



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR PASTORS TO THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD DEACON PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Deacon Program of the Upstate NY Synod is to identify, train, authorize, and supervise lay persons who assist pastors and other rostered leaders of their congregation in worship, educational ministries, and/or ministries of care, service and outreach beyond the congregation..

The following information may be helpful as you acquaint yourself with the Synod Deacon Program. More in depth information is found in the Upstate New York Synod Deacon Handbook which is found online at www.upstatenysynod.org

Presiding at Sacraments: Presiding at sacraments shall follow ELCA and Upstate New York Synod Guidelines. A deacon may only preside with approval of the Bishop of the UNYS Synod following a letter requesting permission by the Pastor overseeing the ministry. In order to comply with current ecumenical agreements, the Bishop cannot authorize Upstate New York Deacons to preside at sacraments in the congregations of full communion partners.

TRANSITION

Ministry Between Pastors: Congregation Deacons are often an important part of the transition process when there is a pastoral transition. The recognized transition pastor shall develop a covenant with deacons outlining responsibilities and boundaries.

When a new pastor arrives: Deacons are to submit a letter of resignation when a new pastor arrives in the local congregation. Some new pastors prefer to hold these resignations for a period of time until service can be clearly defined and understood by all parties.

Questions may be addressed to any of the following persons who serve on the Synod Deacon Committee and they can connect you to the conference trainers.

Rev. Daniel Hoffman, Chair (Niagara Frontier)	716-688-9245 glassmandan142@gmail.com
Ms. Phyllis Becker (Central Crossroads)	315-866-2379 trinityherk@verizon.net
Rev. Jim Bresnahan (Central Crossroads)	315-682-8655 jcbresnahan@yahoo.com
Rev. Jonathan Deibler (Genesee-Fingerlakes)	585-924-5192 jdeibler@rochester.rr.com
Rev. Paul Messner (Foothills)	607-287-9069 prpaul_theoinst@hotmail.com
Dr. Donald Mills (Central Crossroads)	315-446-5194 dhmills@syr.edu
Ms. Christine Nash (Hudson Mohawk)	518-286-3445 humphreycat@email.com
Rev. James Slater (Hudson Mohawk)	518-758-6526 jhsiii@fairpoint.net
Ms. Lynn Whitworth (Niagara Frontier)	716-984-0334 lbella@roadrunner.com

DEFINITIONS

Congregation Deacon is a recognized leader with an intentional ministry in a congregation under the supervision of the pastor. This person has been trained within the guidelines of the UNYS Deacon Program and has a certificate of successful completion of the program.

Conference Deacon is a trained Congregation Deacon who has been identified by his/her pastor and the Conference Dean for service beyond the local congregation within a particular conference. The Conference Dean has supervisory responsibility over this individual.

Synod Deacon is a trained Congregation Deacon who has been identified by his/her pastor, the Conference Dean and the Bishop for service beyond the local congregation for a designated period of time within a special congregation or ministry.

Typical Deacon Responsibilities may include but are not limited to assistance in worship, visitation under the supervision of the pastoral leader, and preaching.

PROCESS FOR SELECTION

A **Congregation Deacon** candidate is a baptized, confirmed, communing and contributing member of a congregation. This person is identified by the pastor and approved by the Congregation Council and Congregation. This person's voluntary service is an extension of the pastoral ministry and under the supervision of a particular pastor.

Conference Deacons are an extension of the ministry of the Dean and the identified pastoral leader of their own congregation and/or the congregation receiving their service. This is an occasional service and non-stipendiary (except within the guidelines of a particular conference). All Conference Deacons have received approved Deacon Training in accordance with the Upstate New York Synod Deacon Handbook.

Synod Deacons are an extension of the ministry of the Bishop and the identified pastoral leader of the congregation receiving their service. Stipend for this service is at the discretion of the Bishop. All Synod Deacons have received approved Deacon training in accordance with the Upstate New York Synod Deacon Handbook.

BACKGROUND SCREENING: It is highly recommended that the local congregation conducts background screening on all deacon candidates prior to their beginning their service in accord with the Upstate New York Synod guidelines.

TYPICAL DEACON EDUCATION shall include the following areas:

- 5 hours Old Testament Survey;
- 5 hours New Testament Survey;
- 5 hours Lutheran identity;
- 5 hours Hermeneutics;
- 5 hours Corporate Worship and Spiritual formation;
- 5 hours Deacon Skills including boundary awareness workshop;

15 hours specific to area of ministry particular to deacon; and

- 10 hours Continuing Education each year after commissioning and installation.

- Participation in a Boundary Awareness workshop is required of all deacons to be renewed every five years.

A record of all deacon training shall be kept on file by the pastor/supervisor and the Conference Training Committee.

Final Approval for the candidate often rests in the conference training group as well as the identified pastoral leader of the candidate's congregation.

Commissioning may occur at a Conference Assembly and **Installation** in the local congregation affirms this ministry.

A **Deacon Cross** is available from the Conference Dean/Training Chair for wearing by trained deacons.

Covenant: It is expected each deacon have an up-to-date covenant on record signed by their pastoral leader as well as representatives of the local congregation.

Pastoral Supervision: It is recommended pastoral leaders meet regularly with deacons for mutual conversation, continuing education and spiritual support. A pastoral leader is encouraged to include a report of the ministry of deacons within the annual report to the congregation. A pastoral leader may require a yearly evaluation meeting with all deacons.

TERMS: Normal length of service – three years, renewable. Deacons are encouraged to take Sabbath time from their deacon responsibilities for personal growth and rest.

Confidentiality issues will be discussed as part of the ongoing relationship with the pastoral leader.

For further information, please contact your Dean.

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