



Sample Rule of Life

Order of Deacons, Great Lakes Annual Conference

Preamble

As deacons and clergy of the United Methodist Church, we lead the people of God through ministries of word, sacrament, compassion, and justice. We are committed embodying, articulating, and leading the whole people of God in it is servant ministry, through teaching and proclaiming the Word; contributing to worship, including assisting the elder in the administration of the sacraments; forming and nurturing disciples; conducting marriages and memorial services; equipping and supporting Christians in their ministries; serving those on the margins of society; connecting the church to in the greater community; leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world; and participate in annual conference ministry leadership. We participate in the United Methodist mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world into the realm of God (The United Methodist Book of Discipline, ¶¶ 328, 329, and 331).

We minister not alone but in responsible and mutually reliant relationships. We dedicate our whole lives to the personal and spiritual disciplines required by the covenant of ordained ministry, which entails mutual care and accountability (¶ 303.3).

Most of all, we commit our lives to the prevenient grace of God, the justifying grace of Christ, and the sustaining grace of the Holy Spirit.

To maintain our commitment to a shared ministry worth of Christ, we commit to engaging in spiritual growth, vocational development, and accountable and supportive clergy relationships.

Spiritual Growth

As a gathered community, we promise to gather annually as an Order of Deacons. This gathering will include time corporate worship, individual prayer, and substantive learning to strengthen our ministry as clergy deacons. The bishop shall convene the meeting.

As individuals, we promise to

- engage in daily prayer and scripture reading
- observe a weekly Sabbath,
- commit to spiritual disciplines such as fasting, an annual retreat, and/or others.

Vocational Development

The order will

- make available and publicize professional development opportunities, particularly those that support the annual conference priorities of starting new faith communities, building faith-formation systems in churches, and leading churches in advocacy and compassion ministries
- collaborate with the Order of Elders to make sure that training is offered and/or publicized related to professional boundaries, self-care, and issues facing church and society

The Board of Ordained Ministry shall make funds available for clergy to participate in continuing education that enhances leadership ministry.

As individuals, we promise to

- renew our boundaries training every five years
- participate annually in a professional development opportunity commended by the Order
- maintain healthy eating, exercise, resting, relationship, and recreation practices
- commit to the United Methodist Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith, & General Rules (§ 104).

Accountability and Support

The order shall

- help organize and support clergy accountability groups
- engage in collaborative ministry and learning opportunities with the clergy Order of Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members

As individuals, we promise to

- participate in clergy small groups in which we meet regularly to pray with and for one another, share best practices for ministry, encourage healthy habits, and hold each other accountable for keeping our covenant and exemplifying the grace of God. We pledge to be trustworthy and respectful of each other, and maintain strict confidentiality.
- partner in ministry with elders, licensed local pastors, associate members, and laypeople, toward the realization of the gospel and the glory of God.

Conclusion

As clergy in set-apart, representative, accountable, leadership ministry, we intend to grow in Christlikeness, in faithfulness to our calling and its emerging demands, and in trusting relationships with each other. We rely on the grace of God to maintain our covenant with each other.

Established this day: _____

Renewed these years: _____