

The Ministry of DEACONS

Those who respond to God's call to lead in service and to equip others for this ministry through teaching, proclamation, and worship and who assist elders in the administration of the sacraments are ordained deacon.

—¶303.2, Book of Discipline

Ordained to Word and Service

Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word and Service to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two. Deacons exemplify Christian discipleship, create opportunities for others to enter into discipleship, and connect the needs and hurts of the people with the church.

- In the world, the deacon seeks to express a ministry of compassion and justice and assists lay persons as they claim their own ministry.
- In the congregation, the ministry of the deacon is to teach and to form disciples, and to lead worship together with other ordained and lay persons, connecting the needs and hurts of the people with the church. (¶329)

Deacons Give Leadership

In the church's life deacons give leadership:

- In the teaching and proclamation of the Word
- In worship and in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- In forming and nurturing disciples
- In conducting marriages and burying the dead
- In the congregation's mission to the world and
- In leading the congregation in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world

For the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church, the bishop may grant local sacramental authority to a deacon in the absence of an elder in their primary appointment. (¶328)

The ministry of the deacon is a faithful response of the mission of the church meeting the emerging needs of the future.

Conference Membership

The deacon in full connection is a clergy member of the annual conference and shall have the rights of voice and vote in the clergy session and the annual conference where membership is held. They shall be eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions, or committees of the annual conference and hold office on the same; and shall be eligible for election as a clergy delegate to the General, central, or jurisdictional conference. (¶329.2)

Appointment

Deacons may be appointed to serve as their primary field of service:

- (1) through agencies and settings beyond the local church, including ecumenical agencies, that extend the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world and connect the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized; or
- (2) through United Methodist church-related agencies, schools, colleges, theological schools, and within connectional structures of the UMC; or
- (3) within a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish leading in the congregation's mission to the world and equipping all Christians to fulfill their calls to Christian Service.



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The appointment of deacons shall be made by the bishop. It may be initiated by (1) the individual deacon, (2) the agency seeking their service, (3) the bishop, or (4) the district superintendent. They will be non-itinerant. Deacons are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for the fulfillment of their call to servant leadership. When deacons serve in an agency or setting beyond the local church, the bishop, after consultation with the deacon and the pastor in charge, shall appoint the deacon to a local congregation where they will take missional responsibility for leading other Christians into ministries of service. (§331)

Steps into the Ministry of the Deacon

Is God calling you? If you believe God is calling you to the ministry of the deacon, to connect the church with the world, spend time in discernment, listening to God.

Talk to your pastor or deacon. God uses others to help in your discernment. Listen to what they say. Read *The Christian as Minister* and *Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process*.

Meet with the Pastor Staff/Parish Relations

Committee. With their approval and consultation with the District Superintendent you can continue your discernment with a mentor.

Meet with the District Committee on Ordained

Ministry. You will be interviewed to become a "certified candidate." After meeting the educational requirements for commissioning your District Committee will make a recommendation to the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Complete Your Educational Requirements. There are four routes to becoming a deacon.

1. Bachelor's Degree and Master of Divinity **OR**
2. Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree from approved seminary **OR**
3. Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in area of specialization and Basic Graduate Theological Studies **OR**
4. Bachelor's Degree and Professional Certification and Basic Graduate Theological Studies (over 35 years old)

Become Ordained a Deacon in full connection. This begins a lifetime of servant ministry to Word and Service.

Deacon appointments may include:

Local church (rural or urban)

- Within team ministry
- Music ministry
 - Christian education
 - Mission outreach

- Parish visitor
- Youth ministry
- Business administration
- Evangelism
- Ethnic ministries

A group of churches or district

- Music ministry
- Disaster relief
- Homeless ministry
- Outreach to community
- Unemployed ministry
- Youth ministry
- Mission strategy
- Rehabilitation programs
- Counseling
- Ethnic ministries

Agencies

- Community centers
- Schools
- Aged-care facilities
- Counseling
- Hospice-care centers
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Industry
- General agencies
- Group homes

Parish ministries

- With children, elderly, homeless, unemployed, drug abusers, disabled
- As parish nurse
- Legal assistant

Annual Conference

- Connectional ministries
- Mission strategy
- Social justice
- Campus ministry

For further information contact:

Division of Ordained Ministry

Deacons and Diaconal Ministries
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
The United Methodist Church
PO Box 340007
Nashville, TN 37203-0007
615-340-7389
Fax: 615-340-7395
deacons@gbhem.org
www.gbhem.org/ministry