

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES
FOR
THE DEACON PROGRAM**



- 1. A Policy Concerning the Use of Deacons**
- 2. Guidelines for Pastoral Administrators**
- 3. Guidelines for Instructors**
- 4. Guidelines for Congregations**

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**A POLICY CONCERNING THE USE OF DEACONS IN THE
MID-SOUTH DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD**

Before a lay worker is licensed to preach and authorized to function as a Deacon in a congregation of the Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, the following conditions must be met:

- 1.00 A candidate for the program will be identified, endorsed and supported by his local pastor and congregation. He will be competent and spiritually qualified to assist his Pastoral Administrator in the ministry of the Word, such as teaching, preaching, leading worship, visitation and outreach. He will show a willingness to work under the supervision of his pastor, and make a commitment to complete what is asked of him in instruction and fieldwork as assigned.
- 1.01 The congregation shall have secured, with the assistance of the District President, the services of an ordained pastor to assume responsibility for supervising the work of the deacon and for oversight (episkope) in the congregation to be served by the Deacon. The arrangements pertaining to his service shall be shared with the District President and the Circuit Counselor and shall be approved by the District President.
- 1.02 The ordained pastor shall have general oversight of the congregation, that is, he shall supervise the doctrine and life of the congregation and the administration of the Office of the Keys to ascertain that they are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the teachings and practices of the Synod.
- 1.03 The Deacon shall carry out, in service to the congregation, certain distinctive functions of the ministry of the Word, and in approved cases, Word and Sacrament, in accordance with the District Guidelines and under the supervision of the ordained pastor responsible for the general oversight of the congregation. His service shall be to the specific ministry location for which he is assigned.
- 2.00 Authorization to a congregation to permit a lay worker to serve as Deacon, that is to conduct certain functions of the ministry of the Word, and in approved cases, Word and Sacrament, shall expire on January 1 of the following year. An application from the congregation for renewal shall be submitted to the District President by December 1 of the year of service.
- 3.00 The license to preach issued to the Deacon expires on January 1 following the year of service but may be renewed on an annual basis. Application for renewal shall be submitted by the Deacon to the District President by December 1 of year of service.
- 4.00 Annual renewal forms are to be completed by the deacon, Pastoral Administrator and congregation and submitted to the District President by December 1 of the service year.
- 5.00 All congregations obtaining the services of a Deacon, as well as all lay workers serving as Deacon, shall agree in writing to follow both this Policy and the terms of the Guidelines for congregations regarding the service of a Deacon when it is not possible to obtain or call an ordained Pastor.
- 6.00 In the event that any of the arrangements or renewals, described in 1.01, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00 or 5.00 above are denied by the District President, the congregation may appeal the District President's decision to the Presidium, (Vice Presidents) of the District. The decision of the Presidium is final and not subject to further appeal.
- 7.00 While the Deacon is a service position and is undertaken without expectation of compensation, the congregation where he is serving is encouraged to provide a stipend once a Deacon begins his work. Travel reimbursement should be provided. This can be expressed in an agreement between the congregation, the Deacon and his Pastoral Administrator.

**GUIDELINES FOR A PASTOR SUPERVISING THE WORK OF A
DEACON IN THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT**

1. The Pastoral Administrator shall faithfully and carefully oversee the work of the Deacon for whose ministry he is responsible.

The Deacon gains most of his learning by “doing” under the guidance, reflection and evaluation of a Pastoral Administrator. The Pastoral Administrator is to inspire and encourage the Deacon and to help equip him with the various skills that will enable him to serve people effectively in the congregation he has been called to serve.

A Pastoral Administrator should have a minimum of five years in pastoral ministry. Any exceptions must be approved by the District President. He demonstrates by his own personal and professional life what it means to be a faithful and effective church worker.

A Pastoral Administrator shall:

- a. Meet regularly with the Deacon for direction as well as reflection and evaluation of the Deacon’s work.
 - b. Supervise the preaching and teaching of the Deacon, evaluating his sermons before he delivers them and approving the materials he uses in his teaching.
 - c. Ask for frequent progress reports from the Deacon.
 - d. Challenge the Deacon to think for himself for possible solutions to various issues and problems that he is facing.
 - e. Back him up with your wholehearted support, sharing constructive criticisms with him only in private.
 - f. Teach him to take criticism constructively and to learn from his mistakes.
 - g. Give him the opportunity to observe ministry, taking him on visits, and including him in ministry activities whenever possible or appropriate.
 - h. Place responsibilities on him gradually, starting in those areas he is most equipped and then gradually enabling him to expand his areas of ministry.
 - i. Supervise and assist him in his ministry to all of the members of the congregation he serves, and in his outreach to the community.
 - j. Complete and share with him a thorough evaluation of his work at least once every six months.
 - k. Consult with his instructor in the Deacon Training Program to see how he is progressing with his class work.
 - l. Meet regularly with the leaders of the congregation he is serving to keep clear his areas of responsibility, and to evaluate his ministry in the congregation.
 - m. Pray for him and his family with the leaders of the congregation.
 - n. Work with the District President and the District Director for the Deacon Training Program in completing the certification process each year for the Deacon.
2. The Pastoral Administrator shall direct the Deacon not to engage in formal pastoral counseling but shall encourage him to be ready to listen and help those in need.
 3. The Pastoral Administrator shall encourage the Deacon, set an example of Christian conduct, and be supportive and helpful to him, freely share ideas, insights, experiences, and other help so that,

by the grace of God, the combined efforts of the Pastoral Administrator and the Deacon will result in the edification of the congregation and the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ.

4. The Pastoral Administrator is also the pastor who has responsibility to oversee the congregation served by the Deacon.
5. The Pastoral Administrator is responsible for applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church according to the Word of God, and as much as possible, keep the Deacon informed of his activity in this area.

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTORS IN THE DEACON PROGRAM

St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "And the things you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Timothy 2:2 TEV. This mandate unceasingly urges pastors to encourage and recruit suitable young men to become pastors. It also applies to our Deacon Training Program. It breathes a sense of sacredness and of mission urgency.

The following are criteria and guidelines that pertain to the appointment of instructors for the courses in the Deacon Training Program curriculum and to the scope of authority and responsibility.

1. Instructors shall be LCMS pastors who demonstrate extraordinary spiritual gifts for the courses to be taught. Practical experience is essential. Academic study beyond the M. Div. Level is highly desirable. LCMS teachers with proper credentials may be used to instruct the "Teaching the Faith" course.
2. Instructors are to demonstrate a maturing relation with the Lord Jesus Christ, and a deepening and broadening of theological knowledge and wisdom. They also are to demonstrate a wholesome accountability to God, to the students' sponsoring congregations, the District and the universal Church.
3. Instructors are appointed by the Executive Staff Program Director.
4. Instructors, of the ten foundation courses shall use the District approved syllabi to direct course content. They are free to use their own methods for presenting content. Credit for the foundation courses will only be granted to those students who successfully complete the course expectations and pass the standardized final examination.
5. For continuing education courses, Instructors may make reference to course syllabi and materials used by other instructors in the Mid-South District or another District of the LCMS. In any case, instructors shall, at an early date prior to the beginning of a course, send their drafted course syllabi to the District Advisor for Instruction for review and approval.
6. The Instructor will not be responsible for collecting tuition payments and fees from the students and/or their congregations. If workbooks or textbooks are needed, the instructor will determine the best method for procuring the books and handling payment.
7. At the conclusion of each of the foundation courses the instructor shall administer a competency exam provided by the District. The exams will be forwarded to the District Advisor for grading. Those students with a passing score will receive credit for the class. Those not passing will have the option of participating in the next class on that topic at no additional cost. The District will provide the instructor with certificates of completion to distribute to those who have passed the class.
8. The District President and the District Deacon Program Director are available to answer questions and provide assistance.

**GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONS REGARDING THE PERFORMANCE
OF CERTAIN PASTORAL FUNCTIONS WHEN NO ORDAINED PASTOR IS AVAILABLE**

Lutherans believe, teach and confess that God has instituted the Office of the Public Ministry (AC V) and that “nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” to serve in this office (AC XIV). Therefore, only those who hold the Office of Public Ministry should exercise distinctive functions of this office. However, when no pastor is available, and in the absence of any specific Scriptural directives to the contrary, congregations may arrange for the performance of these distinctive functions by qualified individuals, lest God’s people be deprived of the opportunity for corporate worship and the celebration of the sacraments. The following guidelines are presented in order to assist congregations in providing for an orderly way of carrying out certain distinctive functions of the pastoral office in the absence of an ordained clergyman through the position of “Deacon” as established by the Mid-South District. Because of its close connection with the Pastoral Office, the position will be held by men in keeping with the Synod’s position and practice on those who hold the office of Pastor.

These guidelines consider some of the distinctive functions of the Office of the Public Ministry, particularly in connection with the ministry of the Word.

I. Preaching in the Public Services

In dealing with this function, a distinction should be made between the responsibility and function of composing and delivering sermons and the simpler task of serving as a “reader” who reads a sermon which has been composed and prepared by one who holds the Office of the Public Ministry. In the latter case, the reader is serving as a kind of announcer or deliverer of a message composed by a pastor. The Pastoral Administrator will exercise the responsibility for oversight (episcopate).

a. Reading Sermons Composed by a Pastor

- i. In an emergency situation when the regular pastor or vacancy pastor of a congregation is unable to be present to preach because of illness, transportation problems, or some other circumstances in which his congregation or mission would be deprived of corporate worship, the elders of the congregation or responsible congregational leadership may, with the consent of the pastor, select a male member of the congregation to read in the public worship service a sermon composed by one who holds the Office of the Public Ministry.
- ii. In circumstances where no resident pastor is available and the regular pastor or supply pastor is unable to preach in the congregation for a prolonged period of time, the selection of the lay reader should be approved of in advance by the District President, who will assure that the individual possesses qualities which would commend him for this ongoing role (e.g., spirituality, exemplary Christian life, excellent standing in the congregation, good communication skills, and a readiness to grow and learn.)

b. Composing and Delivering Sermons by Individuals Not Holding the Office of the Public Ministry

- i. In circumstances where there is no resident pastor and no pastor available to lead worship and preach regularly, arrangements may be made by a congregation or the responsible board, in consultation with the District President, to secure the services of a Deacon, licensed to preach and serve under the supervision of an ordained pastor. Such laymen shall: 1) successfully complete the Homiletics course and Biblical Interpretation course; 2) shall have completed or is continuing to pursue designated courses of study under qualified and designated instructors in the District; and 3) be approved and licensed by the President of the District to which the congregation belongs where the Deacon will serve.
- ii. The license to preach in a given District shall be issued by that District’s President in keeping with criteria and standards which have been followed in Synod. The license shall be initiated for no more than one year and shall clearly state in writing the conditions under which the license may be renewed.
- iii. All sermonic preparation and composition by licensed layman shall be guided and directed by the Pastoral Administrator. All sermons delivered by the licensed layman, whether

prepared by the licensed layman or by another, should receive the approval of the Pastoral Administrator prior to delivery in a public worship service. It is understood that where consultation is not possible, the Pastoral Administrator will have made appropriate arrangements for exercising his accountability for the proclamation of the Word in the congregation.

2. Leading the Public Services

The Deacon will follow liturgical forms as are approved and provided by the Pastoral Administrator and which are acceptable to the congregation.

3. The Public Administration of the Sacraments

Only those Deacons licensed by the District President may serve in this capacity. He may only do so with written permission from his Pastoral Administrator, his local congregation, and, if applicable, the congregation in which he will serve. Written notice of this service is to be forwarded to the District Deacon Coordinator prior to serving.

The Deacon will follow Biblical and Synodical procedures as authorized by the congregation and overseen by the Pastoral Administrator.