

The diversity of the three presentations was remarkable; each was a reflection of our unique backgrounds, ages, experiences, personalities, spiritual gifts, and communication styles. Even so, there was a common thread that ran through all of them—an awareness that, in unity, we are living out the mission statement we created last June of “prayerfully following in Jesus’ footsteps and growing into radical servanthood.” Amy feels called to chaplaincy, and Susan to 21 st century evangelization/re-evangelization, using literature and the arts in non-church settings to spark spiritual discussion and inner journeying, especially among the “nones” (people who check the box for “none” on surveys of religious affiliation). The call I am sensing is to a ministry of presence and human touch among the frail elderly in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. I’m going to use a paragraph, rather than just a few words, to describe it, because it’s a ministry that can be easily added to St. Luke’s long list of community outreach projects. Building on the bond that is formed simply by holding a person’s hand, the ministry I envision goes one step further, with the application of lotion to patients’ hands and lower arms, while engaging them in conversation (if they are able and interested), then ending the visit with a hands-on blessing. For me, it’s a ministry that says: “Your life matters, and you are loved.” When this ministry is launched, volunteers will be needed, so it’s not too soon to prayerfully ponder this question: May God be calling me to touch world-weary hearts through hands of love?

After the presentations and lunch, Deacon Robin Hollis, Director of the Deacon Formation Academy, and Archdeacon Sarah Gets met with the postulants, Rectors, spiritual companions and family members as a group to discuss, in broad strokes, the remaining steps of the formation process. The next six months will have an academic focus, with DFA faculty leading classes in theology, Scripture, The Book of Common Prayer, the Deacon in Liturgy, and preaching. After a summer retreat at Chapel Rock, a six-month internship at a parish other than our

own will commence, which will require us to step back from involvement in all ministries in our home parish, and to develop a “succession plan” for leadership of any ministries that we currently lead. Academic classes will continue during our internships, in subjects such as Christian ethics, pastoral care, recovery ministries, etc., with the final “pieces” of the DFA curriculum being completed in the Spring of next year. God willing, ordination will follow soon thereafter.

Because of the small size of our class, and the format of the afternoon session, there was ample opportunity for interaction with everyone, so, at the end of the day, we left Saint Barnabas feeling a sense of connectedness with everyone, and affirmed in our call to be deacons.

Our next class will be on February 16 th , at the Cathedral—our usual venue—with two new books having been assigned: *Opening the Prayer Book*, by Jeffrey Lee, and *Deacons in the Liturgy*, by Ormonde Plater. In the midst of all this study, I sometimes stop for a moment just to thank God, again, for having led me to St. Luke’s, and to all of you who are now walking with me on this amazing journey.

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers, and support!

—Keehna Sture