Welcome again to Southwark Diaconal News. If you or someone you know is experiencing difficulty in receiving the Newsletter please contact the editor Deacon Michael Dale michael.dale21@gmail.com

From the Director of On-Going Formation
I took over from John Greenwood as Director for On-going Formation on 1st July 2014. Very hard shoes to fill indeed but I will try and do my best.

A little about me. I reached that ‘certain’ age of 60 last year and instead of beginning that wind down period, life now seems to be busier than ever.

I have been married for just over 40 years to Kath with 3 grown up sons and 3 grandchildren. I was ordained in 1999.

It was interesting quite recently when I had to check the Diocesan Directory for something, I realised that there are only 5 deacons in the Diocese who I can’t say that I know. I hope to rectify that this year.

One thing that does concern me greatly is the generally poor support for the 3 Diocesan diaconal days each year. They are created for you as a means on on-going Formation which is very important and continuing to foster friendships in the diaconal community and a chance to get to know newer deacons and those in Formation.

The last one in Bromley in October was attended by 4 deacons, who had been ordained more than 3 years out of a possible 60! Perhaps the speakers are uninspiring or the subjects or the venues chosen I can’t know these things unless you tell me!! I am always looking for new speakers and venues for these days and always glad to hear from any of you with ideas.

Remember, as with the Diocesan retreat (another event which is not wonderfully well supported) all these events are a legitimate Parish expense and can, and should, be claimed back from the Parish. If any deacons are having problems in this area then please feel free to talk to me in confidence. The Archbishop is fully aware that deacons do have problems sometimes with regard to their expenses and I will do my best to help.

In the meantime as this year is the 50th Anniversary of the restoration of the Diaconate, please do consider either joining in with the International Deacons Conference in Rome 21st-25th October and the Southwark trip Organised by Deacons Barry Mellish and Roger Evans or at least put into your diaries Saturday 13th June, which is our renewal of commitment day at the cathedral. It would be a great idea if every parish with a deacon could organise a few parishioners to come with them to St Georges Cathedral on that day to give thanks for the graces which the Diaconate has brought to this and every other diocese. This date may be subject to change dependent upon the Archbishop’s already overloaded diary.

Deacon Stephen Newman
**Deacon Kevin Dunne**

Deacon Kevin retired on 26th January from his role as 'Archbishop's Delegate for the Pastoral care of Permanent Deacons' after 10 years. He had previously been on the Formation Team as Assistant Director for Kent for a similar period.

There are a very large number of Deacons in this Diocese and elsewhere who have reason to give thanks to Kevin and to Jean for their unfailing loyalty, support, friendship and love over these last 20 years.

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**The National Diaconal Conference, Leeds, November 2014.**

I was invited to attend as delegate representative to the National Conference of Diaconal Directors and Deacons Representatives which usually takes place at Hinsley Hall in Leeds and runs from Tuesday lunchtime till Wednesday lunchtime.

There were 42 directors of formation, of on-going formation, associate directors, and representatives, from 15 dioceses of England and Wales.

The total number of deacons in England and Wales is 727 in 24 dioceses, with 101 candidate students in formation.

Southwark has the third place with 68 active deacons, (+ 12 students), behind Birmingham (79 + 16) and Liverpool (90 + 20).

**The first day:**

Father Chris Fallon, who was ordained priest just before the first permanent deacons in Liverpool, and is a parish priest and director of formation, presented us with a challenge in 2 parts:

**Is the deacon the bishop’s agent or the priest’s assistant?**

- Part one: assistant to or substitute for parish priest.
- Part two: agent of the mission of the Church; Minister of Word, Altar and Charity.

**Part one:** What did the priests say about deacons?

Who do we think we are? How do priests understand themselves today?

There are 3 generations of priests: those trained and ordained before Vatican Council II, those trained and ordained after VC II, and those trained and ordained today.

Father Chris presented us with two models of priests: Cultic model [pre-Vatican Council II], and Servant model [present day]

There were two main areas of concern: celibacy and women.

A majority were in favour of ordaining married men to priesthood, and many would look first to the married deacons.

A minority were in favour of ordaining women to priesthood and some suggested ordaining women deacons as a step in the right direction.

A minority of priests were not in favour of deacons and presented their reservations as: unnecessary, because of lay ministry; it is closed to women, so it increases male dominance; the parish sister does everything; and some saw it as ‘clericalising the laity’.

Also some priests expressed their views as: there is no need for deacons as lay people can do funeral services; deacons taking over priestly roles; there were personality conflicts; and difficulty in recruiting candidates were felt because of criticism of the formation as being too liturgical, too academic and too daunting.
However, the majority were in favour of the restoration of the diaconate, seeing the deacons in a functional role of ‘easing the priest’s workload in liturgical ministry of baptism, wedding and funeral. Others saw it as fulfilling the traditional threefold ministry of episcopate, presbyter and diaconate. Also, bringing stability and continuity in local community, and being a bridge between priest and people.

**Part Two: Agent of the Mission of the Church; Minister of Word, Altar and Charity**

“At first sight, *Lumen Gentium* 29 appears to retain the language of hierarchical subordination: “At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons ...”, but it is not speaking of the subordination of the deacon to the priest, but of a lesser participation by the deacon in the bishop’s ministry.

The gradations in participation in the bishop’s ministry thus denote two different structures: the bishop is aided by two separate arms – so to speak – which have differing tasks but must collaborate with one another.” [W.Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, pp.18-19]

**Is the deacon an icon of Christ the Humble Servant?**

The deacon’s ministry is not just about what one does, but about relationships within the Body of Christ.

Historically, diaconal ministries went far beyond humble service; J.N. Collins demonstrates that *diakonia* never referred to humble service in the New Testament; its root meaning is ‘being sent’ or ‘commissioned’. [Based on the work by R. Gaillardetz]

The Anglicans may be right when they say that *diakonia* is a commissioned activity, role or task, in which the *diakonos* is the responsible agent of the one who sends him or who gives the mandate.

It has not always been clear that, while deacons, like all Christian ministers, are indeed servants, they are servants first of the Lord who sends, then of the Church through whom he sends, but not servants in the sense of being at the disposal of all and sundry, simply a function of the needs of those around them. [*Mission and Ministry*, p.81]

The deacon is a missionary and is well placed to be the agent of God’s mission through the parochial structures of the Church.

**The second day.**

Bishop David McGough introduced himself. After twenty years teaching scripture at Oscott, and a similar time as parish priest, he became responsible for the diaconate with the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales.

The opportunities and challenges we had just described are familiar. Don’t expect perfect harmony or be discouraged by friction. And as Pope Francis said to the Religious Communities, don’t generate friction or scandal, and prefer to have an honest conversation.

Vision: go back to the fundamental pattern of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, and consider how they can work cooperatively outside, as well as inside, parish boundaries. Use the grace of ordination and a life of prayer grounded in scripture to reach out to God’s people, and allow the love of God to enter their lives. Touch hearts to turn people to God. Preach the Gospel with confidence by what we do and are: words are not always necessary.

Bishop David would like to see increased fellowship between deacons. Show care for your brother deacons who don’t come to meetings. They promised the Bishop and his successors obedience, and they are letting you down too if they absent themselves.

Pope Francis doesn’t talk ‘Deacons’ often, but he does deacon all the time: all ministry is about service. Respect the diaconate as an essential and distinct ministry, and not a stepping stone to priesthood.

Also, I was encouraged to find many women as directors of formation of deacons, which puts a special perspective to the ministry.

Deacon Gehad Homsey
The Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Southwark

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Archbishop’s Delegate for the Pastoral Care of Permanent Deacons: Vacant

Please pray for:

Deacon John Roberts RIP and Robert Smith and Deacon Samuel Gyepi-Garbrah who are unwell.

Our Aspirants:
Carlos Lozano, Garry Cullen, Oluwole Alayo, Tony Wentworth, Paul Said and Antonio Almeida.

Our students:
First Year
Amgad Gerges (Forest Hill), Roland Gooding (Westerham), Paul Henshaw (Beckenham Hill) and Fidelis Iwu (Beckenham Hill).

Second Year – Gerard Perkins (Norbury), Joice James Pallickamyalil (Syro-Malabar Rite), Robert Smith (Ordinariate / Westerham) and Piotr Zieazio (Plumstead).

Third Year – Julian Burling (Wimbledon, Edge Hill), Simon English and Peter Sebastian (Surbiton).
Also for Tom McCarthy (Tooting Bec) who is taking time out to recover from major surgery.

DDD’s and wives

At the last DDD it was mentioned that some deacons’ wives would like to receive all the information about these days and the retreats independently from their husbands. If you would like this then please send your email address to deaconstephen55@yahoo.co.uk for inclusion in the circulation list.

Support Groups for Deacons

Croydon: Contact Deacon Vincent Morrison marycrmorrison@yahoo.co.uk Deacons come from West Croydon, Purley, Selsdon, Norbury and occasionally Bromley. They meet at a home every three months or so on a Saturday evening to socialise and take it in turns to host a meal.

Gravesend: Contact Deacon Tom Berrie tomandjanethberrie@virginmedia.com. Meet four times a year, all welcome.

Orpington: Contact Deacon Michael Baldry michael.baldry@btinternet.com Alternate months October to June, usually second Wednesday, 8 pm at Holy Innocents, Orpington.

Waterloo: Contact Deacon John Greenwood WJohngreenwood@aol.com Alternate months October to June, on Wednesdays, at 6.30 pm at St Patrick’s Friary, Cornwall Road, SE1 8TW.

Rainham: Contact Deacon Alan Boxall alan-josie@blueyonder.co.uk Alternate months, usually five times a year October to June at St Thomas of Canterbury, London Road, Rainham.

Dover: Contact Deacon Jed Watkins gerald.caritas@btopenworld.com Tel: 01304 374889. We meet about every 4 months at a pub to be agreed upon.