LETTER OF AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

The Rt. Rev. Mary Gray-Reeves, Bishop of the Diocese of El Camino Real
and
(name), Deacon of the Diocese of El Camino Real

whom the Bishop has assigned as Deacon at (congregation), a congregation of the Diocese of El Camino Real, beginning on (date).

Preface

The ministry of the Deacon has its origins in the life and ministry of Christ and in the history of the early Church. It is given shape, meaning and purpose in the words of the Baptismal Covenant. This ministry is made both concrete and specific by the words of the ordination service for Deacons:

“God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known by your word and example, to those among whom you live and work and worship. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time.” (BCP p. 543)

Diaconal ministry is understood as one which takes on characteristics of both servanthood and leadership. While the Deacon is bound by vow directly to the Bishop, the Deacon also carries out ministries in close collaboration with the Priest-in-Charge and congregation, as well as outside the formal boundaries of the Church.

Authority

Deacons serve directly under the authority of the Bishop and are accountable to the Bishop. Their office in congregations reflects and extends their role as agents of the Church, commissioned by the Bishop to make the word of God, the mystery of Christ, known in many different ways and venues.

Deacons serve in accordance with the diocesan customs for the Diaconate. Rectors/Vicars/Priests-in-Charge preside in their congregations and exercise authority in matters concerning the congregation.

Tenure

The Bishop will consult with the Deacon and the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge or other leader exercising oversight before making the assignment. The assignment continues at the discretion of the Bishop.
Ministries in the Congregation

The Deacon shall work with the Priest-in-Charge and the baptized members in the ongoing renewal of the congregation.

The Deacon shall cultivate sensitivity to the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

The Deacon shall implement and use methods of broad-based community organizing to engage parish members in meaningful, energized, in-reach and outreach service ministries.

Liturgy

The Deacon shall perform the full and proper liturgical functions of a Deacon at Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies, and at other liturgies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals by mutual agreement with the Priest-in-Charge.

The liturgical roles of the Deacon will include:

- Proclaiming the Gospel; Participating in the Prayers of the People; Bidding the Confession; Preparing the Table at the Eucharist; Assisting with the distribution of Communion; Sending forth the Eucharistic Visitors; Dismissing the people;

- and may include:
  - Bidding the Nicene Creed; Bidding the Lord’s Prayer; Preaching on a regular basis;
  - Other agreed upon functions appropriate to the Deacon.

At the Great Vigil of Easter, it is the prerogative of the deacon to carry the Paschal Candle to its place and to chant the Exsultet (BCP p. 284).

The Deacon shall not preside at a “Liturgy of the Word with Communion from the reserved Sacrament” (BCP p.408) unless prior permission of the bishop has been obtained by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge; the policies of the diocese must be observed.

Participation in Diocesan and Congregational Life

From time to time the Deacon may assist at liturgies elsewhere.

The Deacon will participate, to the fullest extent possible, in diocesan convention and other required meetings, in gatherings for deacons, and in continuing education.

The Deacon, like other assisting clergy, will have seat and voice (but not vote) on the vestry.

By agreement with the Priest-in-Charge, the Deacon may serve on appropriate committees of the congregation.

Work and Leave

Deacon (name) is self-supporting by (his/her) personal means; (he/she) serves the congregation (and the diocese) part-time without stipend or fee.

Deacon (name) is expected to work a maximum of (number – recommended up to 10) hours per week, including preparation time, in (his/her) service to the congregation to which (he/she) is assigned.
Deacon (name) may be absent from the congregation on (number – recommended one) Sunday each month.

Payment for the Deacon’s expenses to attend diocesan convention and other required meetings may be negotiated.

The congregation shall furnish a discretionary fund for the Deacon, funded out of offerings for the poor, other special offerings, and direct donations, to be used for charitable purposes both inside and outside the congregation. The fund shall be set up as an account in the congregation’s name, using the congregation’s tax ID number. The Fund should follow diocesan guidelines. The Deacon shall make a regular report to the Vestry on the use of the fund, without disclosing the names of beneficiaries.

The congregation shall furnish vestments for the Deacon’s role in congregational liturgies. The Deacon, at (his/her) expense, shall furnish vestments for liturgical celebrations elsewhere.

The Deacon, at (his/her) expense, shall maintain membership in professional organizations, purchase religious books and subscribe to professional periodicals, all pertaining to the Diaconate.

The Deacon is eligible for the following periods of leave, if possible taken concurrently with leave from secular work:
- Four weeks vacation each year;
- Two weeks each year for continuing formation;
- Sick leave, as required;
- Sabbatical leave from all church duties, normally after each seven years of service. An application for a sabbatical should be made in consultation with the Bishop and Priest-in-Charge of the congregation. The typical length of such leave is three months; the timing for sabbatical leave will be coordinated between the Deacon and the Priest-in-Charge.
- Such other leave as required to develop and maintain self-support outside the church shall be negotiated among the Deacon, Priest-in-Charge, and Bishop.

Review

The Bishop and Deacon will meet together on an annual basis to discuss ministry goals, achievements and issues. This meeting may be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. The Deacon will provide an annual letter of review to the Bishop on the occasion of the anniversary of her ordination.

This agreement shall be reviewed and if necessary revised every three years.

Termination

This agreement automatically terminates, including Deacon’s withdrawal of congregational assignment, if and when the Priest-in-Charge leaves this congregation. The Bishop may continue the Deacon’s assignment for the interim period. A new letter of Agreement shall be in place during the interim.

After a new Rector/Vicar/ Priest-in-charge has taken office, the Bishop may continue the Deacon’s assignment to the congregation, after consultation with the Rector/Vicar/
Priest-in-charge and the Deacon.
The Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge and the Deacon shall then, as soon as possible, renegotiate and sign the Letter of Agreement, subject to the signed approval of the Bishop.
A three-month leave of absence for the Deacon, agreed upon by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge and the Deacon, may be appropriate at any time during the first six months of the new Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge’s tenure.

The Deacon or the Priest-in-Charge may request termination of this agreement, including withdrawal of the Deacon from the congregation, at any time, by giving written notice to the Bishop. Termination of the pastoral relationship is ultimately at the Bishop’s discretion. A period of time between the decision to end the pastoral relationship and actual departure is preferred and will be discerned with the Deacon and the Priest-in-Charge.

Revisions

This letter may be revised only by mutual agreement of the Bishop, Deacon, and Priest-in-Charge at any time.
Revision to this Letter of Agreement may be initiated at any time by the Bishop or at the request of the Deacon or the Priest-in-Charge.

The Rt. Rev. Mary Gray-Reeves, Bishop
Diocese of El Camino Real

(name), Deacon
Diocese of El Camino Real

(name), Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge
(congregation/location)