

Brothers and Sisters,

The **Saint Stephen's Diaconal Community Association (SSDCA)** Officers would like to brief you on our activities this past year and express our thoughts to you as we enter into this Advent Season. The board is currently composed of: **Ed and Patty Giblin, Rick and Bernadette Rall, Don and Mary Eggleston and Lon and Susan Smith.**

Let's share a reminder of **our purpose as recently composed by Dick Lombard.** He recalls, *"In the early days of formation, the first diaconal ordination class developed the practice of meeting on Sundays for what they called "forum," an opportunity for families to develop social and spiritual fellowship. In time this practice was formalized into the Saint Stephen's Diaconal Community Association, with the stated goals of building community and furthering the education and spiritual growth of "deacons, candidates, aspirants, wives, widows and families."* These goals remain as important to us today as they were in those early years.

In the spirit of these foundational objectives, we have created and participated in several activities for the benefit of our community and look forward to doing even more in 2024. I am sure that there are many other events taking place. Let me just share **some of the 2023 activities:**

- 1. SSDCA Annual Retreat** at Notre Dame Retreat House led by **Dcn. Dennis Lohouse.** The retreat was well received and feedback was very positive. **Over 50 people came to this event.**
- 2. Deacons and wives conducted several days of reflection at Notre Dame Retreat House.** You are also invited by George and Paula Welch and I to attend a BOUNDLESS COMPASSION retreat and share this with your communities.
- 3. The Auburn Community** continues to meet with for **fellowship.** I only have second hand knowledge of this community, but this is a great example of taking care of folks in your region. Thank you for your leadership!
- 4. Contemplative prayer on-line is available.** If you connect with George Welch, I am sure an invitation would be extended to you.
- 5. Supporting the spiritual growth of those in formation.** There is a small group of deacons and wives that have been working to share their spiritual journey with the candidates. This can be expanded to give regional support of those in formation. If interested, contact Dcn. Ed Giblin.
- 6. Several deacons attend the funerals** of those who have gone to their eternal reward and offer community support for the surviving spouses. Thank you.
- 7. Dcn. Don Eggleston led an evening of prayer for deacons of Western Monroe County** and are interested in getting this to take place in other regions of the DOR. **Thank you Dcn. Jeff Serbicki for leading the Office for us.** Our hope is to expand this through the empowerment of deaneries and look for leadership to step forward to support regional growth. If interested in being the VP of a region, contact Ed Giblin or Lon Smith.

- 8. Fellowship in Western Monroe County for diaconate widows led by Dcn. Don Eggleston at Padre Pio Chapel. The chapel is available to us via Dcn Ange Coccia.** We are hoping to expand this to other (regions). **Nearly 20 people attended** and from this we may see more wives come together to support each other in their ministries. Don's notes will help you implement this activity in your region.

2024 promises to be a great year as our momentum continues to build. We now have a full slate of officers! We are seeking VPs for each region in the DOR. We are fanning flames of the local community to support each other. We are continuing to build opportunities to gather.

2024 COMING EVENTS:

- 1. Diaconate Convocation** will be held on **March 2nd 2024** 8:30-3:30 @ Notre Dame Retreat House (NDRH). **Register now** by calling the NDRH. Cost is \$20/person.

2. Stan Zawacki Award: Dcn. Stan Zawacki Memorial Diaconal Service Award

Please note: We are extending nominations for the Stan Zawacki award till March 2, 2024 for this year.

The award is for a person(s) who has exemplified a ministry in a diaconal sense of service. This can be a lay person, clergy or religious. It is not primarily an award for deacons or wives but those who have, by living lives that preach the Gospel, ministered as deacons, ministered to deacons, supported the diaconal community, or, in other ways, have contributed extraordinarily to the awareness of, ministry of or to, or emulation of the office of deacon.

When nominating someone for the Deacon Stan Zawacki Award – be sure to include Who, Why, and a brief description of the achievement(s) for which you are making the nomination. Once an individual is nominated, their name remains in the selection pool.

Send the nomination to the SSDCA President: Lon.Smith@dor.org

3. Retreats

- a. SSDCA Second Weekend in September
 - b. Deacons Retreat to include all of New York State and Ontario Canada.
 - c. Regional Deacon's Wives Retreat. Focusing on the needs of the wives.
- 4. Support of those in formation:** Candidate Overnights at NDRH. Candidate support in their local region.
- 5. Picnics** – SSDCA DOR PICNIC AUGUST 10, 2024 Al Lorenz Park Mt. Morris. We encourage your participation and assistance in planning this event..
- 6. Rose Marie Lombard** is working hard to get some traction for **support for wives in Phoebe and Friends.** Give her a call, she would love to hear from you!

7. **Check out our website improvements** <https://www.ssdca.org/>

Brothers and Sisters,

As you can see we are really working diligently to ramp up the activities as we recover from Covid-19. **Now we need everyone to get onboard.**

How can you help? Certainly with your gifts and talents we need everyone to participate to lighten the load.

We also need your financial gifts.

Our annual dues have not changed, they remain \$20/individual, \$40/couple.

Currently, we have approximately \$5,000 in our SSDCA account.

About 30% who have paid their dues for the year.

We need your help to support the many activities.

Please consider supporting our vocation's SSDCA.

Please send the dues Payable to Diocese of Rochester with a note in memo area: For SSDCA Dues.

Pastoral Center
Attn. Deacon Ed Giblin
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624

Peace and Blessings to all.

Your SSDCA Officers: Lon, Don, Bernadette and Rick.