

**Recommendation of the Diaconal Discernment Committee  
to Bishop Donald Bolen**



*Respectfully submitted July 17, 2014*

## **Preamble**

Since the spring of 2013, it has been our privilege to be invited, to discuss, and to participate in a diocesan-wide discernment regarding the possibility of implementing a permanent diaconate program in the Diocese of Saskatoon. Our experience has been marked by vigorous dialogue, enlightening diversity and the undeniable presence and leadership of the Holy Spirit, for which we are grateful.

At this stage in the process, we have been asked to submit our recommendation to the Bishop, coming out of many meetings, three public Congress Days and three targeted discernment gatherings of priests, religious and lay ministers. The minutes of our meetings, and the supporting data which came out of the Congress days and discernment gatherings are presented in full to the Bishop alongside our recommendation and therefore are not summarized here.

## Recommendations

Pope Francis' call to reach out to the peripheries of society has moved people in the diocese: "All of us are asked to obey (the Lord's) call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (JG 20). This has emerged over the last year within the diocese through both the Diaconate Discernment process and this past year's strategic planning. Recognizing that God does indeed call all people, and that the Church plays a role in discerning and receiving all vocations, we recommend the following:

1. In response to the call to the peripheries, we propose that a one-year program of ministry formation for women and men be established in the diocese. (This program could be an optional third year in the Lay Formation program, open to all Lay Formation alumni.)
2. That the diocese move forward in discerning the permanent diaconate with those who feel called to serve those on the peripheries of church and society, and that their formation be primarily, but not necessarily exclusively, facilitated within the diocese. We suggest:
  - a. That Lay Formation and a newly formed ministry formation program be an integral part of the discernment for and formation of permanent deacons within the diocese in a way that is consistent with the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, and that the total formation program be designed in such a way that it does not jeopardize funding or resources already allocated to existing ministries.
  - b. That the decision-making bodies which establish permanent diaconate formation include participation from people at the peripheries of our society.
  - c. That the whole of the formation program be designed and carried out in such a way that it is abundantly accessible to aspirants and candidates from all walks of life.
  - d. That we work with community and ecclesial partners in the development and execution of the formation program and its resources.
  - e. That the liturgical ministry of deacons be a celebration and expression of their active ministry of service in the community.
3. That, wherever possible, the diocese participates faithfully and prudently in local, national and international conversations about the possibility of opening the permanent diaconate to women as well as men.
4. That the diocese continue to educate and foster awareness about the vocation and ministry of every baptized Christian, building up collaboration and mutual respect between the lay and ordained children of God.

It is our hope that the Bishop will communicate our recommendations to the people of the diocese, along with the fruit of our conversation and discernment however the diocese moves forward, that all might have an opportunity to bear witness to the movement of the Spirit that has led us to these recommendations for this time.

## **Conclusion**

It has been a great privilege to serve the diocese as a part of this discernment committee. We wish to express our thanks to the Bishop for his invitation and his trust. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the many people throughout the diocese, who gave their time, prayer, energy and passion to the discernment discussions. Finally, we are immensely grateful for the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit, who has been our guide and grace throughout this process.

We humbly submit our recommendations to Bishop Donald Bolen, this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2014.

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