

DEACONS: ORDAINED, COMMISSIONED, CANDIDATE

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The 1996 General Conference established the Order of Deacons as a separate and distinct order from the Order of Elders in The United Methodist Church. That legislation discontinued the previous understanding of deacon as a transitional step along the journey to becoming an elder. The distinctive ministry of this permanent Order of Deacons as described in the 1996 *Book of Discipline* “is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry” (p.187). This concept of a ministry of service or *diakonos* has a long history in Christian community (see for example, Frank 1997; Rowe 1999; Yrigoyen 1999). For The United Methodist Church, creation of a separate Order of Deacons was an entirely new model (Rowe 1999). This new model of ministry of the ordained has far reaching implications for all in ministry (Crain 2007, Frank 2000). This research takes up the questions - who are these servants of The United Methodist Church, where are they serving, and what are their compensation packages?

In 2000, The Ecumenical Network for the Diaconate (TEND) conducted a survey¹ of deacons, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses in the Protestant Episcopal Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Roman Catholic Church, and The United Methodist Church. Deacons in The United Methodist Church were found to be unique in several important ways from the other denominations studied. The greatest number of male survey respondents were received from the Episcopalian (41.9%) and United Methodist (20.6%) churches, but the majority of deacons across these denominations are female. The United Methodists also “carry out their ministries almost entirely within a church context and are by-and-large

¹ The response rate was 35.6%, 516 surveys.

paid to do so” (p.6). Finally, 82% of United Methodist deacon respondents had a graduate degree, more deacons with graduate degrees than in any of the other denominations.

In 2001, a short survey was conducted with deacons, diaconal ministers, and persons certified in specialized ministries in The United Methodist Church to examine where they were serving and their salary in the year 2000.² Most (77%) of the 459 deacons who responded to that survey were female, and the majority of those deacons (73%) had received at least one master’s degree, nearly 7% had a doctoral degree. The findings of that survey also indicate a salary disparity among deacons; that men received a salary more than \$9,600 greater than women’s average salary. That research was an important step to begin to understand the status of the order. In their examination of salary, however, that research did not take into account other factors, such as age, race, or education level. Taking those factors into account may help to explain salary differences.

In 2007, research was undertaken to both update and expand upon the 2001 findings. To do this, an online survey was administered to all deacons, diaconal ministers, and persons having certification in specialized ministry. Survey questions included demographic information, education, ministry status, appointment, location of appointment, salary and benefits, and several measures of satisfaction (career, spiritual, relational). The focus of this paper is on the deacon respondents who were under an appointment at the time they completed the survey. The purposes of this paper are to (1)

² That research was conducted on behalf of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Section of Deacons and Diaconal Ministries and reported in “2000 Background & Salary Report: Exploring Differences among Individuals Classified as Certified Only, Diaconal Minister & Deacon.” Data were gathered from an 18 item questionnaire, primarily multiple choice questions on demographics, education, appointment, type of ministry and income, two opened-ended essay questions, a rank order item for 10 values of ministry, and a Likert scale agreement rating on 13 opinion statements. Responses were received from 712 certified laity, diaconal ministers, and deacons.

describe the current demographic makeup of the order (2) examine deacon salary differences, and (3) examine the deacon's level of satisfaction with their work.

In this paper, I show that deacons are serving in a variety of positions both in the local church and beyond the local church. Furthermore, the salary of deacons varies by appointment: location (in or beyond the local church), position, jurisdiction, and by individual level characteristics. Finally, deacons are, overall, satisfied, and enjoy their work. Later papers will more closely consider these differences and examine whether any differences found in men's and women's salary remain after controlling for age, race, education level, and appointment. Another paper will examine the deacon's perception of the value of the order, and how that affects their work satisfaction. Finally, separate papers will focus on diaconal ministers and those certified in specialized ministry to describe the makeup of those ministers.

LITERATURE

Demographics

The vast need for the service of the deacon has been well described (Hartley and Van Buren 2000; Crain and Seymour 2001), but little is known about the particular deacons (or those on the track to become deacon) who are responding to those needs, where and in what capacities they are serving, nor about the benefits and compensation packages they receive. Some basic demographic information is available for deacons in full connection: In 2007, there were 1,331 deacons in full connection, 92% (1,226) were white or Caucasian, and 77% (1,010) were female (GCFA 2008). The percentage of deacons under the age of 35 in 2007 was 7.10% - better than the 4.92% of elders under the age of 35 (Lewis Center 2008). Deacons serve in a vast array of positions both in and

beyond the local church. Margaret Ann Crain and Jack L. Seymour (2001) do a wonderful job of illustrating the numerous ways that deacons serve as a bridge between worship/church and work/world.

Compensation

In The United Methodist Church, minimum pay is established by the equitable compensation policy of each annual conference. The 2008 *Book of Discipline* reads,

“when the deacon’s primary field of service is within a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, the deacon shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish (§625.2) not less than the minimum established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for full-time and part-time pastors and shall participate in the denominational pension and benefit plans, programs, and in the health benefit and supplemental programs of his or her annual conference subject to the provisions and standards of those programs as established by the annual conference where health coverage is not provided from another source (§331.14.b).

This means the compensation provided to deacons may not fall below a set amount, but may otherwise vary. Salary for those appointed beyond the local church, on the other hand, is determined by the deacon’s profession (as attorney, doctor, social worker, etc.) and not by their vocation as a deacon. Further, those appointed beyond the local church, particularly in secular employment, are subject to the conditions set by that employer.

The denomination likely has little or no influence over compensation. One example may be a deacon who is a public school teacher. For both deacons appointed in the local church as well as deacons appointed beyond the local church the deacon must initiate the employment search and secure his or her position through an interview, just as any other church employee would (Hartley and Van Buren 2000). Particularly among those appointed beyond the local church, we may expect the range of income among deacons to be wide.

In The United Methodist Church, as in other denominations, clergy serve in a variety of settings, locations, roles, and positions. Salary may not align with the number of hours worked; many work greater than full-time hours or working full-time hours in part-time positions. Deacons may also have primary and secondary appointments, or multiple part-time and full-time positions. Some may receive a housing allowance or parsonage while others do not. Further, benefits, such as health, dental, and pension may be received by some but not all.

McMillan and Price (2003) found that median income, including housing, of Protestant clergy is \$40,000 compared to only \$25,000 for Catholic priests. Catholic priests, however, receive additional benefits such as health care, retirement, and theological education that are often additional expenses for Protestant clergy. Protestant clergy may also be responsible for the financial care of a family and the education of their children, costs that priests do not have. Finally, in their examination of Protestant church polity, they found that clergy median salaries in connectional churches (such as Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian/Reformed and Episcopalian) are greater than the median salaries of the congregational or decentralized churches (Baptist, Pentecostal and UCC). This means that compared to other denominations, United Methodist clergy may actually fare better than do clergy in other denominations.

That research, like most other research, does not consider deacon's wages separate from elder's wages, but rather clergy salary is considered in the aggregate. With few exceptions, little research examines deacon's compensation packages at all. One exception is the GBHEM (2001) survey where deacon's salary was reported separately from other minister's salary. Findings indicate deacon's reported average salary in the

year 2000 was just over \$32,159.³ In bivariate comparisons, salary varied by region, appointment, position, sex, and education.

Although disparity has consistently been found in men's wages compared to women's wages in the secular labor force, results are less clear in the religious community. McMillan and Price (2003) found that among clergy making less than \$60,000 per year (holding other variables constant) there was only a \$600 difference in average salaries of men compared to women. Although not a significant income difference, the authors argue that women "do not seem to have equal access to the higher-paying jobs" (p.14). For the United Methodist clergy, McMillan and Price (2003) found that church size and whether the church is in a rural setting are the most important variables explaining clergy salary. For example, salary at small membership churches in the southern jurisdictions is lower than in the Western jurisdiction. But, for large membership churches salary is highest in the South. The opposite was found in the North where the higher salaries are found in the small churches and the lower salaries in the large churches. This suggests then, that any salary disparity potentially found in 2007 may actually be due to the location of the appointment.

A great deal of attention has been focused toward comparing clergy salary to salary of other professions. When compared with doctors and lawyers, as some argue is appropriate, clergy income is significantly lower. Matthew Price (2001) writes that, "Although ministers like to think of themselves as members of the professional middle class, they are hanging on to that status by their fingernails" (p.1). He argues that the mean income of clergy has remained stable while the mean income of other professionals has continued to increase, thereby increasing the disparity. When compared to teachers

³ Average salaries rounded here to the nearest whole dollar.

and social workers, a generally less-educated population, clergy salary is fairly comparable. McMillan and Price (2003) found that “Median salaries for clergy have grown steadily over time to become comparable to those of teachers and social workers” (p.13). Determining whether there are disparities in deacon salary and whether deacon salary is comparable to similar professions is challenging. For example, should deacon salary be comparable to salary of elders as both are elders? Similarly, should deacon salary be comparable to other professions with similarly high levels of education?

Results of the present study add to the existing research in several important ways. First, this research updates the previous demographic information. Second, deacon salaries are not aggregated with elder salary. Deacons salaries are examined in a variety of settings both in and beyond the local church, in full-time and part-time appointments. This first paper is primarily descriptive, later analysis will examine deacon salary using multivariate analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A total of 3,077 people were sent an invitation to participate in the survey - all deacons including candidate, commissioned and ordained, all diaconal ministers, and all people who are certified in specialized ministry (both clergy and laity). Where an e-mail address was available, the survey was administered online. All others received a paper copy of the survey. The response rate was 49% (1,521). Survey responses were exported and converted to SPSS⁴ for coding, cleaning, and analysis. The original data file consists of 226 continuous and categorical variables. For additional details on the survey methodology see Appendix A. In this paper, responses from 1,108 deacons (candidate,

⁴ Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences Version 15

commissioned and ordained) are examined. Analysis is based on valid cases and percentages are rounded to the nearest whole.

Research Questions

The original research from which this paper is drawn focused around five primary research questions and six primary hypotheses. For the purposes of this paper, several of the hypotheses sub-points are reframed as primary hypotheses. Four research questions are examined by testing eight hypotheses. The research questions are:

1) What is the current demographic makeup of deacons?

Hypothesis 1: Demographics will differ between candidate, commissioned, and ordained.

2) Where are the deacons serving?

Hypothesis 2: The majority of the deacons will be serving beyond the local church.

3) What are the compensation packages (salary and benefits) received by the deacons?

Hypothesis 3: Deacon's salary will vary by jurisdiction, sex, and appointment.

Hypothesis 4: Salary will be higher in the southern jurisdictions than elsewhere.

Hypothesis 5: Salary will be greater beyond the local church than in the local church.

Hypothesis 6: Salary will be lower for female than male deacons.

4) What is the job satisfaction level of deacons?

Hypothesis 7: Deacons will express dissatisfaction with work.

Hypothesis 8: The perceived value of the order will be low.

Sample

Of the 1,108 deacon/deacon track survey respondents, more than half (58%, 634) are ordained, 14% (153) are commissioned deacons, and 29% (315) are deacon candidates (Table 1). The average age of the deacons is 49.75. Since candidacy to ordination is a multi-year process we may expect that deacon candidates and commissioned are younger than are the ordained deacons. Although younger than the ordained, candidates and commissioned are aged 44 on average, older than the traditional college age student.

Table 1. Characteristics of Deacon and Deacon Track

	Ordained	Commissioned	Candidate	ALL
Valid N	634 (57.5%)	153 (13.9%)	315 (28.6%)	1102 ⁵ (100%)
Age (Mean)	53.57	44.86	44.29	49.75
Sex	77.9%	71.6%	75.3%	76.2%
Female	(464)	(106)	(213)	(783)
Male	22.1% (132)	28.4% (42)	24.7% (70)	23.8% (244)
Race	3.9%	4.9%	6.4%	4.7%
Black/African American	(23)	(7)	(18)	(48)
White/Caucasian	92.9% (552)	93.8% (135)	90.5% (256)	92.4% (943)
Other	3.2% (19)	1.4% (2)	3.2% (9)	2.9% (30)
Education	13.1%	3.4%	38.8%	18.8%
Bachelor's	(79)	(5)	(112)	(196)
Master's	78.5% (475)	89.9% (134)	55.6% (160)	73.8% (769)
Doctorate	7.4% (45)	6.7% (10)	4.2% (12)	6.4% (67)

⁵ Six of the 1108 deacons/deacon track respondents could not be classified as ordained, commissioned, or candidate because of missing information.

Most of the deacon respondents are female (76%, 783). A slightly greater percentage of the ordained (78%, 464) are female, than are candidates (75%, 213) or commissioned (72%, 106) female. This could indicate the beginning of a change where a greater percentage of men may be ordained deacon. Although candidates appear to be slightly more racially diverse, it is not enough to make a significant impact on the racial makeup of deacons. Even if all candidates and commissioned become ordained, the percentage white/Caucasian would remain at 92%. Just over one-third (37%, 404) of the deacons are in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, 24% (263) in the South Central, 20% (224) North Central, 12% (126) Northeastern, and 8% (83) Western.

This means that the survey respondents represent deacons at all stages of the process toward full conference membership, and all areas of the country. The sample size is twice that of the 2001 survey, but the demographic makeup of the respondents is quite similar to the 2001 research sample.

FINDINGS

Education

The diaconal ministry office was discontinued with the creation of the Order of Deacons in 1996. Those who were diaconal ministers could become ordained as deacon after completion of requirements for ordination. Educational requirements for those seeking a deacons ordination are a bachelor's degree plus one of the following (1) Master of Divinity degree (2) master's degree from a seminary approved by the University Senate (3) master's degree and Basic Graduate Theological Studies (4) Professional Certification and Basic Graduate Theological Studies – available to those over the age of 35 (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry). Although these requirements are

in place, the creation of the Order of Deacons and the subsequent movement of diaconal ministers into that order resulted in a variety of concerns about the educational standards for deacons (Crain 2007). Some feared that this would be an uneducated order. As will be shown, however, deacons are highly educated.

The majority (80%, 836) of the deacons and those on the deacon track have received at least one master’s or doctoral degree (Table 2), and the percentage increases as the deacons become ordained. Likely the candidates, and perhaps the commissioned,⁶ are currently pursuing higher education and have not yet achieved their highest educational level. Of those with a master’s degree, 184 (22%) earned a Master’s of Divinity. Among those earning a master’s other than M.Div., for nearly half (45%, 294) at least one of their master’s degrees was earned at a UM-related institution.

Table 2. Highest Level of Education Completed

	Ordained	Commissioned	Candidate	TOTAL
Some College	1.0% (6)	-	1.4% (4)	1.0% (10)
Bachelor’s Degree	13.1% (79)	3.4% (5)	38.9% (112)	18.8% (196)
Master’s Degree	78.5% (475)	89.9% (134)	55.6% (160)	73.8% (769)
Doctoral Degree	7.4% (45)	6.7% (10)	4.2% (12)	6.4% (67)
TOTAL	100% (605)	100% (149)	100% (288)	100% (1042)

Often, deacon/deacon track receive theological training at multiple institutions, some received training at as many as six institutions,⁷ both United Methodist-related and non-UM-related. Commonly, ordained deacons received at least some of their theological training from Perkins School of Theology and/or Garrett-Evangelical Theological

⁶ With review and approval of their annual conference a person may enter candidacy or commissioning prior to completion of their education.

⁷ 10% (64) no institutions selected – likely they skipped the question or have not yet begun their training.

Seminary (Table 3). Commissioned and candidate are spread out, with the greatest number at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and nearly equal numbers at Wesley Theological Seminary, Perkins School of Theology, and Methodist Theological School.

Table 3. Number of Deacons receiving Theological Training by Institution

United Methodist Related Seminary	Ordained	Commission/Candidate
Boston University School of Theology	11	5
Candler School of Theology	53	24
Claremont School of Theology	27	4
Drew University, The Theological School	21	9
Duke University, The Divinity School	23	11
Gammon Theological Seminary	-	3
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary	106	50
Iiff School of Theology	18	11
Methodist Theological School in Ohio	71	32
Perkins School of Theology	134	36
Saint Paul School of Theology	48	13
United Theological Seminary	76	10
Wesley Theological Seminary	50	37

*Each respondent may select multiple schools

Deacon respondents selected from among a list of 12 areas of certification in specialized ministry and/or specified another certification area. Less than half 47% (521) of the deacon respondents selected any of the certifications and the majority of ordained (62%, 391) have certification, but less than a third (31%, 47) of the commissioned and 26% (82) of the candidates have any certifications in specialized ministry.

Of those who did identify a certification, the most common was certification in Christian education (25%, 284). Certifications are grouped in Table 4 by the percentage of deacon/deacon track respondents who report receiving that certification. For example, between 1% and 2% of respondents received certification in Spiritual Formation. Other than certification in Christian Education, less than 8% of the deacon/deacon track received certification in any of the listed specialized ministries.

Table 4. Percent Range of 521 Deacon and Deacon Track Receiving Certification in Specialized Ministry

Up to 1% (n = 3 - 11)	Up to 2% (n = 17 - 22)	5% - 8% (n = 52 - 84)	26% (n = 284)
Camping & Retreat Ministry	Business Administration	Music	Christian Education
Communications	Nursing	Public School Teaching	
Evangelism	Spiritual Formation	Youth Ministry	
Health Care		Other	
Older Adult			

Primary Appointment

The majority of the 1,108 deacon/ track respondents have a current appointment (79%, 859), but 4% (46) are on leave, and 16% (178) are not appointed. Most (97%, 171) who are without an appointment are deacon candidates. The primary appointment of those with a current appointment is in the local church (60%, 517) and 32% (276) are appointed beyond the local church. Some “other” appointment was selected by 8% (66), nine of them are dual primary appointments.

Within the ministry group, most are appointed in the local church (Table 5). A much smaller percentage of candidates (18%, 24) are appointed beyond the local church, than are the ordained or commissioned. One fourth (25%, 34) of the candidates are under other appointments (i.e. school, student). For those under current appointment, the appointment location is dependent on the status of the deacon (*Pearson’s Chi-Square* 77.617 p. < .000) meaning that the appointment in or beyond the local church depends on whether the deacon is ordained, commissioned, or candidate.

Table 5. Primary Appointment Location

	Ordained	Commissioned	Candidate	TOTAL
In the Local Church	60.2% (349)	63.6% (91)	56.7% (76)	60.2% (516)
Beyond the Local Church	35.7% (207)	31.5% (45)	17.9% (24)	32.2% (276)
Other	4.1% (24)	4.9% (7)	25.4% (34)	7.6% (65)
TOTAL	100% (580)	100% (143)	100% (134)	100% (857)

Deacon and deacon track respondents are serving in a wide array of positions in and beyond the local church. Shown in Table 6, the most common position in the local church is as associate pastor (21%, 108) followed closely by minister of education (20%, 101).⁸ The least common are administration positions, such as directors of programs (2%, 10), business manager, or other church administration (3%, 14).

⁸ Position choices were: associate pastor, business manager, children’s minister, minister of congregational care, minister of education, minister of music, minister of outreach, parish nurse, pastoral care, youth minister, and other. Other was often chosen in order to write in their specific job title, responsibilities, or to select more than one of the listed choices. Responses were recoded into the existing positions as appropriate and three new positions were coded: pastor/local pastor, adult discipleship, and director of program.

Table 6. Deacon/Deacon Track Positions In the Local Church

Associate Pastor	20.9% (108)		
Minister of Education	19.5% (101)		
Minister of Music	12.6% (65)		
Youth Minister	8.3% (43)		
Adult Discipleship	8.3% (43)		
Children's Minister	7.4% (38)		
Congregational & Pastoral Care	6.8% (35)		
Other	16.2% (84)	Minister of Outreach/Missions	3.9% (20)
		Pastor/Local Pastor	3.3% (17)
		Administrator/Business Manager	3.0% (14)
		Director of Program	2.0% (10)
		Other	4.4% (23)
TOTAL	100% (517)		

The most commonly held position differs by the status of the deacon (Table 7). For example, the most common position for ordained and commissioned is as associate pastor, but for candidates the most common is youth minister (associate pastor comes in third for the candidates). Notice that across all three groups the most common positions all include associate pastor, minister of education, and minister of music only the order of frequency differs.

Table 7. Three Most Common Positions In the Local Church by Status

	Most Common	Second	Third
Ordained	Associate Pastor	Minister of Educ.	Minister of Music
Commissioned	Associate Pastor	Children's Minister	Minister of Educ.
Candidate	Youth Minister	Minister of Educ.	Associate Pastor Minister of Music

There is no limit to the ways in which a deacons may serve to link the church to the world particularly when appointed beyond the local church. For that reason, developing category groups for the various positions is a challenge.⁹ For presentation, appointments beyond the local church are presented in two columns in Table 8 – those appointed in church-related structures and those appointed to non church-related structures.

Table 8. Beyond the Local Church Appointments

Church-Related Structures		Non Church-Related Structures	
Chaplain	13.9% (38)	Teacher	11.3% (31)
Staff of Annual Conference or District	14.6% (40)	Administrator	8.0% (22)
Staff of General Church Agency	5.1% (14)	Advocacy/ Social Justice	6.2% (17)
Pastoral Counselor	4.7% (13)	Social Worker	5.5% (15)
Camp Director, Camping & Retreat Ministries	8.0% (22)	Medical/Health Care	5.1% (14)
Spiritual Director, Missionary, Campus Minister		Executive Director	4.7% (13)
		Consultant	4.4% (12)
Total	46.4% (127)	Total	45.3% (124)
Other 8.4% (25)			
TOTAL Beyond the local Church		100% (274)	

⁹ Twelve positions choices were provided in the survey: administrator, campus minister, chaplain, consultant, missionary, medical/health care, pastoral counselor, social worker, staff of general church agency, staff of annual conference, teacher, and other.

Similar percentages, are in church related structures (46%, 127) as are in non-church related structures (45%, 124). Another 8% (25) represent a myriad of other positions that could not be clearly grouped. The most common appointment beyond the local church is chaplain (14%, 38) followed closely by staff of an annual conference or district (15%, 40). While these are the most common positions, the percentages of deacons in each position is fairly small indicating the wide variety of potential positions beyond the local church. Most appointed beyond the local church are ordained (75%, 205) deacons, only 16% (45) are commissioned and 9% (24) are candidates.

Compensation and Benefits

A series of three employment questions (employment start date, average number hours worked weekly, and gross annual salary) were posed. This information was gathered about the respondent's primary position, and up to two additional employments. Analysis is based on valid cases, where deacons answered all three questions and were either appointed in the local church or beyond the local church (N=632)¹⁰.

The majority (87%, 548) identified all information for one position, while 11% (71) identified an additional position (Table 9). A small percentage (2%, 13) provided information for three positions. Some deacon/deacon track may have had additional employment, but were unable to provide complete information about those additional positions.

Table. 9. Number of Employment Positions Identified

	Frequency	Percent
One employment	548	86.7%
Two employments	71	11.2%
Three employments	13	2.1%
TOTAL	632	100%

¹⁰ 20% (161) were excluded due to missing response(s) to at least one of the series of questions.

Deacon/deacon track respondent's median annual salary in their primary appointment is \$40,000 (Table 10). The average salary is slightly higher when comparing full-time to part-time¹¹ working hours. For those working, on average, at least 38 hours per week (FT), the median salary is \$44,748. Meanwhile, those working fewer than 38 hours (PT), the median is \$18,975. The part-time median salary is not quite half of the full-time salary. This is due to the wide range of working hours reported (anywhere from five hours per week to 37 hours per week) and the likelihood that they are paid hourly wages rather than a yearly salary. For deacon/deacon track who are appointed beyond the local church, the median annual salary is \$5,400 greater than the median annual salary of deacon/deacon track appointed in the local church. Again, this difference is likely due to the wide variety of positions included beyond the local church. As discussed earlier, deacons appointed beyond the local church are generally not being paid for being a deacon, but rather for a professional position held.

Table 10. Primary Appointment : Median Annual Salary

	In the Local Church	Beyond the Local Church	Total
PT	\$18,000 (105)	\$23,464 (325)	\$18,975 (430)
FT	\$43,000 (39)	\$49,000 (159)	\$44,728 (198)
Total	\$38,600 (144)	\$44,000 (484)	\$40,000 (628)

Salary differences by jurisdiction may be expected since the cost of living differs across the country (Table 11). Cost of living may be one explanation for the greater salary in the Western Jurisdiction (\$52,000) for those appointed in the local church than

¹¹ Respondents were categorized as full time or part time based solely on their reported weekly average hours worked. For this reason, a part time position may be categorized as full time.

in any other jurisdiction. Additionally, the Western Jurisdiction is the only jurisdiction where the median salary for those appointed in the local church is greater than the median salary beyond the local church. In addition to the differing cost of living in the Western Jurisdiction, other explanations may be the relative size of the congregations, the wealth of the congregation, the number of clergy serving the jurisdiction, or even the value these churches place in the ministry of the deacon. Perhaps in the Western Jurisdiction there are a greater number of large congregations and/or congregations with many wealthy members – where congregations may be able to afford higher salaries than may be true of smaller or less wealthy congregation. Perhaps higher wages are a response to the relative scarcity of clergy. For example, in 2006, there was one church for every 228 professing members and fewer than one clergy member for every church.¹² Further research is needed to fully examine and understand these differences.

Table 11. Median Annual Salary of Full-time Primary Appointment by Jurisdiction

	ILC	BLC	TOTAL
North Central	\$38,000 (61)	\$50,000 (31)	\$40,000 (92)
Northeastern	\$38,000 (15)	\$48,320 (21)	\$44,125 (36)
Western	\$52,000 (21)	\$50,000 (8)	\$50,000 (29)
South Central	\$44,000 (93)	\$46,500 (36)	\$46,000 (129)
Southeastern	\$45,000 (135)	\$50,000 (61)	\$46,000 (196)
TOTAL	\$43,000 (325)	\$49,000 (157)	\$44,728.50 (482)

Outside of the Western Jurisdiction, median salary for those appointed in the local church is very similar across jurisdictions and median salary for those appointed beyond

¹² Calculations based on data from the 2006 *General Minutes of The United Methodist Church* produced by the General Council of Finance and Administration.

the local church is similar across jurisdictions. For example, in the North Central and the Northeastern jurisdictions, median annual salary in the local church is \$38,000 and is lower than either of the Southern Jurisdictions.

Looking at the median salary by position in the local church presents another picture. Presented in Table 12 is the median annual salary for six positions appointed in the local church where the average hours are full-time.¹³ Deacon and deacon track across all positions are working on average close to or slightly more than 50 hours per week.

Table 12. Median Annual Salary of Full time
Primary Local Church Appointment By Position

	Salary (median)	Range (min.-max.)	Hours (mean)
Associate Pastor	\$45,000 (72)	\$15,000-\$85,000	50.24
Minister of Education	\$40,000 (65)	\$15,556-\$60,000	47.85
Minister of Music	\$55,174 (41)	\$53-\$82,000	51.17
Youth Minister	\$40,000 (33)	\$25,000-\$70,000	50.36
Adult Discipleship	\$38,000 (23)	\$20,368-\$61,895	48.83
Children's Minister	\$37,000 (26)	\$45-\$61,000	46.73

The maximum salary reported ranges from \$60,000 to \$85,000. Even though these are only those reporting average working hours of greater than 37 per week, the minimum salary reported is as low as \$45. There is an extremely large range of salaries within each of the local church positions. For example, the median salary (middle salary in the distribution) for associate pastor is \$45,000 but there are associate pastor deacons who earn as little as \$15,000 and others who earn as great as \$85,000.

¹³ Those working part-time hours are not presented as there are too few respondents within each position. There are 105 total part time across positions in the local church. With the exception of associate pastor (18), minister of education (25) and minister of music (14) each position has 10 or fewer respondents.

Additionally, there are fairly dramatic differences between positions. For example, the median salary of the music minister is \$55,000 compared to \$37,000 for the children’s minister. While some of this difference is likely due to the differing educational requirements and levels of experience of the respondents, difference may also be due to the level or importance or value of the ministry – music is often central to worship unlike the role of the children’s minister.

There are many fewer deacon/deacon track appointed beyond the local church who responded to the survey (Table 13). Again, examining only those working at least full-time hours, these deacons appointed beyond the local church average 50 hours per week. Median salary is greater than \$45,000 for each of the common appointments beyond the local church, except for the camping/retreat/campus ministry group. Median salary is greatest for the administrator at \$58,000 followed closely by the teacher at \$56,000. Again, the salary range within any one of these positions is quite large.

Table 13. Median Annual Salary of Full time Appointment Beyond the Local Church By Position

	Salary (median)	Range (min.-max.)	Hours (mean)
Staff of Annual Conference or District	\$49,160 (32)	\$18,900-\$86,180	50.06
Teacher	\$56,000 (19)	\$35,000-\$120,000	49.21
Chaplain	\$45,900 (17)	\$600-\$53,000	46.65
Administrator	\$58,000 (14)	\$25,000-\$120,000	49.21
Camping/CampMin/Mission/Spiritual Director	\$31,000 (12)	\$19,200-\$69,000	51.67
Executive Director	\$48,000 (11)	\$12,000-\$106,680	50.00

In sum, among these deacon/deacon track respondents there are salary differences between appointments beyond the local church and appointments in the local church, by average number of hours worked, between jurisdictions, and position held. It seems likely, that differences in salary between men and women will also be found.

Analysis of salary by sex can only be conducted for the appointments in the local church - there are too few respondents appointed beyond the local church and too few of those are male respondents. Of the six most common positions BLC, only the position of staff of annual conference or district has greater than five male deacons. Even among the top six most common local church appointments, there are fewer than six male deacons in the positions of adult discipleship and children's minister and are therefore excluded.

The majority of female deacon respondents are in positions of Associate Pastor or Minister of Education. Male deacons on the other hand are Minister of Music or Youth Minister (Table 14). There are five female deacons for every one male deacon in the positions of associate pastor and minister of education, but nearing equal numbers of female to male deacons in the youth minister position. For each of these most common primary appointments in the local church, reported male salary is slightly greater than female salary (Table 14). Additionally, the minister of music is the only position presented where the male salary is much greater than the female salary, nearly a \$12,000 difference. In the other positions, the difference is about \$3,000. This suggests that there may be differences in deacon's salary between men and women. Further analysis is necessary to more closely examine where these differences exist and the effect of other factors, such as the jurisdiction may affect salary.

Table 14. Median Salary by Position In the Local Church

Local Church Position (Median FT Salary)	Female Male	N	Salary Median
Associate Pastor (\$45,000)	F	60	\$45,375
	M	11	\$48,305
Minister of Education (\$40,000)	F	54	\$41,380
	M	10	\$43,451
Minister of Music (\$55,174)	F	8	\$47,838
	M	30	\$59,734
Youth Minister (\$40,000)	F	13	\$39,869
	M	19	\$41,573

In addition to salary, deacons/deacon track may receive a variety of other benefits, such as medical insurance or pension plans. Although the benefits were to be identified for their primary appointment only, it appears that some (but not all) selected benefits if any of their employers provided that benefit.

Among those appointed in the local church, 84% (363) reported receiving at least one pension/retirement plan (Ministerial Pension Plan, Comprehensive Protection Plan, or Retirement Security Program) listed, or identified another plan, but 16% (69) did not select any of the plans.¹⁴ On the other hand, only 64% (128) of those appointed beyond the local church receive pension or retirement plans. Health insurance, however, is received by only 58% (251) of those in the local church, but 70% (140) of those beyond the local church. Similarly, only 17% (75) of those in the local church receive disability insurance, but double that, although still a small percentage (39%, 78) receive disability

¹⁴ These questions are toggle buttons, meaning that affirmative responses are recorded but negative, missing, and skipped are simply not selected.

beyond the local church. Of course, when excluding the part-time workers, greater percentages of those working full-time receive pension/retirement (90%, 293 ILC; 70%, 111 BLC), health insurance (74%, 239; 81%,129), and disability (22%, 70; 46%, 73).

Other benefits deacon/deacon track respondents may receive are continuing education tuition. Among those appointed in the local church, 69% (297) receive continuing education and among those appointed beyond the local church, 43% (86) receive. Similarly, 64% (274) in the local church and 54% (109) beyond the local church have a travel reimbursement account.

A greater percentage of those in the local church receive vacation time than those appointed beyond the local church, but the majority of each do receive vacation (91%, 392 ILC; 75%, 151 BLC). Similar percentage of those receiving vacation time beyond the local church also receive sick or medical time (74%, 148), but a much lower percentage in the local church receive sick/medical time (66%, 285) than receive vacation time. Rarely, do deacon/deacon track appointed either in or beyond the local church receive a parsonage (4%, 17 ILC; 5%, 10 BLC), but nearly half (49%, 212) appointed in the local church receive a housing allowance and 28% (57) appointed beyond the local church receive a housing allowance.

Satisfaction

According to Cary Cherniss (1995) job satisfaction comes from doing work that has meaning, recognition, autonomy, and remuneration (cited in Hoge and Wenger 2005, p.13). Similarly, P. Spector (1997) argues that the minister's "perception of the situation [that] is the most important in determining his or her job satisfaction" (cited in Mueller and McDuff 2004, p.264). What are the deacons' perceptions; are deacons satisfied with

their work, their relationships, and the level of support they receive? A variety of scales were used that measure satisfaction in different areas of the deacon's life. For this paper, individual item descriptives are presented. Future analysis will examine how much these variables may help to explain differences in job satisfaction levels.

Deacon and deacon track respondents are satisfied and enjoy their work. In fact, 95% (900) agree¹⁵ or strongly agree that they find real enjoyment in their job. Similarly, 88% (792) agree or strongly agree that they are fairly well satisfied with their job. When asked the opposite, I definitely dislike my job, 94% (826) disagree or strongly disagree. And, 87% (758) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, I feel dissatisfied with my present job. Clearly, deacons across the board are satisfied with their work.

On the other hand, 65% (593) deacon and deacon track respondents fairly¹⁶ or very often felt the deacon order was misunderstood. While they feel that the order is misunderstood, most (63%, 562) felt fairly often or very often that the order was accepted by others. So, deacons enjoy their work, are satisfied with that work, believe the order is generally accepted, but not that the order is generally understood. This could mean that deacons generally enjoy what they do, but they know that others do not know precisely what it is that deacons are doing.

Deacon survey respondents feel valued most of the time. Asked how often their role was not valued, one-third (306) responded never and 45% (419) once in a while. Similarly, most of the deacon and deacon track respondents do not often feel lonely and isolated in their work. The majority, 82% (768), never or only once in a while feel lonely

¹⁵ Rated on a scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

¹⁶ Occurrence of events rated on a scale from (1) never (2) once in awhile (3) fairly often (4) very often.

and isolated in their work. That nearly half felt unvalued once in a while is not a serious cause for concern. Whatever the reality of the situation, for most people, there are times when we have felt less than fully valued in our work. The same can also be said for feelings of loneliness and feelings of isolation. These feelings are also more likely and pronounced when entering new employment.

When these brief moments become regular occurrences, that is when there is cause for concern. Unfortunately, some may fit into this category; 10% (91) feel often that their role is not valued and 6% (57) feel that way very often. Twelve percent (111) said they fairly often feel lonely and isolated in their work. Later analysis will look more closely at these respondents to determine whether there are particular factors that accompany the more frequent occurrences of feelings of loneliness, isolation, and not being valued. It may come as no surprise then, that 16% (140) fairly to very often consider leaving their current appointment. Overall though, 40% (355) never consider and 44% (390) consider leaving once in a while.

Deacons and deacon track respondents appear to be quite satisfied with their work as deacons. They enjoy their work, believe the order is accepted, feel valued, and are not generally looking to leave their work. There are numerous variables that may affect these levels of satisfaction including the amount of autonomy provided in their work. Conversely, job satisfaction may affect satisfaction in other areas such as satisfaction with their spiritual and family lives. The influence of these variables will be more closely examined elsewhere.

RESULTS

The hypothesis that the demographics of the ordained are different from the commissioned and the candidates is only slightly supported. Not unexpectedly, the average age of a candidate is nearly nine years younger than the average age of the ordained. And, more of the ordained have received a master's degree than have candidates. Since candidates are likely to be currently pursuing their higher educational goals, we may expect those who have completed their education/ordination requirements to be older. There is slight difference in the racial makeup of the groups, but not enough racial diversity to make a difference in the overall makeup of the order.

Hypothesis two - that the majority of the deacons will be serving beyond the local church - is not supported. In fact, most of the deacons who responded are appointed in the local church. It is unclear why this is or what it means for the church. Perhaps there is a greater need for the service of the deacon in the local church than beyond. Or, perhaps even with some misunderstanding of the role of the deacon in the local church, the level of misunderstanding is less in the local church than is true beyond the local church.

Three of the four hypotheses relating to compensation are supported. The average salary of deacons does vary by jurisdiction, sex, and appointment. With one exception, the Western Jurisdiction, average salary is greater beyond the local church than in the local church. And, in this preliminary analysis, male deacon salary is greater than female deacon salary. The hypothesis that salary will be higher in the South jurisdictions than elsewhere is only supported compared to the northern jurisdictions. Salary in the Western Jurisdiction is greatest, higher than the southern jurisdictions.

The hypothesis that deacons will express dissatisfaction with their work is not supported. Overall, deacons are quite happy with their work. As in any vocation, occupation, profession, or employment, some days are better than others. Responses to this section of the survey are likely to change based upon the current situation of the respondent and influenced by when the deacon answered the questionnaire. Administering the survey again would produce different results for particular individuals, however, the aggregate of the responses is reflective of the overall health of the deacons as a group. Results indicate that deacons are not the dissatisfied group as some have suggested by some but rather, deacons enjoy what they do, appear to understand their role and believe they are accepted.

Again, the hypothesis that the perceived value of the order will be low is not supported. Deacons believe that their role, though misunderstood, is valued. In other words, deacons believe that even though everyone does not understand how the deacon's role works, the importance of the role of deacon is recognized.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Many in The United Methodist Church have become alarmed that the average age of clergy in elder's orders continues to rise. At first glance, the average age of ordained deacons does not seem to offer much comfort. However, there is a greater percentage of deacons under the age of 35, than elders under 35, uncovering the reasons for this difference is important to change the direction.

Deacon's orders have only been an option since 1996, a short 12 years. Many who chose deacons orders were previously diaconal ministers – those who had already been serving for some time. Necessarily then, those who are ordained deacon from the

diaconal office are likely to be older. Deacon may also be an additional profession or second career. Who better to connect the church to the world than someone who has experience in the professional/work world?

The longer the deacon's order is an available option, the more opportunity candidates have to enter at younger ages. Changing the age structure of the order will take time. A greater focus on the gifts and talents candidates bring into the ministry, and less on the age of the candidate, may draw a younger cohort into the deacon order. It is encouraging that the youngest deacon candidate respondent was 20 years old. Hopefully, more young people will make it through the process while still in their 20s and 30s.

The racial makeup of the order is not surprising, or for that matter encouraging. The order, as is true of the rest of the U.S. clergy and denomination membership, remains predominantly white/Caucasian. Though the population of the United States is shifting, little is changing in the membership of The United Methodist Church.

Importantly, deacon salary appears to be comparable to other Protestant clergy salary of \$40,000 found by McMillan and Price (2003). Furthermore, salary is \$8,000 greater than what the 2001 findings that this research seeks to update. Some salary differences were found, but for the most part this preliminary examination shows that those appointed in the local church earn similar salaries, but those appointed beyond the local church generally earn higher salaries.

Although Chang (2004), in her examination of the clergy labor shortage contends that "The United Methodist Church seems to take the most enlightened view of clergy labor." "It is able to maintain some control over the balance between labor supply and demand, negotiate minimum wages and benefits for their clergy, and go further than any

other denomination towards providing life-long full employment,” that review does not seem to apply equally to the deacon order. Deacons must locate and secure their own employment positions, and benefits are not consistent. In fact, deacons appear to fare better, in terms of benefits when appointed outside of the local church. A greater percentage of deacons appointed beyond the local receive health and disability benefits than do those appointed in the local church.

An important finding of this research is the general sense of satisfaction among the deacons. The deacon’s ministry is important to the life of The United Methodist Church and deacons feel valued in that role. This, despite the confusion about the role of the deacon as described in much of the literature and that deacons believe the role is misunderstood. Rather than continued efforts to explain what the order is about or what deacons should be doing, emphasis could be placed on how deacons are performing those roles. Why is the literature rife with questions and concerns which imply a sense of dissatisfaction when, in fact, deacons enjoy their work and feel valued. How can we shift the focus from concerns toward a fuller discussion of what does work. What could we learn about the deacon order from questions, such as what about the work of the deacon do you particularly enjoy?

This is the first in a series of papers that will examine the results of this research. As was shown earlier, a number of factors may help to explain salary differences that will need to be more closely examined. Further research is necessary to examine the influence of each variable on the deacon’s salary. How do factors such as age, length of time since ordination, length of employment, and education level (among others) affect the deacon’s salary? McMillan and Price found that size and setting were more important predictors of

salary than was the sex of the clergy. Similarly, I have shown here that there are dramatic differences in salary based on location (jurisdiction, ILC/BLC). Are there other factors that may help us to understand differences among the group of deacons appointed in the local church that are different from variables that help to explain salary beyond the local church.

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APPENDIX
Data and Methods

Instrument

The survey instrument was created using an internet based survey administration tool - Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). A paper version of this survey was created using Microsoft Word. A unique identifier was used to track responders/ non-responders and to update addresses in the GBHEM contact database (see below).

Survey questions included ministry status, appointment, annual salary and benefits, education, theological training, areas of certification, basic demographics, and measures of satisfaction including autonomy, enjoyment, acceptance, support and relationships.

Sample

The Division of Ordained Ministry of the GBHEM maintains a database of all deacons, diaconal ministers, and persons certified in specialized ministry. The primary purpose of the database is to maintain contact through email, postal mail, and telephone. A secondary purpose is to provide a quick snapshot of the makeup of these ministries. This database was used to create the survey list from all records where contact information existed, excluding retired, deceased, those who had withdrawn from candidacy, the ministry, or the church.

The original list was drawn from the GBHEM database in August 2007. The survey was sent to 4,261 people (excluding 469 where no contact information was available). During data collection a query failure was discovered which revealed that some, but not all, of the retired and deceased were included in the list. This means that the population to administer the survey is fewer than the original list indicates; 46 deceased and 719 retired persons were erroneously sent the survey. From those retired, 277 completed the survey, but are excluded from analysis.

A few did not participate because they were no longer within one of the ministry groups under study, had left the ministry, or had left the church. However, 112 completed the survey although they indicated in the survey that they are not a deacon, diaconal minister, or have certification in specialized ministry, and 14 more left the ministry or the church. These 138 are excluded. Finally, the postal mail was returned for 281 persons and no accurate address information was available.

This brings the final population total to 3,077 potential survey respondents.

Original List	4, 261	
Deceased	-46	
Retired	-719	(277 completed a survey)
Inaccurate Address	-281	
Other ministry	-117	(112 completed a survey)
Withdrawn/Left UMC	<u>-21</u>	(14 completed a survey)
TOTAL POPULATION	3,077	

Administration

All deacon candidates, commissioned deacons, ordained deacons, diaconal ministers, and persons having certification in specialized ministry (both clergy and laity) were included. The survey was administered by email and mail. For those with an e-mail address in the database, the survey invitation was sent with a unique identifier to their e-mail address. A letter of invitation containing a uniquely identifying URL for survey access was sent via postal mail to all those without an email address. E-mail non-responders were sent one follow up e-mail. For the final request a paper copy of the survey was sent to all non-responders.

The first e-mail was sent on August 30, 2007 and follow-up e-mail on September 18, 2007. The postal invitation letter was mailed out over a two week period August 30, 2007 through September 19, 2007. The final postal request was sent on November 12, 2007. The survey was closed on January 16, 2008.

There were a variety of challenges to administration of this survey through Survey Monkey which are discussed in detail elsewhere.

Data Collection and Analysis

When completing the survey online, all responses are automatically captured. For those who completed the paper version of the survey (427), the responses were manually entered into Survey Monkey. All responses were exported to Excel and the converted into SPSS for analysis.

Response Rate

The response rate is 49%; 1,521 qualified respondents completed the survey; more than twice the size of the 2001 sample of 712 respondents. A fairly small number of respondents could not be contacted to participate in the survey.

Surveys Completed	1,924	(1,487 online, 427 paper)
Excluded (see above)	<u>-403</u>	
TOTAL COMPLETED	1,521	

Response Rate 3,077 potential, 1,521 completed, 49.4% completed.

Limitations

As with any survey research, responses are limited to those who choose to respond, and the accuracy and honesty of their responses. Likely some respondents selected answers they believed the researcher desired, some may have over inflated the number of hours they work, or the salary they earn.

The United Methodist Church has little influence over compensation outside of the church. Those appointed beyond the local church and particularly those working in the business world are subject to the economic realities present in those professions. Examination of compensation for those working beyond the local church as a group should be approached with caution. Widely disparate positions are contained within that group, comparing the salary of a deacon attorney to a deacon social worker is inappropriate. Unfortunately, the limited number of deacons in any one position also does

not allow for an appropriate comparison of similar positions either within the group of deacons or to the secular market.

The survey did not ask the total number of paid positions the respondent currently holds. Instead, respondents could provide information about up to three currently held positions. For some, the number of fields completed conflicts, so that it is unclear how many positions the respondent currently holds –the number of positions held is not clear for 169 (11%) respondents. Of the 1521 respondents, 283 (19%) did not provide salary information.

Several questions allowed multiple choices, but no explanation where none of the choices were selected. Therefore, it is not known when no choices were selected whether the options were not applicable, the respondent did not know, or whether they were refusing to answer that question.