Dear Parishioners of St. Paul's:

I have been in discernment for the ordained ministry of the diaconate for the past year. I started to feel called toward becoming a vocational deacon a couple of years ago. A vocational deacon is different than a transitional deacon. Transitional deacons are ordained as step toward priesthood while vocational deacons stay in that ministry. Vocational deacons are to give 3-6 hours a week to the parish they are assigned and are traditionally an unpaid position in the church. Deacons are called to bring the needs of the people to the church. The Episcopal Church describes deacons in the following manner:

> "Deacons are members of one of three distinct orders of ordained ministry (with bishops and presbyters). In the Episcopal Church a deacon exercises "a special ministry of servanthood" directly under the deacon's bishop, serving all people and especially those in need (BCP, p. 543). This definition reflects the practice of the early church, in which deacons were ordained "not to the priesthood but to the servanthood [diakonia, "ministry"] of the bishop" (Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition). In the ancient Greek-speaking world the term diakonos meant an intermediary who acted or spoke for a superior. Christian deacons were agents of the bishop, often with oversight of charity. Since ancient times the liturgical functions of deacons have suggested the activity of angels. As they proclaim the gospel, lead intercessions, wait at the eucharistic table, and direct the order of the assembly, deacons act as sacred messengers, agents, and attendants. The revival of the order of deacons in the twentieth century has emphasized social care and service. Many bishops in the Episcopal Church expect their deacons to promote care of the needy outside the church."

This call strengthen during the summer of 2024. I attended discernment day in October 2024 and shortly after sent my application to become an aspirant. The diocese formed a discernment committee that involved a priest, a deacon, two members of St. Paul's and another lay person from our mission area. We met six times (two hours each) from February through July 2025. I was given essay assignments about a question or set of questions pertinent to the topic of each meeting. The committee would then ask me questions on the topic and dig deeper into my essays.

The Committee was then tasked with making a favorable/ unfavorable recommendation to the Commission on Ministry for me to attend the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Applicants to the Ministry (BACAM) weekend on October 10-11, 2025. The committee gave a favorable recommendation.

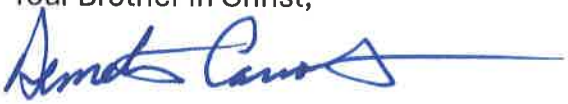
BACAM weekend is a weekend of intense discernment in which aspirants go through four separate one-hour interviews with individuals (Lay and Clergy) from the diocese. This committee then makes a recommendation to the Bishop as to the aspirants call.

The Bishop makes the decision if an aspirant is to enter the formation process and become a postulant. Bishop Jolly informed me on December 9, 2025 that I have moved forward in discernment and I am a postulant for the diaconate. Formation classes will begin in the Fall of 2026 but my status as a postulant begins now. Canonically a postulant is not allowed to serve on vestry, other positions of leadership, and/or decision making for a parish. I am allowed to remain as a crucifer, lector, lay preacher, altar guild and serve in other ministries. I have already submitted my resignation from Vestry.

Formation will take an estimated 2-3 years and is another leg in a long journey of the discernment process. The Bishop will assign to me to a parish, other than St. Paul's Canton, should the formation process discern my call to the diaconate and I am ordained.

People tend to think that discernment for ordained ministry is a private affair, but what I have learned in the past year is discernment involves community. The people of St. Paul's have been a positive influence and motivation in my discernment process. I am extremely grateful for that. I wanted to let you know where I was on this journey for transparency's sake and to ask for your prayers as this journey continues.

Your Brother in Christ,



Demetrius Carrothers