

REPORT OF THE ORDER OF DEACONS

During 2007 the Order of Deacons has held quarterly gatherings for fellowship, spiritual nurture and continuing education. Our primary focus has been on the areas highlighted by the Clergy Effectiveness Initiative. In October, Rev. Pat Begthel-Mahle led us in reflecting on “Wholeness of Relationships” with a special focus on systems theory as it applies to local church staffs. In January, Rev. John Rosenburg led a workshop on Church Administration, one of the components of the “Competencies and Skills” emphasis.

In April, nine of our Deacons attended the 10th Anniversary Convocation of the Order of Deacons in Orlando where we shared in lively celebration, uplifting worship, and informative workshops. Our focus changed for our May meeting, where material from the Convocation was shared with those who were unable to attend. A historical video presentation helped many of us remember the journey from the Certified Lay Worker to the Consecrated Diaconal Minister to the Ordained Deacon. For our younger and newer Deacons this historical perspective gave new insights into the long journey of the ministry of the Deacon.

Throughout this spring the Order has met several times informally as we have explored the political realm of General Conference elections. We are prayerfully hopeful that this year we will have a Deacon as part of the General Conference delegation.

On June 5th the Deacons will celebrate once more as we gather for our Annual Conference luncheon to welcome Marji Bishir, who will be commissioned on the Deacon Track, and Joe Stobaugh, who will be ordained as Deacon in Full Connection.

The Order of Deacons will meet in October to complete our emphasis on the Clergy Effectiveness Initiative as Rev. Georgjean Blanton leads a workshop on Disciplines of the Christian Life, part of the “Holiness of Heart and Life” emphasis.

In 2008 we will begin a focus on the ministry of the Deacon as it provides a bridge from the church to the world. The majority of North Texas Deacons serve in appointments within the local church. Although we function as Associate Pastors in the local church, each of us has an area of ministry specialization. Among our North Texas Deacons we have nineteen Deacons whose primary area is Christian Formation. Sixteen are Church Musicians. Three Deacons are Church Business Administrators. Two have a primary ministry focus in Missions. One Deacon serves within the local church primarily in Pastoral Care.

A growing number of Deacons have primary appointments “in the world.” Two serve in Church agency settings. Two are Pastoral Counselors. Three Deacons serve in Church and Community settings: Habitat for Humanity, Reach Ministries, Genesis Two. Three Deacons serve as consultants in areas of church music, early childhood education, and theological librarian services. We have one Deacon serving in an international ecumenical church setting. Each of these Deacons serving primarily “in the world” also has a secondary appointment to a local church.

The ministry of the ordained Deacon was designed to be a bridge to connect the church and the world. During 2008 the North Texas Order of Deacons will examine our ministries to identify ways in which we traverse that bridge ourselves as we nurture people into discipleship and walk with them as they take up their ministry in the world. We will also explore the ministries of our Deacons “in the world,” and examine ways in which that bridge enables Deacons to walk with people from the world to the church.

At the Deacons’ Convocation we discovered that across the United Methodist connection there are 1,298 Deacons in full connection. There are 2,000 persons now in process on the Deacon Track. It is with joy that we share that the North Texas Conference leads the South Central Jurisdiction with 52 members of the Order of Deacon!

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Biggerstaff
Chair of the Order of Deacons