CHAPTER 1

Creating a New Vision; Setting the Stage for a Renewed Order

It's been said that history doesn't look like history when you're living through it; it just "looks confusing and messy, and it always feels uncomfortable."[1] Perhaps that's one reason why, unless our personality is somewhat analytical, we don't often think about how we are living history. In The Episcopal Church our attention to history is thwarted, from time to time, by the fact that we focus so much on what we call the "triennial," a three-year cycle of General Conventions at which we set new priorities, recommit to old ones, forget the ones we already set, or wonder why we set any at all.

Perhaps we don't attend to history because no one ever made it relevant or exciting. That's somewhat ironic given that, as church folk, we tell and retell the stories of people of faith, throughout the ages, as part of our rhythm of communal life. In the midst of them, we don't realize that the stories we're living now, the patterns we are establishing, the changes we are making, the generation-to-generation legacies we are leaving, are not so unlike the history that Moses and the Israelites were making during their generation of exile. A lot happened in that forty years in the wilderness. In fact, a lot has happened in the last forty years in The Episcopal Church. Indeed as we consider the diaconate in this church, the last forty years are critical to our understanding and development of the Order.

It thus becomes important to reckon with the history we've been a part of making. History here, as it relates to the contemporary story of deacons, and to the diaconal ministry of all believers, begins just after the approval of our current Book of Common Prayer (hereafter BCP 1979). Of course, I find this part of church history remarkable because it's the part of the church's history that I've lived. I've never lived with any other version of the Book of Common Prayer, so I assumed from the beginning (my beginning in The Episcopal Church being in 1977 when the book was already in pews for trial use), that the theology set forward in our current prayer

book is what we all believed. What I didn't realize, for many years, is that it has taken the church a while to live into this theology and the changes this version of the prayer book brought us. The diaconate is part of that. In fact, the church's understanding of her own servant nature is part of that.

Only now am I coming to recognize the ways in which I was personally (along with many others) caught up in making history as I journeyed, nudged by the Spirit, toward the life and work of a deacon and the meaning of a long-ignored Order in the Church. While I offer this interpretation of history from my own point of view, there are many others who have been making it and living it in their own ways.

I was thirty-one years old when a supportive vicar spoke to the bishop about my becoming a deacon. The year was 1980—just a year into the "official" use of the BCP 1979. I had struggled with the ordination of women and, though I supported it, it called me to move beyond tradition in a way that surprised me. Looking back, I suspect the struggle was less about ordaining women and more about patriarchal models of leadership. As more and more women were ordained to the priesthood, I would be uplifted by new models, new images, and new possibilities. However, at the time, someone suggested that since I wasn't sure about ordination to the priesthood, maybe I should look at being a deacon. I had no idea what a deacon was, but when I looked at the ordination service, everything about it resonated with me. It wasn't any longer about women's ordination, but about which Order captured my soul. And because I was a new Episcopalian, unaware of the significance that the Order was being reenvisioned, I simply had no idea that this was such a novel and unexplored option in The Episcopal Church. It's taken me nearly twenty-five years to recognize how significant that was and, I suspect, the church may still be living into that—into what came with the liturgical and theological revisions incorporated into the BCP 1979.

In 1980 the bishop didn't tell me no. Nor did he tell me yes. He told me that the church had undertaken a six-year study to examine what the diaconate should be in its new incarnation.[2] He offered to send me to a conference at Notre Dame on the diaconate, and suggested that I report back and keep him informed. What I experienced there is, quite likely, what carried me through the next eight years of waiting.

Those in attendance were history makers. They'd already been part of research on the diaconate, shaping the prayer book, and offering statements on why they thought this distinctive Order important, even necessary. They were leaders in thinking about the "total ministry of the church." While they envisioned a distinctive diaconate, it was always in relationship to all other ministry, and especially so as the church claimed a new and deep commitment to develop "lay ministry." But before I say

more about that gathering, it's important to return to the beginning of the six-year study the church had already undertaken.

A report of a 1978 survey said:

> At its 1977 meeting in Port St. Lucie, Florida, the House of Bishops asked the Council for the Development of Ministry to undertake an empirical study of the Diaconate in the Episcopal Church in the United States. The study was underway when the house met in Kansas City in 1978. The charge was then enlarged to ask not just for data on the diaconate, but for analysis and recommendations from the Council.
>
> During the past two years the Council has designed and executed the survey, analyzed the results, and appointed a special committee to prepare recommendations. While committee members often disagreed and debated the issues, in the end they found they could come to a common mind and submit this report for the consideration of the House. This consensus is evident in the following agreed statement:
>
> Upon reflection on the report of the findings of the survey, the committee agrees that the primary issue of concern is the servant (diaconal) nature of the church. Questions directly related to the order of deacons are secondary to the primary issue.
>
> The study has demonstrated to us that there is an obvious gap between the experience of the Diaconate as it appears in the study, and a vision of the Diaconate expressed by a majority of diocesan Commissions on Ministry and bishops.
>
> The doctrine of diaconal ministry as expressed in the Ordinal of the Proposed Book of Common Prayer and the description of actual diaconal ministry as portrayed in the Study point to a disparity between the reality of the diaconate as it is now practiced and the ideal expressed. We believe that some change will be necessary if the permanent Diaconate is to live out more clearly the understanding of the Church as the servant (diaconal) people of God.
>
> Though some amongst us think that the permanent Diaconate might be discontinued, others feel that it has validity but should be enhanced. Given the realities of the study and the opinions identified therein, we all believe that the new directions called for in the study should be evaluated and this evaluation should be presented not later than 1985 at General Convention.

> The report has demonstrated the need to explore new forms of ministry which express the servant ministry of the Church. . . .
>
> The disparity between the vision of a diaconal ministry of servanthood and the actuality of a diaconate which is often seen—and often sees itself—as a minor order of priesthood understandably evokes the apparently conflicting responses reported in the survey: 94% of all respondents feel that the church should have a vital diaconate, yet only 18% of the participatory bishops have plans to ordain permanent deacons.
>
> The survey makes it obvious that there is reluctance on the part of many to continue support of the diaconate in its present form. At the same time, there is a great interest in developing a Diaconate which would be distinctive from and yet enhancing of the ministry of the other clergy and of the laity.[3]

It's taken me many years to fully appreciate why the bishop in my diocese wanted to wait until the six-year study was complete. Here I was in 1980, only two years after "some amongst us" thought the permanent diaconate should be discontinued. And yet, the church had just adopted a prayer book which included a new vision of the diaconate. How like Episcopalians!

While the diaconate has a long history, beginning with the earliest church, and while there had been many discussions about renewing it for the contemporary times, The Episcopal Church simply did not have a history with the new vision offered in the prayer book. Thus, it was easy to conclude that, for a time, there was no common understanding of this Order. Since then, however, many deacons and others who believe in diaconal ministry have more clearly defined that vision.

It is that defining journey that we will explore here. How did we get from "some amongst us" believing that we should do away with the diaconate to an order that is vibrant and vital?

Six Long Years

After the empirical study conducted in 1978 and the presentation of its subsequent analysis to the House of Bishops, the 1979 General Convention "directed the Council for the Development of Ministry to begin to implement the recommendations contained in their report and to be prepared to make a presentation on the results at the 1985 General Convention."[4] The

next step was for the Council to call a Consultation on the Diaconate in May of 1980.

Thirty-one dioceses (about a third of the dioceses in the church at that time) were represented at the consultation. We learn from their report that

> the first task of the consultation was to define *servant ministry*, a term entering the consciousness of many people, at least in regard to the Episcopal diaconate, for the first time. Once arrived at, the definition quickly became the focal point of all the discussions that followed. This was their definition of the servant ministry:
>
> Servant ministry is the sacrificial work of the baptized community in which we share *Christ's presence and activity of making whole* by our response to and advocacy for those in need. This work includes identifying and proclaiming to individuals, institutions, and authorities the needs of the world.[5]

It was through this lens that those attending the consultation would look at the selection and deployment of deacons, appropriate training, supervision, and the effects of the diaconate on other ministries.

The consultation spent no small amount of time in reiterating and clarifying that "in order to select people for the servant ministry of the diaconate there had to be a clear idea on the part of the persons selecting as well as on the part of the aspirants to the diaconate what the role of the deacon was actually to be."[6]

It is important to note here that at the time these studies were undertaken, the role of deacons in the church had been primarily as pastoral and liturgical assistants. In the servant ministry definition shared by the Consultation, we begin to see the importance of the "baptized community." It was a remarkable thing that the church was looking at the relevance of an Order in relationship to the whole people of God. It would also be remarkable should the church do that with all other Orders! The important thing, however, is that the diaconate was not reenvisioned in a vacuum.

Recall the church of that time was deeply committed to the development of lay ministry, now what we simply call "ministry." Over time we would come to see that this careful definition of the diaconate, albeit at times painfully slow, would serve us well in recognizing the role of deacons in developing ministry in and with others, owning a primarily baptismal identity, and pushing the church to deal with her tendency toward clericalism.

We would also come to realize that, while these initial attempts to define a role, the training for it, the best ways to deploy those serving in it, and how best to tell the church about it, those definitions were being offered by people who had never lived in that role. This will be important to keep in mind as we observe the further unfolding of the definition of the ministry, and the living of it.

The culmination of the church's six-year review of the diaconate would come with one more study, conducted between 1981 and 1984, of eight dioceses engaged in the renewal of the diaconate (Albany, California, Central Florida, Hawaii, Michigan, Nevada, Pittsburgh, and Spokane). With this study we begin to see questions about the diaconate that have now evolved into patterns, qualities—questions not to be solved with a definitive answer but with a flexibility of living—and a conscious recognition of the importance of being contextual and adaptable.

The study of the eight dioceses addressed:

- the purposes and benefits of ordaining persons to the diaconate, including thoughts on the deacon as symbol of servant ministry, the meaning of ordination, the deacon's role in the liturgy, the deacon as enabler of lay ministry;
- the hierarchy of orders, including whether deacons should have a distinctive and equal ministry, factors that hinder that equality with other orders, canonical requirements regarding authority, differences in education between priests and deacons, the part-time status of nonstipendiary deacons compared with the full-time status of the stipendiary priest;
- issues in the training and deployment of deacons, including how deacons might be similarly or differently trained than priests, whether they should stay in their home congregations, or whether they should be moved, ministry assignments in general;
- equality in the relative value among orders, including establishing collegial relations between priest, supervisor, and deacon, the relationship with the bishop, and developing distinctive ministries;
- and finally an assessment of the overall impact of the participating dioceses' diaconate program on the understanding of the Order and of deacons in these dioceses on the ministry of their congregations.[7]

We discover that overall the diaconate is growing and seen positively. And yet we read in the foreword to the document, "In spite of current enthusiasm all should not be viewed as in order. From those surveyed, it is clear that there is no consistent or necessarily coherent vision of what the diaconate should be, specifically what is distinctive about what the deacon

is to do to be an effective sacramental sign of our common ministry of servanthood in Christ."[8]

Once again we return to a key concept. All of the study, all of the questions, all of the issues about training, deployment, authority, relationship—all of these—were ways of defining an Order that would enable the church to engage with the *diakonia* of all believers—to be a servant church.

Often the church tends more to institutional concerns created by new ideas than it does to spiritual ones. In fairness, those institutional concerns can come to make up the important infrastructure that will undergird glorious new possibilities, but without holding the practical spiritual living of the idea in tension with our constitution and canons, we risk rather brittle interpretations of what the living, breathing, changing, growing, imagining body of Christ really is. Without the positive and practical, that infrastructure can be used to control instead of to free us with support. Therefore, it's important to consider what other initiatives were taking place at the same time as these church-sponsored studies.

Imagining New Possibilities, Reenvisioning the Church

At the same time the six-year study was taking place, a movement was growing. While my first exposure to that movement was at Notre Dame in 1981, that meeting was actually the second gathering of reformers committed to the renewal of the diaconate.

In 1979 a three-day meeting on "The Diaconate . . . A Unique Place in the Total Ministry" was sponsored by the National Centre for the Diaconate and Associated Parishes, Inc., with the help of the Episcopal Dioceses of Central Florida, Indianapolis, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nevada, Pittsburgh, and Western Massachusetts. The program was held in liaison with the Episcopal Church Council for the Development of Ministry, though it is not clear that the Council was an actual sponsor or financial contributor. They were conducting studies of their own.

The final press release reported that "despite the difficulties caused by the United Airlines strike and the gasoline crisis, about 165 persons from all over the United States and Canada attended a successful major conference on the diaconate. . . . There was also Lutheran, Methodist and Roman Catholic representation."[9]

While the studies requested by the House of Bishops and others were important, the attendance of so many at this conference, from such a variety of locations, was testimony to the persistence of those committed to the renewal of the diaconate. It was also an opportunity for many who

were curious to learn about historical, theological, liturgical, and ministerial aspects of the Order.

Three things stand out as especially significant to the future evolution of deacons in The Episcopal Church. The first is that the gathering was a good mix of scholarly, spiritual, and practical approaches to this ministry. The second is that deacons participated—in the presentation of a major paper, in liturgy planning and participation. Third, the title of the conference and the intention of its planners reflected a very important concept of the time, that is, the total ministry of the church. These gatherings were not held simply to reenvision the diaconate for its own sake. (Indeed total ministry language had been used in some of the church-sponsored studies already discussed. The implication was that there was a shift occurring, away from the community gathering around a minister, to a community gathered around a table and a font, becoming ministering communities.) It is heartening to remember that the church once thought about "total ministry" as something other than a method of survival for small congregations and small dioceses. At that time small dioceses and small congregations were leading the way in examining how to live a theology newly articulated in the revised prayer book—partly through local formation and team ministry. But in the context of these gatherings about the diaconate, the total ministry of the church meant just that—the whole church.

The church, as a body, was beginning to live into a renewed ecclesiology where baptism was not only the initiation into the church, but the first call to ministry. The role of the baptizing community was not just to receive the newly baptized, but to nurture them. And with the advent of the Eucharist as the primary Sunday service, the community's identity was becoming one of gathering around the table, sharing the meal, sharing as liturgical ministers, being sustained in new ways because of the regularity of the Eucharist and the public nature and call of baptism.

Keeping in mind that this was the context for the initial, but ongoing conversations about the diaconate, and thus the servant nature of the church, the words of one of the presenters in that first gathering at Notre Dame capture the spirit of that mutuality. Deacon Phina Borgeson, ordained to the diaconate in 1974 before women's ordination to the priesthood was possible, but when liturgical reform was bringing a renewed understanding of the diaconate, spoke clearly in her keynote address as she remarked:

> My interest in the diaconate, both general and personal, began with a revelatory moment centered on the words . . . "to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world." After theologizing about the diaconate for some time, I question whether this activity might not be a luxury which we can

> ill afford. At a variety of meetings and continuing education endeavors in the last year, I have heard a message repeated: it is time for Christians to do some serious rethinking of our faith. The world has changed, and the expression of the truth of our faith must change too. In classical terms, what is called for is a new apologetic. In my terms, the task is one of renewed vigor in mutual interpretation. While we have been busy theologizing about the diaconate and in-house concerns, the need for a diaconal theology has overtaken us. Part of our service from Church to world is the service of mutual interpretation. It is a necessary component of the mission for which the Church exists.
>
> Let us hope that a renewed interest in the diaconate, and theological reflection on the diaconate, will help to equip us for the interpretive tasks of the Church's diaconal ministry. Not only a re-emphasis on servanthood, but a relating of servanthood to modern images would be a place to begin. Certainly the recognition that all of our ministries are interrelated and that each has diffuse boundaries, for all are derived from the one ministry of Christ, is a way to begin refreshing our theology. The recognition of mutuality in practice demands mutuality in theologizing. The realization that deacons do not do all our servant work, but are necessary to bring it into focus, should enable us to get about that work with a more consistent vision. The vision must include both a more active proclaiming of the Gospel and a more sensitive listening to the world.[10]

Borgeson's words from that gathering serve us as well today as they did in 1979. As we take a further look at how we got here from there, they will serve as a helpful reminder of the importance of mutuality in ministry—on all kinds of levels.

There would be one more conference at Notre Dame that paralleled the years of the church-wide study. Held in May 1984, articles about the conference tell us that again the theme was "Deacons in the Total Ministry of the Church." The Very Rev. Durstan McDonald, dean of the Seminary of the Southwest, provided the two-part keynote.

Dean McDonald would address an issue that to this day I believe has not satisfactorily been resolved. It may never be. Grounding his remarks in the context of the ministry of all the baptized, he speculated:

> I wouldn't be a bit surprised that if, on an unconscious but intuitive level, the revived diaconate raises fears because there is an intuitive perception that to revive the diaconate will have

> revolutionary implications about the way we think about lay ministry now. It will revise and recast the language and thought of many people who understand already the importance of the total ministry of the laity.[11]

I believe that the speaker hinted at an unresolved issue. It is not only about how we understand the diaconate, but how we understand all the orders, not so much in relationship to each other as in relationship to the whole people of God. It is as important to understand the presbyterate in relation to the total ministry of the church as it is the diaconate. That work has not been done.

Dean McDonald suggested a number of distinctions that might be considered, including revisiting the term "pastoral," and the difference between pastoral and diaconal functions. He suggested, in agreement with Associated Parishes (frequently a partner with the Centre for the Diaconate in sponsoring these conferences), that the church do away with the transitional diaconate. He made other controversial recommendations about doing away with collars and titles for deacons, but only because of the privilege already associated with them, primarily as it related to the presbyterate.

Along with these recommendations and within the context of the ministry of all the baptized, Dean McDonald never wavered from recognizing the two major charges given by the church to deacons. He remarked:

> Concerning the diaconate itself, let me applaud the emphasis of your Centre on a special ministry of servanthood, as an icon, and as a sign of the servanthood of the whole people of God, lay and ordained. The focus on the dual function of the deacon serving the poor and the weak in the name of Christ on the one hand, and on the other, interpreting the needs, the concerns, and the hopes of the world, has potential for removing and revisioning pastoral ministry and lay ministry alike. The acid test, of course, is whether our practice matches our rhetoric. Whether we fall into the trap of worrying about our status or whether in the words of that marvelous sermon by Bishop Bigliardi, whether we are icons to be looked through, rather than to be looked at, icons of Christ's servanthood to the world and icons of the poor to the church.[12]

Dean McDonald recognized, most effectively, the place of the diaconate in an ordered church, one that had only just begun to live into a prayer book theology that strengthened, in great measure, the role of all

the baptized, the priesthood of all believers, and the servant nature of the church.

Influences, Asides, and *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*

During the years that I was waiting for the church-wide study to be completed, there were not multiple resources to read about the diaconate—at least none that were easily accessible. Interestingly, the very month after the vicar of my little congregation had gone to see the bishop on my behalf, I accepted a position working as an administrative assistant for five campus ministers. They represented three denominations sharing space at the Wesley Foundation in our community. One of the first volumes I discovered on the book shelf in the student lounge was *The Diaconate Now*. Edited by Richard T. Nolan, an Episcopal priest teaching at Hartford seminary, the book was published in 1968. Nolan's introduction to the book reads:

> In 1963 a bishop of the Episcopal Church laid his hands on my head and said, "Take thou authority to execute the Office of a Deacon in the Church of God committed unto thee; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Three days later began my month's supply ministry in a parish whose rector was on vacation. Except for a Sunday supply priest, I was quite on my own for all practical purposes. As a matter of curiosity, I took up the Book of Common Prayer to see again what specific functions I had as a deacon; academic theory and ordination promise had suddenly acquired a jolting dimension of existential reality! Finding listed some tasks I felt unprepared for, and some that perhaps were not to be done, I ministered as I could for the four weeks.
>
> When I returned to the final months of my sojourn as a master in the Choir School of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York, I sought to satisfy my lingering curiosity about the diaconate, a curiosity now safely academic. . . .
>
> Neither persons nor books I sought out furnished unanimity on the tasks for the contemporary deacon. Thus, with the encouragement from some senior clergy, I set out to gather essays about the diaconate from some perceptive Christians.[13]

Nolan's experience was common to many like him, and points to how congregations understood the diaconate as well. A deacon was someone

who was a priest in training, and often would be with the parish for only a short time. In an attempt to more clearly define the diaconate, his book includes essays on its historical perspective, in Protestantism, in the Roman Catholic Church, in the Orthodox Church, in Anglicanism, in the Church of South India. It also includes an essay on deaconesses and one on the future of the diaconate.

Nolan's book is important to mention here because he was speaking about the diaconate as it was envisioned in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. Someone was asking questions, even then, and the revised prayer book has now articulated a clear vision.

That book is what I had to go on—along with the ordination service in the prayer book, until later that year when I was able to secure a copy, fresh off the press, of James Barnett's *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order* (1981). Soon to follow the next year was John Booty's *The Servant Church*. However, it would be another ten years before the first printing of Deacon Ormonde Plater's *Many Servants*, the first resource with stories of real deacons, their history, their recruitment, deployment, care, and feeding.

I suspect that many others were in similar circumstances. We had little bits of things. Scholars were able to trace the diaconate historically. Church studies were able to describe some possibilities, but were constrained by not having lived the vision, while the church hierarchy looked for canons and training programs and answers to what it might mean to be a servant church. In the meantime, many of us simply went about the business of living the questions and defining the Order.

On a personal level, James Barnett's book was most important to me. Tracing the diaconate throughout the church's history, considering the theology behind it, suggesting it as a full and equal Order, offering ideas about training, deployment, liturgical roles, it was a significant offering to the church. For this deacon, however, there was no paragraph more important than Barnett's very first one in the book:

> The principle of the diaconate as an office and function in the Church is rooted in the nature of the Church itself as it was originally founded and lived in the pre-Nicene world. The first principle of that Church as it came into being was that it was *laos*, the people of God. The Church was called into being by God and made a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."[14] All were *laos*. There was no word to distinguish, in the sense of today, between clergy and laity. The clergy were laity along with others who belonged to the people of God.[15]

His next paragraph continues, "It is here that we must begin if we are to clarify our understanding of the Church's ministry, because we must first rethink our theology of the Church itself."[16]

As I've looked back at this deep influence, I've become aware that with the revision of the Book of Common Prayer, the church was doing just that. The diaconate happened to be caught between a church that was not just reenvisioning an Order, but was reenvisioning itself. It was living into the Eucharist as the primary service of the gathered community, as well as into the centrality of baptism, baptism as public, as the first call to ministry, and into a community who shared and spoke covenant language.

In fact, in the same year that Barnett's book about the diaconate was published, so was a volume entitled *Worship Points the Way*: *A Celebration of the Life and Work of Massey H. Shepherd, Jr.* Shepherd, known throughout the Church for his *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* on the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, his volume in the Church's Teaching Series, *The Worship of the* Church, and for his leadership in the Associated Parishes and on the Standing Liturgical Commission, he is honored in this book by a distinguished and ecumenical group of former students, professional colleagues, and friends." In the essay contributed by Urban T. Holmes, III, on "Education for Liturgy," we read:

> It is evident that Episcopalians as a whole are not clear about what has happened. The renewal movement in the 1970's, apart from the liturgical renewal often reflects a nostalgia for a classical theology which many theologians know has not been viable for almost two hundred years. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer is a product of a corporate, differentiated theological mind, which is not totally congruent with many of the inherited formularies of the last few centuries. This reality must soon "come home to roost" in one way or another.
>
> In other words, the revision itself was the product of an awakening, a newly educated theological consciousness. Now it becomes a *source* for a much broader awakening through participation and reflection upon the meaning of the participation. For those of us that believe that the theological emphases of the 1979 book are appropriate for people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries this is a splendid opportunity. It is why we do not see the choice between 1928 and 1979 as a matter of taste. It is more a question of truth for our time. Two standard Books of Common Prayer would be theologically naïve, to put it kindly. The task that lies before us is to show how in fact

> *lex orandi* is *lex credendi* and to rewrite our theology books in the light of our liturgy. This can be a tricky process.[17]

Without rehearsing the arguments about liturgical renewal, or the fullness of the theological changes the "new" prayer book encompassed, the important thing to recognize is that this was a remarkable period of change, discovery, definition, and redefinition. The diaconate was not the only new thing, but that its reenvisioning took place in this climate is significant, both in how easily it was accepted—or not, and how mutually it was defined—or not. The baptismal theology pointed right at what Barnett had described about the pre-Nicene church and, in the end the church was determining how she would live into a baptismal theology that mimicked the early church and contextualized and updated a way of believing for the times in which we were living.

As a result, I often repeat a beloved mentor's words. "It is no small thing that the renewal of the diaconate and the renewed understanding of baptism occurred at the same time."

I believe it has had a deep effect on how the diaconate has come to be. Deacons often see themselves, not just as doers of diaconal ministry, but developers of diaconal ministry in others.

As an aside, having become a member of The Episcopal Church in 1977, my introduction to the church included a congregation steeped in spirituality and renewal, along with a new prayer book, and another steeped in a vision of mission and justice, the ministry of the baptized, and liturgy as the work of the people.

My understanding of ministry was intuitively and practically grounded in baptism and in community as organic; not gathered around a minister, but around Christ, with opportunities blessed and strengthened in being part of Christ's body in the world. I see now that I have been privileged to taste a radical equality that many have longed for, or have worked to create, but not as many have experienced. Having tasted that vision, the reality of the radical equality that comes with baptism, I become impatient with the power dynamics of a church that is often more institutional than organic, more concerned about structure as control, rather than as support.

And finally, we return to *lex orandi, lex credendi.* We believe what we pray. Praying shapes believing.

Many years ago, I was sitting at a table with colleagues at a board meeting of the North American Association for the Diaconate (now known as the Association for Episcopal Deacons).

Someone commented that the authors of the revised Book of Common Prayer suggested that there would be surprises as we continued to use it. I recently tried to remember and track down the person who made that

remark. While I was unsuccessful, I did end up having a lovely correspondence with the Rev. Dr. Louis Weil. Most recently he taught at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, prior to that at Nashotah House, and he has served several terms on the Standing Commission for Liturgy and Music.

When I asked if he could remember anyone talking about these "prayer book surprises," this is how he responded.

> I have mulled a good bit. I can think of things I have said along that line, but I am pretty sure that I have never attended a NAAD meeting. But that does not necessarily mean that something like this wasn't quoted by a former student—they do that a lot, which is fine except for when (as has happened) the "quotation" is 180 degrees opposite to what I said. As to this quotation, which I see may also have been attributed to Boone (Porter), I suspect that all of us in the field of liturgy have said comments similar to that. What I do remember clearly is that when the 1979 Book of Common Prayer became official, I commented to a class of students at Nashotah House (that was still the "good old days!") that it would take us fifty years to live into the implications of the new book. That is still true. It amazes me how much the 1979 book is still "read" through the prism of 1928—but I stick to my guns, as I once heard Paul Tillich say.
>
> My point was that the reshaping of a mentality—any mentality, and certainly a liturgical mentality—is a very slow process because this operates at a very deep level—not at the cognitive level where we are inclined to think it operates. Piety is in our gut—and often shapes our attitudes at an unconscious level. So "reshaping," that is shattering. I know that in the midst of my doctoral studies in Paris, some of the historical material finally hit me between the eyes: this was no longer an academic matter, it was threatening my piety—my God this is serious!
>
> This does not help you with the origins of the phrase you mention, but I do think that among us "seniors" in the field, there was an enormous common sense that emerged, and it certainly transcended the ecumenical boundaries. That also was threatening to some people, still is, especially for people heavily invested in the institutional structures.[18]

It would take us fifty years to live into the implications of a new prayer book. As of this writing, it is has been thirty-five years. The diaconate was just one of the manifestations of a shift in theology, an old Order for a new world. And if we consider that the church-sponsored studies maintained

that the primary issue was about the meaning of a servant church and not just the diaconate, the implications may be even more remarkable.

Over the course of the next several chapters we'll see just how deacons have lived into the words they pray and that the church prays with them as they make their vows and accept their charges.