

Order of Deacons Information

THE CALL OF THE DEACON

DEACONS ARE CALLED TO THE MINISTRY OF:

- Word
- Service
- Compassion
- Justice

DEACONS ARE SERVANTS

- *Diakonos* is found throughout scripture and can be interpreted as servant, minister, messenger, or one who cares for the poor.
- "...the work of the deacon traditionally linked the Eucharistic meal with the feeding of the poor. In fact, 'the deacon was ordained to insure the just distribution of food.' After assisting at the sacramental table, the deacon took food to the empty tables of the poor."¹
- Not only are Deacons servant ministers, but they lead and equip others in servant ministry.

DEACONS ARE A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

- According to The Book of Discipline ¶329, "Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice, to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two."
- "By embodying their calling in the world, deacons bring the Church to the world, often in places where the Church has not been present."²

DEACONS CAN SERVE IN UNIQUE MINISTRIES

- Deacons "are not preparing for exclusively congregational ministries. Their ministry complements and expresses the work of the Church."³
- Deacons interpret their call in the contexts of church and world and can fulfill that call through specialized ministry.
- Examples of specialized ministries can include, but are not limited to: Hispanic Ministries, Christian Education, Pastoral Care and Counseling, Camps and Retreats, Campus Ministries, Social Justice Ministries, and Spiritual Formation.

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE DEACON

Because deacons have the mandate to connect the church and the world, they are able to find vocations in both inside and outside the church. These are a few examples of how deacons are fulfilling their call:

WITHIN A CHURCH

- Associate Minister
- Youth Minister
- Children's Minister
- Minister of Christian Education
- Minister of Music
- Outreach Minister
- Congregational Care Minister

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH*

- Social Worker
- Chaplain
- Congregational Specialist
- Social Justice and Poverty Rights Advocates
- Counselor and Family Therapist
- Hospital Nurse
- Lawyer

*Deacons who have appointments beyond the local church are required to have a Charge Conference to which they have a missional responsibility.

¹ Margaret Ann Crain and Jack L. Seymour, *A Deacon's Heart: The New United Methodist Diaconate* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, ©2001), 48.

² *Ibid.*, 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 19.

Ordination Requirements: The Highlights

For the complete list of ordination requirements for both Deacons and Elders in South Carolina, go to Clergy Services at umcsc.org and look under "Forms."

Similar Requirements for Ordination Among Deacons and Elders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet eligibility requirements • Have a bachelor's degree • Provisional period of ministry • Meet supervisory and mentor requirements • Medical report • Credit report • Psychological report • Criminal Background report • BOM papers, interviews, and recommendation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bible Study Committee ○ Called and Disciplined Life Committee (2 question difference, see below) ○ Preaching and Proclamation Committee (Deacons have option, see below) ○ Theology and Doctrine Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) • Fulfill Theological study requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Old Testament ○ New Testament ○ Church History ○ Mission of Church in the World ○ Evangelism ○ Worship/Liturgy ○ United Methodist Doctrine ○ United Methodist Polity ○ United Methodist History ○ Black Studies ○ Women's Studies
A Comparison of Requirements Between Deacons and Elders	
DEACON REQUIREMENT	ELDER REQUIREMENT
<p>Course requirement by SC Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Speaking or Communications 	<p>Course requirement by SC Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homiletics or Preaching
<p>Preaching and Proclamation Committee requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon submission on the assigned passage (or) • A Contextual Project relating the Word to the ministry context 	<p>Preaching and Proclamation Committee requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon submission on the assigned passage
<p>Education requirement (§1330.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree from a United Methodist seminary or one listed by the University Senate, or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM (or) • Master's degree in the area of specialized ministry in which the deacon will serve (or) • Professional certification alternate route (minimum age of 35, with professional certification or license in area of ministry, 8 semester hours of graduate academic credit, and basic graduate theological studies) 	<p>Education requirement (§1335.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree from a United Methodist seminary or one listed by the University Senate, or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM

The Board of Ordained Ministry and Deacon Candidates

It is the duty of the Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to examine candidates as to their fitness for ordained ministry.⁴ Therefore, it is our responsibility to understand the unique ministry of Deacons so that we may successfully examine their fitness to that ministry.

PREACHING AND PROCLAMATION

Like Elders, Deacons are called to the Ministry of the Word and that call can be fulfilled in different ways. The Elder will have a church and a pulpit from which to preach, however Deacons may or may not be appointed to a church and some Deacons may never preach a sermon from a pulpit. We know the Word can be proclaimed in a variety of ways and its power is not limited to the pulpit. Deacons have the responsibility to reach out to people outside of the church and should have the freedom to proclaim God's word in a relevant way. The Preaching and Proclamation Committee realizes this and offers Deacon candidates the option to either do a sermon or a contextual project. Both options test the Deacon candidate's knowledge of scripture, understanding of context and audience, exegetical skills, communication skills, and ability to proclaim and transform scripture.

Examples of proclamation beyond the pulpit:

- Bible Study curriculum
- Pastoral conversation with a patient
- Premarital counseling session
- Public speech at a rally for social justice
- Open letter to a legislator

CALL AND DISCIPLINED LIFE

Elders and Deacons are asked 7 questions, 5 of which are the same. It should be noted that although Elders are not called to the ministry of Justice, they are asked the question: " Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries."

Questions specific to Full Deacon candidates:

1. How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon?
2. Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry?

Questions specific to Full Elder candidates:

1. How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?
2. How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE

Both Elders and Deacons are required to have classes in United Methodist Theology, and are asked the same Disciplinary Questions. It should be noted that although Deacons are not called to the ministry of Sacrament, they are asked the question: "How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments."

BIBLE STUDY

Both Elders and Deacons are required to have classes in the Old and New Testaments, and are required by the Book of Discipline to submit a Bible Study. The Bible Study instructions are the same for both Orders.

⁴ *The Book of Discipline* ¶ 635.2.h