



EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE ORDER OF DEACONS COVENANT 2014-2015

Purpose and nature of covenant

A covenant in a faith context is a mutual exchange of promises for the good of the body, its purpose and ministry, and discipleship to God.

“Ordained persons exercise their ministry in covenant with all Christians, especially with those whom they lead and serve in ministry. They also live in covenant of mutual care and accountability with all those who share their ordination, especially in The United Methodist Church, with the ordained who are members of the same annual conference and part of the same Order. The covenant of ordained ministry is a lifetime commitment, and those who enter into it dedicate their whole lives to the personal and spiritual disciplines it requires.”—*The 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline*

Preamble

As deacons we are called to share in Christ’s ministry of servanthood, to relate the life of the community to its service in the world, to lead others into Christian discipleship, to nurture disciples for witness and service, to lead in worship, to teach and proclaim God’s Word, to assist elders and appointed local pastors at Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, to interpret to the church the world’s hurts and hopes, to serve all people, particularly the poor, the sick, and the oppressed, and to lead Christ’s people in ministries of compassion and justice, liberation and reconciliation, even in the face of hardship and personal sacrifice. These are the duties of a deacon.

We, for the sake of the church’s life and mission, covenant to participate in the order of deacons. We give ourselves to God through the order of deacons in order to sustain and build each other up in prayer, study, worship, and service.

The functions of the order

- Gather regularly for continuing spiritual formation (Bible study, issues facing church and society, theological exploration of vocational identity and leadership)
- Assist in plans for individual study and retreats
- Develop a bond of unity and common commitment to the UMC mission and ministry
- Nurture mutually supportive and trusting relationships among order members
- Hold order members accountable to the above purposes

Key areas of promise

As members of the Order of Deacons:

We in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference covenant together to maintain and strengthen relationships and purpose among the members of the Order of Deacons through the below activities:

1. Spiritual Growth

- Plan and hold a Deacon Day Apart at least once every two years for the purposes of fellowship, support, spiritual growth and study inviting all ordained, commissioned deacons, candidates, and those discerning a call to the ministry of the Deacon.
- Plan and hold an overnight retreat (two days and one night at minimum) at least once every two years for purposes of spiritual renewal

2. Vocational Development

- Participate in the formation of future ordained deacons by becoming a candidacy and/or clergy mentor.
- Plan a deacon/elder/local pastor shared ministry workshop to demonstrate effective elder/local pastor/deacon partnerships in ministry and liturgical leadership once every 4 years.
- Participate in worship leadership at local churches with the area bishop as invited.
- Participate in and/or lead a worship service at Annual Conference each year as invited.
- Staff a booth or display table yearly at conference session and talk to folks who might sense a call to the ministry of deacon.

3. Accountability and Support

- Meet at least once annually with the area bishop (the Bishop convenes the Order of Deacons yearly per the BOD) and providing a question-and-answer time where together we explore ways to engage the ministry of the deacon effectively across the conference.
- Develop and maintain a social media site for discussion on shared reading, best-practice sharing, and problem solving.
- Meet over a meal at annual conference session yearly. Invite candidates and provisional members in order to develop relationships with them.

As individuals:

- We will practice Spiritual disciplines such as daily prayer & scripture reading, weekly corporate worship, and periodic spiritual retreat.
- We who live and/or work within the bounds of this conference will attend and/or participate in at least one opportunity or activity planned by the leadership of the Order each year.
This includes:
 - Deacon Day Apart
 - Deacon Overnight Retreat
 - Day the Bishop Convenes the Order
 - Annual Conference Luncheon
- We will freely offer our gifts and graces to further the fruitfulness and the understanding of the call and ministry of the ordained Deacon in the EPAUMC by serving on District and/or Conference level Committees and Task Forces when invited.
- We who live and/or work outside the geographic bounds of the EPA Annual Conference will commit to:
 - Being similarly engaged in Annual Conference Orders of Deacons with whom we are in relationship in the Conferences where we are serving.
 - Discussing with the Chairperson of the Order other ways in which we might contribute to the health of the Order if unable to attend at least one of the above EPA planned activities during the course of the year.
 - Enrich the fellowship of deacons across the connection by sharing with the EPA Order of Deacons news about deacons' ministries in the Conferences with which we are a part.

Conclusion

We, the undersigned, do covenant together to encourage and support one another as we grow in Christlikeness, in faithfulness to the calling of the ordained Deacon in the UMC, and in trusting relationships with one another and with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

May the peace and the grace of God go with us as we follow in the footsteps of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____