

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry
Division of Ordained Ministry
Deacon's Primary Appointment Covenant (Sample)



Appointment Covenant for Stephen Marter
minister of faith formation, Bristol United Methodist Church

United Methodist deacon's ministry

Deacons are clergy called to fulfill servant ministry in the world and lead the church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in world, interrelating worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world. Deacons give leadership in the church's life in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship, and assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in embodying the church's mission to the world; and leading the congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. . . . Deacons lead the congregation in its servant ministry and equip and support all baptized Christians in their ministry. . . . Deacons are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for the fulfillment of their call to servant leadership (The United Methodist Book of Discipline, ¶ 328).

Bristol United Methodist Church's mission statement and ministry goals

Mission statement: Bristol United Methodist Church shares the redemptive love of God through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to its community by inviting and welcoming its neighbors, offering compassionate ministry, pursuing justice for the poor and the left-out, teaching and nurturing Christian disciples for spiritual growth and world-changing ministry, and joining in celebrative worship worthy of God.

Ministry goals and strategy

Ministry context: Bristol United Methodist Church has learned that its neighborhood is becoming increasingly popular with young adults of limited means, due to affordable housing stock. Many have moved from other cities and desire meaningful community with peers. Many are college graduates but underemployed due to national economic conditions. Many enjoy busy social lives on weekends. The median age of Bristol members is 52 and average term of membership is 20 years.

Church Goals for 2013-2016:

- Invite and welcome the young adults in the neighborhood into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ and the church, the body of Christ
- Increase the depth of spiritual commitment and mission engagement among members
- Offer challenging and inspiring worship, employing our very best gifts, creativity, and expectations

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Church Strategy for 2013-2016:

- (1) Develop three ministries to nurture spiritual community among young adults and provide them world-changing ministry opportunities.
- (2) Develop and offer a coffee-house-style worship service, with communion and a meal following, offered on Sunday nights; train young adult leadership for the service.
- (3) Develop and introduce a small-group system that provides faith formation, supportive community, and accountability. Aim for 30 percent of membership participation within 24 months. Require members in leadership roles to be part of a small faith-formation/accountable discipleship group.
- (4) Train members in welcoming and inviting skills.

Responsibilities and goals of the minister/deacon of faith formation

Forming and nurturing disciples:

- Develop a faith-formation/accountable discipleship system for members. Introduce and train members about the structure and goals of the system. Train leaders who will invite participants and facilitate small groups. Train a leader who will oversee the system. Goal: 35 percent of members will be faith-formation group participants in two years.
- Develop a team that will plan and train leaders for learning opportunities for adults for Sunday morning and other times. These learning opportunities will teach the faith and the application of faith to our lives and engagement in the world. Special attention shall be paid to topics of interest to young adults. Goal: Develop and offer one new adult Sunday-school class and five free-standing events by the end of the year.
- Organize annual leader appreciation activities. Goal: organize at least one event per year.
- Collaborate with the minister of children and family to coordinate a church-wide faith-formation system. Goal: Engage others in the planning process and develop a draft system by the end of the year.
- Help train new members on membership expectations and counsel parents bringing children for baptism.
- Participate in regular pastoral staff meetings and assist in pastoral care through prayer and occasional visitation.

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Equip and Support the Baptized:

- Organize mission opportunities. Goal 1: Develop at least one mission activity per year for the church. This would be a compassion ministry in our neighborhood or in another city, state, or country. Goal 2: Develop hands-on compassion or justice advocacy opportunities that especially adapt to the interests and lifestyles of neighborhood young adults.
- Train lay people for worship leadership skills (reading scripture, writing and leading prayer, etc.). Train lay people to prepare elements for Eucharist and appropriate disposition of elements after communion. Train lay people to assist or provide extension of the communion table to those whose health does not allow them to attend gathered worship. Goal: Train at least ten people in the first year.
- Attend meetings of the church council on ministry.
- Introduce young adults to forms of lay and ordained ministry.

Interpret the needs and hopes of the world:

- Spend time in the neighborhood meeting non-church people, particularly but not exclusively young adults, learning about their needs and concerns, offering spiritual care and invitations to church activities where appropriate (community bridging).
- Attend the church administrative board meetings and present an informative report on a world issue. When relevant, report on the United Methodist response to that issue (United Methodist Committee on Relief, General Board of Church and Society, etc.). Also report on your community bridging ministry and what you are learning about our neighbors and how this may shape the church's ministry.

Worship leadership:

Participate in worship leadership at least three times per month. (Exception is made for vacation and spiritual or renewal leave.)

- Read the gospel lesson or train lay people to read the Scripture
- Call for and bless the offering
- Assist elder in the provision of the sacraments
- Lead prayers of the people and include prayers for the world
- Lead the worshipers in the Lord's Prayer
- Offer the sending forth into ministry after the benediction
- Preach once a month (some vacation coverage for elder)
- Lead worship in absence of elder
- Extend the communion table to the homebound/train laypeople to participate

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Approximate division of time:

Work week: Average of 45 hours per week or 185 hours per month (four weeks)

Responsibility and approximate/average hours per month:

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| • Faith formation opportunities development and leadership; lay trainings: | 110 |
| • Mission activity planning and leadership: | 30 |
| • Community bridging: | 12 |
| • Staff and administrative meetings: | 10 |
| • Annual conference/denominational leadership and ministries: | 10 |
| • Worship leadership: | 8 |
| • Funerals and weddings (upon request/as fits in schedule): | 5 |

Compensation:

The compensation for the deacon shall meet Disciplinary and Conference standards for clergy and shall reflect ¶ 331.10 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* (2012).

- Gross pay (conference equitable compensation standard): \$_____
- Housing allowance (by declaration)
- Conference standard for health and other insurance for clergy: \$_____
- Conference standard for clergy pension benefits contributions: _____
- Continuing education fund: \$_____ per year
 - The deacon is expected to engage in at least one continuing education activity per year.
- Conference standard for vacation days: _____
- Conference standard for sick days: _____
- Disciplinary standard for spiritual growth days:
 - One week per year (¶ 351.2), in addition to vacation days. The deacon shall present a plan for this time to the SPRC and arrange it in advance. This can entail a retreat, spiritual training, or similar.
- Conference standard for clergy renewal leaves: _____

Accountability

The elder orders the life of the congregation, so the pastoral staff, including the deacon, relates to the elder in charge for the performance of pastoral ministry and congregational ministry. The pastoral staff shall meet on a regular basis. The pastoral staff shall report on their activities and identify ways to address the church goals in the context of their ministry responsibilities. Pastoral staff shall support each other and hold each other accountable for their ministry responsibilities and goals.

The deacon shall sign his/her agreement to cooperate with the church Safe Sanctuaries policies.

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The deacon, as a clergy person, shall uphold high ideals in his/her personal life, shall treat others with respect and lead others in respectful interaction, and shall set appropriate boundaries around time and home, for the sake of wellness and healthy relationships.

The Staff/Parish Relations Committee shall meet with the deacon quarterly and annual evaluate performance.

Quarterly meetings: the SPRC shall review the covenant with the deacon. The deacon will report on achievements and areas of concern. The SPRC shall offer opportunities and resources for skills development or recommend other adjustments. Collaboratively, the SPRC and the deacon shall set goals toward the achievement of the deacon's responsibilities. The SPRC will pray with the deacon.

Annual evaluation shall consist of reviewing the covenant, a self-evaluation by the deacon, shared feedback between the deacon and the SPRC, an SPRC self-assessment, a written summary from the SPRC, plans for continuing education (including financial and other support), and collaborative revisions of the covenant, if deemed necessary. (See *Watching Over One Another in Love*, by Gwendolynn Purushotam (GBHEM, 2010), pp. 38-44, for details on carrying out these steps.)

Office

The deacon shall have a dedicated office with a door. The office shall have a window that is not blocked, per church Safe Sanctuaries rules.

The deacon shall have the assistance of the church secretary for an average of 2 hours per week.

The deacon may engage volunteer assistance for office work. The volunteer must agree to church volunteer and Safe Sanctuaries policies.

The deacon shall have access to church office equipment and office supplies.

The deacon's office shall have an operating computer, internet access, and telephone.

Changes to appointment status/dismissal

The district superintendent is the supervisor of conference clergy. The bishop appoints conference clergy, which includes deacons. The district superintendent must approve job descriptions and covenants.

No action to change the job descriptions, covenants, compensation, total hours or continued appointment of the deacon may be taken without consultation with the deacon and with the district superintendent (§ 331.10.e).

Dismissal can be recommended by the SPRC but an appointment change can be carried out only by the bishop and the bishop's cabinet (§ 258.2.g.11). It must follow the review process described under "Accountability" above, and consultation with both the deacon and the district superintendent. If the SPRC plans to discuss continued appointment of the deacon, the SPRC must inform the deacon in advance (§ 258.2.e). The district superintendent shall give the deacon a minimum of 90 days' notice before final termination (§ 331.10.e).

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Covenant Agreement

On this date _____, we hereby agree to uphold and support this covenant, for the enhancement of the church's ministries to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We agree to review and adjust this covenant, collaboratively, if circumstances call for such adjustment.

Rev. Steven Marter
minister of faith formation

Rev. Sue Wesley
lead pastor

Janet Doe
chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee

Rev. O. Versia
Superintendent of the Western District