

Everything has a season, as does active service for a deacon. How to decide when the right time is to retire and what that looks like can sometimes be a challenge. We know that some of you are contemplating when and how to retire from active status as a deacon. Bishop Loya and the archdeacons sat down and started with what is outlined in the new customary on this topic:

“Retirement: The age for retirement set forth in the canons is 72 (Title III.7.7). A deacon is ordained for life but may retire from active status with the consent of the Bishop. A retired deacon may wear the clerical collar and participate in the liturgy at the invitation of the rector of a parish with the understanding that the ministry of any deacon assigned to the parish takes priority.”

We have outlined some additional details below to help you in your discernment as well as clarify the process and the general terms of retirement for a deacon:

Should a deacon wish to retire, the deacon will be in conversation with the onsite supervisor, Archdeacon and Bishop about the timing and terms. Terms of retirement must be agreed upon by all parties. The deacon may not serve in any lay leadership capacity, including serving on vestries. The deacon may not hold other leadership positions in the congregation without the prior support and approval of the rector (or other named canonical authority), Archdeacon and Bishop. It is preferred practice that the deacon finds another congregation as a spiritual home and for worship. In some cases, this may be waived or a one year leave of absence before returning may be required. Self-care resources for deacons at retirement are available upon request.

Considerations for deacons discerning retirement: Where/how do I still want to remain active, and to what extent? Congregational ministry? Liturgy? Preaching? Teaching? Ministry in the world? Diocesan assignments/committees? Deacon formation? What involvement is optional? Is my capacity diminishing? Do I want/need fewer responsibilities? What does my current congregation need as I depart? Timing, leadership succession, etc. Where will I worship? Who will be my spiritual community? How will my ministry with the congregation and community be celebrated?

We hope this is helpful and gives some clarity. We are here to support you in your ministries and through ministry transitions. Retirement is one of these transitions. We would be happy to talk with you. Please reach out to the archdeacon who serves you and your mission area:

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