve as icons of Christ, inviting us into the fullness of the living Body of Christ.

All Christians at baptism are called to *diakonia*, to bring the light of Christ where there is darkness, to recognize and respond to situations of injustice and need, to organize and distribute resources for their remedy, to bring the brokenness and hunger of the world to the attention of the faithful for prayer and nurture and healing. Our diaconal ministry is to serve, to proclaim the gospel by our words and in our lives, to seek a preferential standpoint with those who are poor or vulnerable. Some are called, equipped, and ordained to embody *diakonia* as deacons, to exemplify to the faithful what it is “to serve all people, especially the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely”. As such, they serve as icons of Christ, inviting us into proclamation and service of the Gospel for the sake of the world.

The Diaconate – The Church’s Icon of Christ’s Service

The Order of Deacon is of New Testament and Apostolic origin. The Book of Acts contains what has traditionally been seen as the institution of the diaconate in the selection and appointment of “the seven” through prayer and the laying on of hands for service and distribution of food among widows in the community. The letter of Paul to the Philippians and to Timothy refer to deacons as officers alongside bishops in the life of the emerging Church. Deacons became important figures in the administrative life of the Church, often acting as the chief administrating officer to bishops and in particular in overseeing the temporalities of the Church.

In the Middle Ages the use and the influence of the office of Deacon was diminished as many of the roles and functions of deacons were taken over by presbyters or members of the minor orders (e.g. lectors or acolytes). During the English Reformation, the major orders of bishop, priest and deacon were retained while the minor orders were eliminated. Unlike the Eastern Churches, which preserved the Order of Deacon, the diaconate continued in the West as a transitional order in preparation for the priesthood. While Anglicanism claimed to continue the historic threefold orders of the Church Catholic, it was not until the 20th Century that it gave serious consideration to the redevelopment of the diaconate as a permanent and distinct Order of ministry.

The redevelopment of the Diaconate has recalled the Church to a fuller and more vital expression of its ministry as agents of mercy, healing and justice in the world, especially among those living at the margins of systems and society, restoring the image of Christ who came “to bring good news to the poor”. Women and men called to this ministry of sacramental presence in the world serve as a reminder to the People of God that all are likewise called to follow Christ’s example of *diakonia*.

Ordination as a deacon is an affirmation by the church that an individual is being called to this distinctive ministry of service and agency, gifted and equipped to inspire and mobilize others into ministries of service, healing and justice. They become sacramental signs of the presence of Christ in places of need and risk and vulnerability, in the faces of strangers and friends alike.

The diaconate has biblical and apostolic origins that pre-date the presbyterate. The essence of *diakonia* has continued throughout history and across denominational lines in different forms but with a consistent thread of identity that combines notions of both authority and marginality, of both service and agency, especially arising from the edges of systems and institutions. The paradoxical position of deacons at the edge and centre of the church’s leadership can be seen in their role of service in response to needs within and beyond the local community, as Christian educators, welcoming “outsiders” (strangers, seekers, newcomers, candidates for baptism) and bringing them into the faith community, and as caregivers, especially to those who are isolated from community life by illness, poverty, or injustice.

Ministries of service are being done by God’s people whether or not there are deacons, just as ministries of oversight, teaching, and unity are being done whether or not there are bishops. But a full and vital diaconate along with a full and vital priesthood and episcopate gives completeness to our common life in Christ.

Ordination to the diaconate is recognition by the community that a person is gifted, called, and prepared for a distinctive, sacramental ministry. Diaconal ordination is not an honour bestowed on faithful laity but is consecration to a distinctive ministry. Formation, education, and training are necessary both in preparation, and for lifelong growth in ministry. The competencies that are proposed in this Report are intended to be a guide for the church to discern the gifts of a person called to the diaconate, and equip and form them with the knowledge and skills they will need to minister effectively.