

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be always acceptable to you, O Lord. Please be seated.

A calling, in the context of the Christian church's understanding is the belief that God has a specific purpose or assignment or task for an individual's life. Individuals may have a calling to serve God in a specific way, but collectively, we are all called as baptized Christians to be the hands and feet of Christ on earth. We are all called to the royal priesthood to bring people to Christ by our own example and partake in his redemptive work in the world. The worldwide Anglican Communion is considered an ecclesiastical church.

We have bishops, priests, and deacons and each of these holy orders are full and equal to each other but they fit into the church's hierarchy in different ways. In the early days of the church there were only Bishops. Most had hands laid on them by the Apostles. They in turn laid hands on more bishops etc. But as the church grew, the bishops had large areas to cover and so the order of deacon was created to perform diakonia. Diakonia is a Greek word meaning to serve and it is the root of the word deacon. Deacons were and still are today, called to help the bishop look after the poor, widows, and foreigners.

Remember no social structures existed like we have today. Also to care for the sick and generally assist the bishop any way they could. Hands were laid on the deacons and they were ordained to their ministry of service to God's people. A deacon is called by God in today's understanding to bring the church to the world and bring the needs of the world back to the church to see how we can help. All of us here today are the church. Not the building but the body of Christ. church. We are the church. Two weeks ago on the Sunday of the Baptism of Jesus, Rev. Diana had us renew our Baptismal vows or covenant.

When we answered each question, we made a promise to God that we would live out those promises in our daily life. Three of those promises each of us made are as follows:

- 1). Will you proclaim by word and example, the good news of God in Christ.
- 2). Will you seek to serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself.
- 3) Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Our response to those three questions was: I will with God's help. And we do need God's help as we are unable to do these things asked of us on our own. Each of these promises describe the word diakonia that I just mentioned. It is taking the divine love that comes to us from the Father and sharing it with the rest of the world as we are required to do in loving our neighbour as ourselves.

While it is all of our responsibility to do this work, some are called to do it in the context of the ordained ministry of deacon, I feel I have a call to do this. I have felt this calling for a few years - to reach beyond lay ministry. A specific calling like this is hard to put into words and difficult to explain. I have put myself forward to the diocese to follow this calling. I have had many conversations with God over this, in particular why at this time of my life, but ignoring this is not an option. He, God, and He alone knows what years I have left and each of us are to live day to day. This is a process with the diocese which can take a couple of years, as nothing happens overnight. There are many steps along the road and no guarantee of ordination. Ultimately Bishop Todd will make the decision.

This is not a call to be a transition deacon who moves on to the priesthood in six months. This is a call to be a vocational or perpetual deacon. A calling is not limited to those who seek ordained ministry. We are

all called to fulfil our baptismal covenant as I have said. You have all been called to be here today. Some are called to a music ministry, some to readers or intercessors or communion assistants. Or to be greeters, the first people one sees when entering the church and that impression a person has may determine if they come back again. Every ministry is important and of great value. Some of you are called to work in the Community Closet or help out at a food bank or set up for the coffee hour. A deacon in a church does not take over all these ministries, but they are to lead, excite, and encourage all members of a congregation to seek their own personal ministry as well as assisting in current outreach and working with the priest and congregation to establish other ministries.

Deacons may preach, assist with or lead bible studies and prayer groups. A deacon may hear of a need for hungry kids at the high school and bring that back to the church to see how we as a collective body can help. A deacon will read the gospel and set up the table for communion and clean up after. A servant's role. That is what diakonia is. They may help clergy with pastoral visits if that is their calling.

This is all about receiving that divine love from God and doing something about the needs around us. As I pursue this, I need the support of my congregation. At some point in this journey, a motion will be made at a vestry. And if passed, a letter will be sent to the bishop's office saying that I am being upheld by the people of St. James. I will likely be sent on an internship to another nearby parish for a period of three months, and they too will have to give their approval. There will be interviews with the Deacon's board and the bishop and the candidate will be given a spiritual chaplain to help guide them along the way. But most of all I need your prayers for me and my family because ordained ministry will affect them as well.

Two of my passions are prayer and food insecurity. I want to encouraging others to pray and learn about prayer. Prayer is not just for Sunday at church. Food security is also very important and no one in this community should ever be hungry. Perhaps my specific ministry will develop from those areas. We shall see how God roles out our individual and corporate ministries. As I said a calling to specific ministry is not easy to explain, I just know it is there. I look forward to this journey and what will be the direction it takes.

Thank you to those who have given me encouragement so far and to you all for listening to me this morning.

Amen