



**Free Methodist Church USA
39th General Conference
RESOLUTION**

INSTRUCTIONS:

Complete requested information, adding additional pages as necessary. Save and e-mail completed form to your Annual Conference office.

INTRODUCED BY:
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ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: _____
Southern Michigan
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WRITTEN BY:

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General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 602

Received Date: 12/19/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPHS 6500, 6600, 6610

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE: Resolution on the Understanding of
the Role of Deacon

Final Vote: Yes No

WHEREAS:

WHEREAS according to both Scripture and the Free Methodist Book of Discipline, women and men are *called* to the office of a deacon, as opposed to the diaconate being the result of one showing inadequate potential of becoming an elder.

WHEREAS in the Bible deacons are set apart to serve the church in significant ways such as: ministry to the marginalized (Acts 6), preaching (Acts 7) performing signs and wonders (Acts 8) and delivering, and likely reading, Paul's letter to the church in Rome (Romans 16)

WHEREAS the greatest church multiplication movements historically, and presently, were lay-lead movements

WHEREAS the Wesleyan movement multiplied rapidly in the 18th and 19th centuries primarily through lay preachers and circuit riders

WHEREAS the founding of the Free Methodist Church finds its roots in the organization of laymen conventions

WHEREAS the role of the deacon is to complement the work of elders to serve a particular local church the phrase "conference deacon" is confusing

WHEREAS leading missiologists see the decreased emphasis on mobilizing lay leaders as one of Methodism's greatest movement killers

WHEREAS significant emphasis on developing consecrated deacons will cultivate a fuller expression of the priesthood of all believers in the Free Methodist Church

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED: that the following changes to the Book of Discipline paragraphs 6500 and 6600 on Local Ministerial Candidates and Conference Deacons be made for the purpose of validating, empowering, and mobilizing lay leaders to serve the church and rekindle a multiplication movement:

Revised Language (~~omitted language in red~~, recommended changes in blue)

Local Ministerial Candidates

¶6500

- A. A local ministerial candidate is one who is seriously considering a call to vocational ministry and who has completed the processes of licensing. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. Prior to being approved to work toward a local ministerial candidate license, the person shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing the developing qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister: a heart for God and the mission of the church, leadership potential, good conduct and the ability to work with people.
- B. Persons who ~~do not show adequate potential of being an elder who can lead a congregation to fulfill the mission of the Church and our expected outcomes should be counseled at an early time to consider the support and service role of a deacon.~~—discern a call to the diaconate should pursue the consecrated deacon path at the completion of the local ministerial candidate process.
- C. The pastor shall enter into a mentoring relationship with the potential local ministerial candidate, establishing a Formation Plan (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*). The pastor shall journey with the individual through licensing as local ministerial candidate, and possibly even through licensing as a conference ministerial candidate. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill (see ¶6300.Q, ¶6320.B.10).
- D. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate is contingent upon:
1. membership in the Free Methodist Church;
 2. exploring a call to ordained ministry in a mentoring relationship with pastor/designee (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*);
 3. an interview with and approval by the local Board of Administration upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.A; and
 4. receiving a local ministerial candidate certificate before the congregation upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.B.
- E. Following licensing, the new local ministerial candidate opens a file with Ministerial Credentialing Services (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*).
- F. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- G. A local ministerial candidate shall maintain membership in the society that licensed him/her, unless

appointed as a licensed pastor (see ¶6500.H).

- H. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a licensed pastor shall hold membership in the society served (see ¶5640).
- I. A local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the local Board of Administration.
- J. A local ministerial candidate, who after four years does not actively progress toward conference ministerial candidacy leading to elder's orders, shall choose to study for the diaconate or to serve in another lay capacity, thus discontinuing the local ministerial candidate license.
- K. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a Ministerial Appointments Committee to have charge of a society may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- L. Finally, the local Board of Administration recommends to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

Conference Consecrated Deacons

¶6600

A. **Conference Consecrated** deacons are members in good standing in the Free Methodist Church. They are persons of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Spirit, whose spiritual gifts from God have been confirmed by their societies. In response to God's call on their lives, **conference consecrated** deacons offer servant-leadership in particular areas of congregational life, according to the gifts and graces God has given and they have developed. ~~Complementing the work of elders,~~ **conference consecrated** deacons serve the society by assisting and leading the membership to carry out its ministries to one another and the world.

B. The specialized ministries of the **conference consecrated** deacons include, but are not limited to, ministries of:

1. care and mercy
2. worship and music
3. administration and organization
4. spiritual nurture and counsel
5. outreach and service

C. Under the leadership of the pastor(s), local congregations will help people recognize, accept and use their gifts in ministry. In due course, God will call some to lead the body in specialized ministries, assisting the pastor(s) in equipping the people for ministry and dedicating significant time to this work.

D. Under the guidance of the pastor(s) and the local Board of Administration, persons called to such ministry will be recognized, encouraged, mentored, trained, examined and certified for the diaconate.

1. The local Board of Administration shall guide prospective **conference consecrated** deacons in a process of study and mentoring appropriate for their areas of ministry and according to denominational standards. In the process, the local Board of Administration will give due

consideration to character, calling, gifting, training and fruitfulness in ministry (see *Deacon Handbook*).

2. When a prospective **conference consecrated** deacon or his/her spouse has been divorced, clearance for ministry shall be required, according to denominational guidelines used by the bishops. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will review and recommend clearance for ministry to the local Board of Administration for final approval. The file will go to the conference office, so that if the conference deacon were later to proceed to elder's orders, the bishops would have access to the previous endorsement.
 - A. Upon meeting the requirements and completing the process of preparation, the local Board of Administration shall approve the candidate for consecration as a **conference** deacon within the society. The conference superintendent or designee shall consecrate the **conference** deacon with the assistance of the pastor(s) and other deacons. The local Free Methodist Church shall issue a certificate of **consecration** to the newly **conference consecrated** deacon.
 - B. On an annual basis the local Board of Administration shall review and approve **conference consecrated** deacons within their care as to their character and performance in ministry. When appropriate, with due process, the local Board of Administration may discontinue certification.

The Conference Consecrated Deacon's Role

¶6610

- A. **Conference Consecrated** deacons remain members of the local Free Methodist Church with no official standing in the annual conference. **Conference Consecrated** deacons may therefore serve as lay delegates to annual conference and General Conference.
- B. The **conference consecrated** deacon's particular ministry role is defined by his or her individual gifts, passions and calling from God. **Conference Consecrated** deacons may therefore serve the local congregation in a variety of ways.
- C. **Conference Consecrated** deacons may administer the sacraments only when authorized by an elder.
- D. The consecration of a **conference** deacon will be valid only in that society. Whenever a **conference consecrated** deacon transfers membership to another Free Methodist Church, the receiving pastor may decline to recognize the prior consecration. If the pastor chooses to affirm the transferring **conference** deacon's consecration, the person may be approved for ministry in the new congregation after review by the pastor and local Board of Administration of the receiving society.
- E. A composite record or list of **conference consecrated** deacons will be kept at the conference office and not listed in the denominational Yearbook. They shall be clearly distinguished from ordained located deacons who are listed in the Yearbook.

Annual Conference Resolutions Committee Worksheet:

Mission: To love God, love people and make disciples.

Vision: To bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

1. Does the resolution have a direct relationship to the vision and mission of the Free Methodist Church?

Yes

2. How will the proposed change help us accomplish our vision and mission?

It elevates the role of deacon and corrects the current faulty language which diminishes the office that is currently in our BoD. It also reverses the erroneous action of our last General Conference in establishing a “conference” deacon and returning our language to “consecrated” deacon.

3. The Resolutions Committee rates this resolution as:

(A) Support - recommend adoption

Other Comments:

