



The PeliDeacon



*a newsletter about deacons
in The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana*

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Benefits of Deeper Engagement in Community Outreach Explored in Deanery Presentations

In a series of presentations called “Sacagawea Meetings.” Archdeacon Charles deGravelles and other deacons have led deaneries in exploring the multiple benefits of outreach ministries. Named for the Indian guide who was indispensable to the Lewis and Clark expedition, these meetings have sparked vigorous conversations around outreach ministries and the often-untapped potential they offer to energize our parishioners and reinvigorate our parishes.



The Rev. Kit McLean and husband Bill hosted the Northshore Deanery meeting where Archdeacon Charles deGravelles and Grace Rose of the diocesan staff made presentations.

Most recently, deGravelles and Deacons Mark Hudson, Louis Ogle and Phil Wild met with the Northshore Deanery at the home of The Rev. Kit McLean in Hammond. Also attending was first-year seminarian Laura Freeze who is on the deacon track. Other meetings have been held with the Jefferson Deanery and the combined New Orleans deaneries. More meetings are scheduled with the Baton Rouge Deanery and the Southwest Deanery.

“Of course, churches have always understood that serving others, especially those in greatest need, is an indispensable

part of what it means to follow Christ,” deGravelles says, “but we’re also beginning to appreciate how deeper engagement with the people we serve can provide many additional benefits for congregations, their congregants, and the direction of the church at large.”

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As examples, deGravelles talked about the long-time success of EDOLA’s prison ministries, especially The Episcopal Chapel of the Transfiguration, a mission station at the Angola prison. “What began in the 1990s as a handful of lay and clergy from around the diocese, has over the years, been a crucible for forming clergy and fired-up lay folks that number in the hundreds. And now we are seeing formerly incarcerated people who were active in our prison churches who are out now and joining and providing leadership in our parish churches. Hands-on ministries like this are the places where you meet Christ in the world,” he said, “and your faith is always the stronger for it.”

As an example of innovative outreach, deGravelles pointed to the ministry for the Latino/Hispanic communities within the diocese. “The Cathedral in New Orleans, St. Margaret’s in Baton Rouge and even smaller churches like St. Timothy’s LaPlace are tapping into this growing demographic, a wonderful resource for service and growth. It’s gratifying to see us reaching deeply into the world around us.”

“I look forward to a time when every parish church can direct its newcomers and old-timers to a variety of outreach opportunities...”

DeGravelles noted another example of innovation in outreach--the recent partnership between Trinity New Orleans and Christ Cathedral. “Each church had its own feeding ministry but by combining resources and working together, the ministry is stronger and more efficient for both churches and the diocese.

Also presenting at the Northshore Deanery meeting was Grace Rose, newly appointed by Bishop Shannon Duckworth to administer a Lilly Foundation grant to provide “Episco-parenting Care Kits,” a “faith-based subscription service that will inspire and equip parents to embrace faith practices in their daily lives.” “The potential to reach, educate, serve and inspire young families—a vital demographic in church growth—is tremendous,” deGravelles said.

“We’ve had great response everywhere we’ve been,” deGravelles said of the Sacagawea meetings. “A lot is being done around the diocese, but some churches are missing opportunities to grow their outreach through collaboration with other churches and working through existing organizations. Just getting together to talk about what different churches are offering has opened the door for new ideas and possible partnerships. There’s a lot of good energy around this idea.”

DeGravelles concluded, “One priest told me that when young couples come to see him about possibly joining the church, they almost always want to know what’s being done in the community, and he wishes he could tell them that more was being done. I look forward to a time when every parish church can direct newcomers and old-timers to a variety of outreach opportunities, each with the potential to change the lives of the servers as well as the served.”

Upcoming Sacagawea Meetings

**Baton Rouge Deanery
Wednesday, April 24, 2024, Noon
St. James Place
333 Lee Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA**

Southwest Deanery to be determined

Looking back at 2023: A Year in the Life of Louisiana's Deacons

Under the leadership and with the encouragement and support of their new Bishop, Louisiana deacons spent 2023 reorganizing and reenergizing the diaconate in the diocese. Bishop Shannon Duckworth named long-time deacon, The Rev. Charles deGravelles, as Archdeacon, and appointed a new Council on Deacons.

“Encouraging and supporting the growth of the Sacred Order of Deacons was a main part of Bishop Duckworth’s vision for the diocese,” deGravelles said. “Many Louisiana deacons had reached retirement age during the pandemic, and even our most active deacons were getting older. We quickly saw the need to educate folks at every level about the vital role deacons play in the church and to encourage vocations, especially among younger men and women who were considering a call to ordained ministry.”



Bishop-elect Shannon Duckworth shares her vision for the diaconate in early meeting with deacons at Middendorf's.



Deacon Pat Lyle received the Louisiana Deacon Award for her years of selfless service.

One highlight of the year was “A Day on Deacons” held at the Solomon Episcopal Conference Center in October.” Over fifty people from across the diocese participated. The event included speakers, presentations and panel discussions, surveying the history and specific ministries of the diaconate within the church and in the world. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated by Bishop Duckworth. The day also included time for participants to visit with the Bishop, deacons and priests and to ask questions during plenary and informal settings.

“It was absolutely delightful and encouraging to see so much interest within the diocese,” deGravelles said. “I know of several people who have started formal discernment as a result of that day.” Bishop Duckworth agreed: “As I drove home, my heart was filled with gratitude for such a wonderful day, led by

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an incredible team. I look forward to many such gatherings in the years to come as well as the continued growth of this important order.”

Another 2023 high point for deacons was a day devoted to paying homage to an iconic historical figure in the diocese and to formally recognizing outstanding clergy whose active ministries have exemplified the spirit of the diaconate. The day began with Morning Prayer in the Frances Joseph Gaudet Chapel of St. Luke’s New Orleans. “While Gaudet was not an Episcopalian,” deGravelles said, “her work intersected at several key points with the Episcopal Church in our diocese, and although she was not an ordained person, the spirit of her work is thoroughly diaconal. We want to keep that spirit alive.”



Louisiana deacons pay homage to The Blessed Frances Joseph Gaudet in the Gaudet Chapel of St. Luke’s New Orleans

The keynote speaker for the day was Matthew Pineda. Pineda, imprisoned at age 16, returned to his Christian faith during his 35-year incarceration in Louisiana prisons. Released from prison, Pineda now works as Community Engagement Manager for the Parole Project in Baton Rouge, is a 12-step study group facilitator, and a certified substance abuse peer counselor for Celebrate Recovery. “To me, Matt Pineda represents the fruit of Frances Gaudet’s work with prison inmates, at-risk youngsters, and prison reform,” deGravelles said.

Deacons next moved to St. Anna’s where three clergy, retired deacons Pat Lyle of St. Margaret’s Baton Rouge and Joyce Jackson of St. Anna’s New Orleans, and The Rev.



Deacon Cindy Obier and Archdeacon Charles deGravelles serve Bishop Duckworth at an event at the Solomon Episcopal Conference Center. The Rev. John Pitzer preached.

William Terry, retiring rector of St. Anna’s, were presented with the **Louisiana Deacon’s Award** for their “deep commitment of loving service to others in the name and Spirit of Jesus Christ.” DeGravelles added, “As new groups of deacons come up, these servant-leaders will be role models they can look to and follow.”

“We give thanks to God for our diaconal vocations. Our hearts’ desire is to serve the LORD, and we look forward to the opportunities He will give us in 2024.”

When Analyzing the Outreach in Your Parish

Ask These Questions:

- ◇ *What is the outreach (or work in your community) that's being done from your parish?*
- ◇ *What long-term relationships, if any, have come out of this service?*
- ◇ *What have you learned and/or are you learning from the people you serve?*
- ◇ *How are you involving those who are being served in doing the work itself.*
- ◇ *How are those you serve helping to inform your goals and strategies for growing the church in the future?*



Louisiana Deacon Award recipients for 2023 included Deacon Joyce Jackson (top) and The Rev. William Terry



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