



## Anglican Deacons Canada 2021 Conference

July 9<sup>th</sup> -July 10<sup>th</sup>

This was a historic conference.

It was our first virtual conference. It was the first time we were privileged to be able to welcome Lutheran Deacons from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and their National Bishop, the Reverend Susan Johnson to our gathering. We officially changed our name from the Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada (AADC) to Anglican Deacons Canada (ADC).

The conference theme: “Deacons in a Pandemic and its Aftermath” touched the reality of those who attended. The conference was planned and ably hosted by the College of Deacons in the Diocese of Niagara with some assistance from the board of ADC and Lutheran Deacon Scott Knarr.

The unique relationship between Deacons and Bishops was highlighted by the presence of the Anglican Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, the ELCIC National Bishop Rev. Susan Johnson, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Niagara, the Right Reverend Susan Bell.

Archbishop Linda gave the keynote address. It was passionate and challenging. She said the narrative some might still hold about the church and its historic relationship with political and social prestige is no longer true. We are a small church that is called to live into a time of diakonia. The primate noted that with the renewal of the diaconate and the unequivocal statement from the Lambeth conference of 1968 that the diaconate was no longer considered an “inferior order”, Deacons have been preparing for and growing into what the church needs now. She said this had been preparation for this liminal time in the church.

“We are and will be a church without influence and need to shed the millstone of colonial structures”. While deacons call the church to attention, this is also a time which calls for “a new and deepened servanthood of all.” She warned such servanthood is costly.

We need to ask questions: who is missing, whose voices are not heard, who have we not listened to? This discernment requires deep humility. It is a time of listening critically to the world and the church. The primate used the image of the Deacon as a foot in the door, pushing open and calling the faithful into service. The deacon, she said, observes, notices and names the disparities, the needs. “This is your moment. You must be our guide.” Her words were mirrored in the reflections of Bishop Susan Bell and Bishop Susan Johnson. Bishop Bell noted the work of Deacons is a work of knowing and relationship building. It is the work of building trust. ELCIC Bishop Susan Johnson referred to the work done in the Lutheran church and the changes in language concerning deacons. She reminded us that all the baptised are called to “diakonia” through their baptism. Deacons are to lead and work to ensure the gospel is heard as good news. Deacons are living bridges. She also spoke of the desire in the ELCIC to “flatten the ministry of all in orders.”

Ted Dodd, president of Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC) shared information on the work of DOTAC through a brief presentation.

Tracie Middleton, the president of the Association of Episcopal Deacons (AED) brought greetings from the association to the gathering. Tracie is an ex officio member of the board of ADC a reciprocal role shared with the president of ADC.

Webinars followed up on the challenge of the Primate to listen for the unheard voices, to ask who is missing, and what erroneous assumptions are we making. From conversations on indigenous truth and reconciliation to prejudice and inequality and migrant farm workers. Each presentation challenged us to consider our own perspectives and assumptions that get in the way of listening and appropriate action.

There were three services of worship and an introduction to centering prayer. The first one was offered by the planning team from the Diocese of Niagara. We had an opportunity to re-engage with the practice of centring prayer. The second was from the Lutheran Deacons. It included the reflections of two deacons who shared stories of their ministries through the pandemic. One spoke movingly of her work in Long Term Care where so many contracted and died of Covid 19. The other spoke of the ways they found to continue social justice ministry during lockdown.

The third was the closing liturgy. It has been tradition this service would be a eucharist in the diocesan cathedral. The incoming president of ADC would deliver the homily. This time we had a service of evening prayer where the new president Lisa Chisholm-Smith preached. We prayed and listened to the very clear call of diakonia in this very different time.

The service ended with a new worship song video; "We seek your Kingdom" [https://youtu.be/vS\\_fCJJvVOY](https://youtu.be/vS_fCJJvVOY)  
May we too embrace our calling to Transform, Revive and Heal society!

Further information may be found at: [www.anglicandeacons.ca](http://www.anglicandeacons.ca)