

Ken Delisle



Year Commissioned

I was commissioned in 1994 in Morden, Manitoba through the Conference of Manitoba and North-western Ontario.

Program of Formation

My studies were through St. Stephen's College in Edmonton in an experimental program called The Western Field Based Diaconal Program. It was a five-year program where we worked half time in a church and/ or outreach setting while studying. We remained in our hometown doing the work; taking approved courses

either in a classroom setting, or internet or correspondence. The entire class met for 2 - two-week periods each year for specific studies and group formation. We also spent two weeks in Cuba to experience the gospel in a different cultural setting.

What called you to Diaconal Ministry?

When the call for a second career came to me, I debated between ordained ministry or theatre as I am also a professional actor. I kept deciding on theatre but it didn't feel right. Then a friend told me about Diaconal ministry where the type of theatre I was doing would be considered ministry. I was directing church members in plays with Christian themes that were performed in services or in public.

Describe some of your experiences of ministry

I have worked in congregational settings as youth minister and outreach worker. I have worked as pastor for Winnipeg Church of the Deaf; Campus Chaplain; Pulpit Supply to a three point pastoral charge; worked at Rainbow Ministry (Outreach to Winnipeg's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community) and Interim Minister.

One of the stories I tell about shared learning and working in circles is about an incident with Winnipeg Church of the Deaf. We always worshipped in a circle because we were few in number and because culturally, it is easier to see what a person is signing. After each reflection in the service, there was always discussion. Sometimes it connected to the reflection and readings and sometimes we needed to discuss an incident or question someone had during the week.

One service we talked about women and oppression. I was asked if women in the gay and lesbian community were treated as equals. I started to answer and stopped. I asked why the question, do you think it should be different? They said yes, since gay men experience oppression we shouldn't be oppressing women. We should know better. I asked if women were treated as equals in the Deaf community. The men said yes and the women weren't so sure. So we started a dialogue on why people who are oppressed, oppress others. Why didn't we learn from our experience. One person said we did learn. We learn to oppress so we can stay on top, just like our oppressors did. There was a stillness and lots of nods and then discussion on how we stop it; break the cycle by following Christ's command to love and not hate. We are brothers and sisters. Here were Deaf and hearing; men and women; gay and straight; Canadian and foreign-born learning together.

How I explain Diaconal Ministry to others ...

For me, Diaconal ministry is working and learning together; sharing resources and encouraging each other to take risks and grow. It's a ministry of equals; it's a ministry of circles and not pyramids of authority. It is also a ministry where we hold each other accountable and challenge each other to be more open, justice seeking, caring and compassionate. How are we living out the command to seek justice, love kindness and walk with God?

What gives you the most satisfaction, reward, sense of fulfilment from the ministry you do?

It is an awesome spiritual moment when someone suddenly has an AHA moment and they are filled with a fire of understanding and awareness, either of their own goodness and blessedness or in a sudden clarity about the plight of others.