

A Long Road by Guy Drake

Living in Grand Island, Nebraska in 1979, Bishop Warner authorized the 4-year EFM curriculum as a road to the diaconate, eager to ordain some deacons in the vast reaches of the western part of the state, where Episcopal clergy were few and far between. My wife, Nan, and I went through the process of becoming certified EFM mentors and formed a group of 8 students from as far away as Holdrege to the southwest. We studied together for 3-12 years, when I received a job transfer to the Twin Cities, where we both grew up. Bishop Anderson did not recognize EFM for ordination, but we formed a new group at St. David's and stayed together for another four years. Meanwhile, all 6 of our Nebraska cohort were ordained six months after we left in 1982. With a new position at work and a young family, I was working around the clock and did not attend any seminary classes for a long time. Eventually, when the School for Formation was launched, I started taking one class per semester, when I could fit it in between 25 surgeries I had from 1986 to 2013. In the spring of 2013, I received a letter that I had taken enough courses over 6 years to be ordained as a deacon in June of that year. All of the members of our original cohort in Nebraska had retired from ministry by then.

I have been blessed to serve these last 7-12 years as deacon at St. David's in Minnetonka, the parish that Nan and I joined upon moving back to Minnesota in 1982. Last year Bishop Prior changed my title to Deacon Emeritus, in order to provide an opportunity for new deacons at St. David's. So far, everything has remained the same, and I will be allowed to stay with my St. David's family until I ride off into the sunset. I am so grateful for that, especially since in 1983 we bought a house just a couple of blocks from the church and are still there.

My entire time on the staff at St. David's has been spent serving with our rector, The Rev. Katherine Lewis, and our adjunct clergy, Len and Lindsay Freeman. I could never have asked for more capable and inspiring mentors. Becoming a parish deacon was a long learning curve for me, much more so than I had expected after being in discernment for 25 or 30 years! I still feel like a beginner in so many ways, and 2020 has clearly been an entirely new experience for me, unlike anything before in terms of pastoral care, outreach, preaching, and parish leadership.

I still feel a strong bond with the gang of deacons who were ordained with me in 2013-14 after our years together in The School for Formation. I think there were 13 of us ordained as priests and deacons in my ceremony alone on June 27, 2013, in a stifling field house at Breck School. But the class before ours in January and the class after ours the following January were filled with the folks I studied with for all those years. God bless all of you in your journey. It's been the joy of my life to have shared the ride.