



FAQ about The Fund's proposed status change

November 2024

Why are you doing this?

We were informed by the Association for Episcopal Deacons (AED) leadership earlier this year that AED can no longer guarantee the completeness of the mailing list they manage and which we use to contact our members. Our legal status in New York State says that our members are all deacons in The Episcopal Church. We have been aware for a while that we were only reaching maybe 95% of all our deacons, but now it looks like that percentage is optimistic. At what point does the percentage get so low that we cannot meet the state's requirements.

Is that the only reason?

Another major reason is that the Fund board believes that our limited purpose (manage our investments, and provide grants to deacons in financial need) calls for particular skills in potential directors, and does not require competitive elections. Our attorneys have also informed us that, when the Fund was incorporated in 1927, New York State law required a membership; that law is no longer in effect. A lesser reason is that the current process costs about \$1,500 annually, the equivalent of a formation grant. And, voter turnout over the past several years has only been about 15% of those we contact.

What exactly is the proposal?

The proposal will be a package of amendments to the bylaws. The major change will be to **Article III - Membership**, where the proposed wording will change the definition from "all deacons in The Episcopal Church (TEC) not further ordained" to just those members of the Fund board. There will be changes to some other articles related to that re-definition.

Why doesn't the Fund develop a paid membership?

First, it would put us in competition with AED for annual contributions. Plus, managing our own list would be an added expense.

Will there be any checks and balances on the board's activities?

We will continue to be subject to IRS regulations as well as the laws of New York State. We must be audited annually (currently by EisnerAmper). Our lawyers will also advise us when we propose anything new.

How will I know what is going on with the Fund?

We will maintain our website and Facebook page, and will add whatever social media innovations come along. We will continue to report in AED's enewsletter, and magazine, Diakoneo. We intend to continue being present at General Convention and other gatherings of Episcopalians.

Isn't this anti-democratic?

It could be seen that way. Taking the vote away from a group is a serious matter. However, most grant making organizations do not have a board elected by members, but instead seek out potential directors who will advance and maintain the mission of that organization - which is managing their money and giving out grants that support their mission. The Fund would do the same. But the current membership of the Fund would have to agree to do this.

How will you recruit new members of the board?

For the past few years, we have included a non-director on our Nominations Committee to give us an outside viewpoint, and we would continue that practice. By attending meetings, networking, and even asking in church media for volunteers, we expect we can find suitable deacons to serve.

When and where can I voice my opinion?

There will be two "open mike" meetings for deacons on Zoom: 7 pm ET on Monday November 11; and 9 pm ET Tuesday November 19. Details are on our website. If the Fund board decides to go ahead with a vote, there will be another online meeting in early February 2025 to answer questions about the ballot, as well as a special membership meeting for last minute votes in early March (dates and times TBD).