

The Place of Deacons in the Local Church

Deacons have been influential in the life of the local church since biblical times. Their focus is servant-leadership and reflects the ministry of Jesus. As pastors and local congregations help people to recognize, accept and use their gifts in ministry, God will call some to lead in specialized areas. They will assist the pastor and equip people for ministry and service. Deacons will typically lead in ministries of:

- care and mercy
- worship, music and creative arts
- disciple making and mentoring/coaching

CONSECRATED DEACONS



“The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it.”

- spiritual nurture, counsel and prayer
- outreach, evangelism and service
- Christian education or communication
- administration and organization
- technology ministries/communication

Other specialized ministries may also be developed.



The Free Methodist Church USA
770 N High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214
800.342.5531
www.fmcusa.org

A guide for
pastors and local
boards of administration

They must be reverent before the mystery of faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. ● ● ●

Where Do We Begin?

Pastors and lay leaders work together to identify, attract and equip leaders. They look for people of spiritual maturity and gifts for service to consecrate as deacons. They consider spiritual gifts, natural abilities, passions, educational background and life experiences. Prayerful counsel with the pastor(s) will help guide the individual in understanding God's call to ministry as a deacon.

The individual must make application and the pastor give a written recommendation for consideration to the local board of administration (LBA). The LBA will then determine if the applicant qualifies for the office of deacon and evaluate the candidate's strength and growth areas by means of a diagnostic interview.

If approved, the LBA will assign a coach who will meet monthly with the candidate and report to the board.

If there is history of divorce on the part of the candidate or the spouse of the candidate, clearance must be granted by the Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, according to the guidelines provided by the Board of Bishops.

The "Deacon Handbook" for the Free Methodist Church will guide the church, pastor and candidate through the process. It is available at www.fmcusa.org.

How Long Will the Process Take?

The normal expected time frame is one year. However, unusually mature or gifted individuals may be approved earlier. Candidates who require more mentoring or equipping may take longer. In no case shall the process be less than six months. The local board of administration (LBA) shall make the final determination of an individual being fully prepared to serve as a deacon.

The Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board shall oversee the process to insure that minimal criteria for excellence are achieved.

Cultivating Leaders

The strategic priority of the Free Methodist Church is to multiply godly and competent pastoral and lay leaders for today and for each new generation. Primary responsibility rests with the pastor of each church to "identify, attract and equip leaders." (§5310.B) This applies to lay leaders, consecrated deacons and ordained elders. All three roles are important in providing a healthy leadership team for the local church. Effective pastoral leaders and local churches make multiplying servant leaders a priority.

The Book of Discipline clearly states that the church must discern and cultivate those who have abilities and character qualities for pastoral leadership (see §5300). If the pastor assigned to

oversee a congregation does not initiate and guide such discerning and cultivating, many whom God is calling into leadership will never fulfill their calling.

Therefore, pastors are called to regularly guide their congregations in prayer for the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers (Matthew 9:37-38). They are called to observe not only youth and young adults, who may be called into ministry, but also mature members who are in other careers and professions. They are called to encourage those who, by the use of their spiritual gifts, give evidence of potential for spiritual oversight and consecrated deacons or ordained elders.

Who Can Serve as Coach?

The coach for the deacon candidate shall be a mature Christian who has demonstrated significant ministry fruitfulness and ranks high in the 12 categories covered in the the diagnostic interview. The coach does not have to be a pastor. The duties and responsibilities of the coach are included in the "Deacon Handbook."

● ● ● Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith. ” ”
(1 Timothy 3:9-10, 12, The Message)

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