



## Ministry of **DEACONS**

### Ordained to Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice

Deacons are ordained clergy who lead the people of God through ministries of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Some deacons serve congregations in ministries of Christian education, music, outreach, administration, or pastoral care. Some deacons serve outside the church in such ministries as social-service organizations, schools, legal services, or as chaplains.

### Ordination and Leadership

Ordained ministers are leaders who are set apart in ministries that represent God's love. Ordination is a lifetime covenantal relationship that includes mutual care and accountability. It is founded in the sacrament of baptism, through which all Christians are called into service. Deacons are ordained into this lifetime relationship.

The office of the deacon dates back to New Testament times. The word "deacon" carries the meaning of "servant" and "messenger." A deacon's work includes ministries of compassion and justice and leading the faithful in these ministries. United Methodist deacons are appointed to their places of ministry. They typically find their place of service and request appointment from the bishop.

### In the Congregation

In the congregation, deacons help to lead worship and assist the pastor with presiding at the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. They also preach and teach; raise the congregation's awareness of the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world; lead outreach ministries; and conduct funerals and weddings. Their ministry in a church includes sending the faithful into ministry outside the church walls.

### In the World

Beyond the local congregation, deacons may serve in social service agencies; in church-related schools, institutions, agencies, and in places where people are hungry to know a loving God. While many of these ministries can be performed by lay people, the ordained are distinct in their accountable relationship to the church, their representative ministry (representing service to the church and the church to the world), their leadership, and their lifetime commitment to this relationship. Deacons serving beyond the local church also have a "secondary appointment" to a congregation, connecting the church to the needs of the world.



**HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY**  
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## First Steps – Deacon

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergyperson or candidacy mentor. This book is available for purchase at [www.Cokesbury.com](http://www.Cokesbury.com).
- Contact a pastor, an elder, a deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission into the candidacy process. The district superintendent invites applicants to enroll in the candidacy process.
- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* and refine your call to ministry.

## Becoming a Certified Candidate – Deacon (¶310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one year.
- Register online in the Candidacy Application System and pay the candidacy application fee.
- Meet with the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) to discuss your call to ordained ministry, and complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in ¶¶310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

## Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Deacon (¶324)

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Bachelor's degree (some exceptions apply) from an approved institution.
- Graduate degree options include:
  - Master of Divinity degree from a University Senate-approved seminary or other master's degree from a University Senate-approved seminary
  - Master's degree in an area of specialization and completion of Basic Graduate Theological Studies
- Alternative education available for candidates over 35 years old includes a bachelor's degree, United Methodist Certification in Professional Ministry, and basic Graduate Theological Studies.

## Continuing Steps – Deacon

- Demonstrate gifts for ministries of compassion, justice, and leadership to the satisfaction of the dCOM.
- Complete application requirements including health certificate, background checks, written theological exam, and autobiographical statement.
- Interview first with the dCOM and then with the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) to be recommended for commissioning.
- Receive Clergy Session approval for election to provisional membership, followed with commissioning by a bishop.
- After successfully completing the requirements of provisional membership, apply for recommendation by the BOM and approval by the Clergy Executive Session for ordination and full membership.
- Be ordained by a bishop.

The candidacy process is listed in ¶¶310-314 in *The Book of Discipline*.

The ministry of the Deacon is described in ¶¶328-331 in *The Book of Discipline*.