



**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:

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: Gateway Conference
and East Michigan

WRITTEN BY: Tyler Boyer

General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 504

Received Date: 11/30/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPH 5340.E, 6500.B, 6600, 6610

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE: Return To Consecrated Deacon

Final Vote: Yes No

WHEREAS:

- The Free Methodist Church has always valued the kingdom work of clearly called and well-trained lay people.
- God's given revelation demonstrates that the calling, oversight and the tasks of the deacon are situated in the local church setting.
- deacons, "serve under the authority and accountability of the local church." (Deacon Track Description, Pathwright, pg. 18)
- "The New Testament describes several people that were set apart by the overseers and elders of the church to take particular roles for encouraging, serving and building up the body of Christ..." (Deacon Track Description, Pathwright, pg. 17)
- "Although their ministry may be pastoral in nature and/or they may serve in an oversight capacity of a local ministry, because their affirmed calling is to a particular local context, their development and oversight is provided by the local church." (Deacon Track Description, Pathwright, pg. 18)
- With the exceptions of divorce clearance and providing for training resources it should not be the task of the Ministerial Education and Guidance board to provide for ongoing oversight lay ministry positions like deacon in local settings.

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED: that the title and descriptions of "Conference" Deacon, be replaced with the title and descriptions of "Consecrated Deacon" in order to return to the 2003-2015 BOD understandings of the role of deacon.

Conference Ministerial Candidate

¶5340

E. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may recommend the ~~conference~~ **consecrated** deacon track to a candidate for reasons when:

1. A Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) who is called to a specialized ministry but not the general itinerant ministry of a Free Methodist elder.
2. A CMC who is called to pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church, but due to age, or language skills is not able **or not willing** to complete all of the preparations for becoming an elder.
3. A CMC who desires to continue in ministry in the Free Methodist Church but needs to suspend completing the course of study for an extended season (e.g. personal, vocational, or medical reasons).

~~To be considered as a Conference Deacon the candidate must complete the Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) vetting process and 50% or more of the core curriculum for CMCs (including FM History and Polity, Old Testament and New Testament Survey Courses, Wesleyan Theology, and one or more practical ministry courses, internship, or practicum). The Conference MEG Board presents qualified conference ministerial candidates to be confirmed as Conference Deacons. Following their confirmation, a Conference Deacon shall receive a card stating his/her status with the Conference. A Conference Deacon maintains the same relationship with the annual conference that he/she had as a CMC. If at a later time a Conference Deacon desires to seek ordination, he/she may contact the MEG Board to reengage with the ordination process. If a Conference Deacon seeks a transfer to another conference, he/she could do so as a CMC/Conference Deacon.~~

To become a Consecrated Deacon, the candidate must complete the steps laid out in the Consecrated Deacon Handbook. Because scripture requires deacons to "keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience", consecrated deacons will be expected to complete core ministry training courses, including but not limited to; the Free Methodist Way Course, FM History and Polity, Christian Doctrine, Old Testament and New Testament Survey Courses, Wesleyan Theology, and one or more practical ministry courses related to their area of specialization.

Local Ministerial Candidates

¶6500

~~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.~~

Persons should be instructed early in the Local Ministerial Candidate formation process regarding the role and expectations of both a Conference Ministerial Candidate and a Consecrated Deacon. At this early stage of discernment, the pastor shall clearly explain itineracy, the educational and service requirements and the processes leading toward ordination and appointment as an elder. The pastor shall also clearly explain the possible roles of the consecrated deacon, the specialization areas and the training required, as well as the process of becoming a consecrated deacon and serving in the local church.

Conference Deacons **Consecrated Deacon**

¶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 Local Board of Administration will review and recommend clearance for ministry to the conference superintendent for final approval.** The file will go to the conference office, so that if the ~~conference~~ **consecrated** deacon were later to proceed to elder's orders, the bishops would have access to the previous endorsement.

E. **Upon meeting the requirements and completing the process of preparation, the local Board of Administration shall approve the candidate for consecration as a deacon and recommend them to the conference superintendent for final approval.** 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 new deacon.**

F. 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~~ **consecrated** 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~~ **consecrated** 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

No

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

3. The Resolutions Committee rates this resolution as:

(A) Support - recommend adoption

(B) Recommended - worthy of review

(C) Rejected - anticipate General Conference rejection

Other Comments:

