

Dear Bishop Eddie,

Further to your request for an indication of the Terms of Reference for a Commission to investigate the ministry of the distinctive and permanent diaconate.

I am taking the opportunity to give you some of the historical background, before coming to the Terms of Reference (the formulation of which are dependent on your clear thinking!), from 2018 onwards.

Motion recorded on Pg 6 of PSC 2018 Minutes – 28 Sep 2018 read as follows:

“ . MOTION ARISING FROM THE FELLOWSHIP OF DEACONS REPORT

The Ven. Dr George Palmer, seconded by Bishop Charles May proposed that this PSC;

Noting there is an omission in terms of the duties of a distinctive deacon in the Anglican Prayer Book, thereby creating a lack of clarity among both clergy and laity.

Therefore respectfully requests that the Synod of Bishops be asked to:

1. Examine the role and ministry of permanent deacons in the Province with a view to recognizing the distinctive vocation to the Holy Order of deacons, as discerned in respective dioceses.
2. Apply their minds to this anomaly, and to release a directive that would explain to the church the distinctive nature of the role of the permanent deacon as opposed to that of the transitional deacon.”

PSC agreed that debate on this motion would be suspended for amendment.

On page 9 of the Minutes, the amended Motion was recorded as follows:

“MOTION ARISING FROM THE REPORT ON THE FELLOWSHIP OF DEACONS

Archdeacon Dr George Palmer proposed and Bishop Charles May seconded the following:

Noting that:

1. ACSA has recognized that the ordained ministry of the church is a 3-fold ministry of deacons, priests and bishops; and
2. Celebrating the ministry of those who are discerned to the distinctive and permanent ministry of a deacon in the church;

Calls upon the Archbishop to establish a Commission* to investigate the ministry of the distinctive and permanent diaconate and to report to Provincial Synod 2019.

*The Archbishop may in his discretion make use of the following structures for this purpose: The Advisory Board for Theological Education and/or the Provincial Liturgical Committee.

The motion as amended was passed.”

I enquired in June from the PEO as to whether there had been any work done as decided upon at Synod, and was told that nothing had been done. I explored the possibility of submitting a Motion to explore this, but was advised to submit a question.

QUESTION TO PROVINCIAL SYNOD:

Your Grace,

As recorded in the Minutes of Provincial Standing Committee September 2018, a Motion was passed for the establishment of a Commission to investigate the ministry of the permanent diaconate, utilizing The Advisory Board for Theological Education and/or the Provincial Liturgical Committee for this purpose.

However such a Commission does not appear to have been set up.

I would therefore respectfully enquire from the Archbishop when such a Commission would be set up and who would be the responsible person with whom I could communicate.

Deacon Gwynne Lawlor

Fellowship of ACSA Deacons

The response from Provincial Synod was that nothing had been done And the task was then handed to you.

What I would like to have explored ... or see as the terms of Reference for the Commission are the follows:

- 1. The Office of Deacon**
- 2. The Ministry of the Deacon**
- 3. The Vocation of the Deacon**
- 4. The Formation of the Deacon.**
- 5. The re-instatement of the Office of Deacon in the Canons of the Province and in the Resolutions of the various Dioceses favourably oriented towards the Diaconate.**

As regards 1. And 2. The Prayer book gives us some information on the Office of Deacon in the Service of Ordination.

The Canons say very little.

Deacons

Age of Ordination	Canon 18 Pg 54,
Qualifications for Ordination	Act VI Pg 161
Representation at Provincial Synod ?	I have been told by the PEO that The Fellowship of ACSA Deacons has two seats at PSC and one at Provincial Synod but cannot find where this is written in the Canons (Pg24?). We have a right to speak but not to vote, which we have exercised since 2017.

The Canons do say a lot more about the licensing and ministry of Lay-ministers (Canon 20. Pg 55), which leaves the deacons out on a limb!

You have a copy of the Resolution of Permanent Force passed at Highveld Diocesan Synod. It would be great to see this generally accepted in ACSA.

Great to have you working with us! Grace and Peace, Gwynne.

3. With notable exceptions, and to our limited knowledge, very few diaconal callings have been recognized and supported in our various Dioceses. Having said that, we do appreciate that not all Bishops are in favor of building up distinctive diaconates.

I would draw your attention to the ACSA Fellowship of Deacons' report in the Agenda book of this year's Provincial Synod (2021).

You will note from the report that much work has been done by your deacons to connect other deacons of our own and many other denominations throughout the world, through our membership of DIAKONIA Region Africa Europe, and DIAKONIA World Federation. Some of our ACSA deacons represent our Province on international diaconal committees. One Diocese of Grahamstown deacon, through her work on DIKAID, a committee of Diakonia World Federation, has even been able to attract funding for projects in the Eastern Cape.

Is this all to come to an end, through lack of support from our Province for their Distinctive Deacons?

The small group of deacons who met to look into the continued viability of the Distinctive Diaconate in ACSA came to the conclusion that, without support from our Archbishop and our Bishops, we are unable to minister effectively in this vineyard.

We appeal to you, as our Spiritual and Actual Leader, for direction. We look forward to hearing from you,

Grace and Peace,

Deacon Gwynne Lawlor
Member of Executive Committee
ACSA Fellowship of Deacons