

Assisting Episcopal deacons – working, retired, disabled, or in formation – who have insufficient funds for their needs.

Special Announcement: The Fund for the Diaconate to propose major change in status

The Board of the Fund for the Diaconate (the Fund) will be calling for a special vote of the members (all deacons in The Episcopal Church not further ordained) in early 2025 to change the status of the Fund. Special meetings will also be held to explain the matter to be voted on.

The proposal is to make the Fund a non-membership corporation, and eliminate the need for annual elections to elect directors and approve bylaws changes. There are a few reasons that prompt this move.

Earlier this year, the leadership of AED informed us that they could no longer vouch for the completeness of a mailing list of all The Episcopal Church (TEC) deacons. AED has been managing a mailing list for the Fund since 1990, when there were about 1,300 deacons. Now there are over 3,200 deacons - we think.

Both organizations have been aware for several years that we are missing about 3-5% of all the deacons (based on conversations with the Church Pension Fund, which is restricted from giving us more specific information). In addition, the rate of return from the annual survey of dioceses that AED conducts is dropping, with only 60% compliance in recent years. In other words, the number of “missing” deacons is growing, with no way to enforce the collection of necessary information.

Related to that is the Fund’s election participation rate, and the expense. Recent elections have returned ballots from 15% or less of the Fund’s members. Software licensing for the election, plus printing and mailing for 300+ members who want a paper ballot, costs about \$1,500 annually, plus a lot of volunteer time to create a competitive slate each year.

Another consideration for the Fund in this issue is our purpose. We are not an advocacy organization, looking after all the issues that affect deacons in The Episcopal Church, as AED does. The Fund has a very limited focus: to manage an endowment, and to provide grants to deacons in need. In our recent elections, we have sought to recruit candidates who have backgrounds in non-profit or financial management, rather than a wide variety of skills or geographic placement that would be representative of our order.

In researching this question, our attorneys, Simpson Thacher and Bartlett (STB) informed us that when the deaconesses incorporated the Retiring Fund (as The Fund for the Diaconate was then called) in 1927, New York State law required them to have a membership and elections, identical to the National Council of Deaconesses. STB reports that the New York State law in question is no longer in effect, so the requirement for the Fund to have a membership is no longer needed.

The Fund board realizes that this proposal may raise questions. Before we make any further decisions, we will hold two Zoom meetings for our members, for you to ask questions. One session will be **Monday, November 11 at 7 pm Eastern**. The other session will be **Tuesday, November 19 at 9:30 pm Eastern**. We will also post information on our website, including an FAQ to address questions. A final decision on whether to hold a vote will be made at the board’s January 14, 2025 meeting. Because most deacons are not members of AED, and will only hear about this for the first time when (if) we contact them, the Fund will also hold a Zoom meeting at the start of any voting process.

The Fund intends to continue serving deacons of The Episcopal Church (and those in diaconal formation) who are in financial need. The board believes that this change will allow us to concentrate more closely on that mission, but we want everyone to be clear about why we are doing it. We welcome your questions.

Deacon Keith McCoy, president. Contact president@fundfordiaconate.org

The Fund for the Diaconate is an independent non-profit organization, not part of AED.

GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM THE FUND

Diaconal Formation; Ongoing Support; Declared Emergency; Medical; and The Hallenbeck Fellowship.

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www.fundfordiaconate.org

