

Good day everyone. This reports comes to you just a few days before the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the more curious deacons of note in our Church. When I reflect on all the stories of St. Francis (and boy there are some stories!), I love the fact that the Church found a space for him and his radical idea of relationships between every part of the created order – from the wind, to the sparrow to you and I. All comes from the same creative hand and so we're all connected. Francis continues to not only be a modern day icon for Creation Care but also a great reminder for all of us deacons who live, foster and weave community together.

As a Community of Deacons, we're called to pray, serve and support the diocese, always (as the bishop asks us in our ordination liturgy) looking for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need. It's a tall order and a holy endeavor, which makes gathering as a community imperative for our wellbeing and self-care.

We usually meet on a monthly basis for fellowship, support, check- ins with each other and education. This past year we've spent time "telling our stories" with tales about faithful trips to Puerto Rico, and also the Holy Land. We've heard about new ministries which have begun and shared news about diocesan ministries and committees for which many of us are members. We've had deacons in the news this year - *Bells and blessings: The story of Deacon Beth Simpson* (https://www.columbiamissourian.com/visuals/videos/bells-and-blessings-the-story-of-deacon-beth-simpson/article_7d917448-f293-11ed-9d8e-9fd95476413f.html) and *Food Justice with the Rev. Deacon Barbi* Click on our Bishop's 11 in 11 podcast series (<https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-hxw9i-141434a>).

In June we celebrated the festive ordinations of the Deacons Loretta Go and David Luckes who have been grace-filled additions to our Community. We also gathered to celebrate the life of the Rev. Jan O'Neil, to tell stories about this amazing woman of faith and mourn our sister, who was an inspirational deacon who faithfully served our diocese for many years. *May angels sweetly sing her to her rest.*

I want to thank the bishop and the entirety of the diocesan staff for being such supporters of the diaconate. To labor alongside this dedicated and humorous cohort of fellow workers in the mission field is a joy! I also want to thank the numerous lay persons and priests of our diocese who also support the diaconate in ways both large and small!

Lastly, I would be amiss if I did not thank our entire Community of Deacons for their nonstop dedication, love and service to the diocesan community. I consistently admire each of them and they help me to be a better deacon and servant leader. It warms my heart when I hear others talk about all the things that our deacons are doing in their parishes, in the diocese, in the world. They continually teach me what building the Kingdom of God looks like.

To learn more, please visit the Community of Deacons diocesan page here:

<https://www.diocesemo.org/community-of-deacons/>