Order of Deacons

Presentation to January Seminar

2016

Douw Grobler
PO Box 128
Magalieskruin
Pretoria
0150

0833744333

douw.grobler@sinovillemethodist.org.za

Sinoville Methodist Church

(012) 567-0065
THE ORDER OF DEACONS
IN THE
METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2
MINISTERIAL SUPPORT 2
ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT 2
PROBLEM SOLVER 3
MISSION IMPLEMENTATION 3
PROCLAMATION 4
HISTORY OF DIACONATE 5
CALLING AND PATH TO ORDINATION 6
MCSA AND THE METHODIST ORDER OF DEACONS 10
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEACONS AND PRESBYTERS 19
SERVANTS PREVIOUS, CURRENT, AND PERSONAL JOURNEYS 21
CONCLUSION 22
REFERENCES 23
Introduction
The role of the Deacon in the Methodist Church is to serve – to minister to the church’s needs. To help, to assist, to ensure that the true needs of the Church, community, and its members are met in a way that brings honour to God and His church.

In the light of this understanding, the tasks of a deacon can be grouped under 5 ministry functions:

Ministerial Support
Based upon the Biblical example of focusing ministry on Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ‘ends of the earth’:

‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (NIV, Acts 1:8),

I believe that the task of the deacon starts at home – caring for the church of which he is a member, and then flows out through the community, wider society, and even further.

The deacon must be a valuable ally, assistant, and source of help and support to the senior minister (presbyter) of the local church where he is based. Those individuals appointed in Acts 6:1-7 were appointed to support the Apostles right where they were.

This support can take the form of hands-on work as well as sharing of ideas, insights, and sharing in the building and implementation of the specific vision of our local church.

We conduct hospital visits, shut-ins, and course facilitation. In addition, I we focus on growing Church Mission by developing volunteers (calling, equipping, and sending), coordinating projects, and initiatives, and developing a feedback system that not only informs, but also aims to involve the whole church in mission.

Organisational Support
As deacons, it is our task to support the organisation: the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and in fact, the whole Church in Southern Africa and the world.

We do so by applying the skills and talents, experience and insights we have accumulated that have shaped us for ministry. Each of us are unique and we bring with us a unique ability to help build and facilitate specific mission activities to which we have been called.
We aim to positively impact on the Church’s ability to address the challenges it faces. Our guidance is towards practical theology (hands-on, living the Gospel injunction to love God and one another) that results in the development of strategies and implementation of activities that are constantly evaluated and assessed to maximise impact and transformation within our communities, helping our people to face and overcome the challenges they encounter.

We avail ourselves to serve on task teams, committees, and work groups that formulate, promote and implement mission strategies.

**Problem Solver**

Like those appointed in Acts 6:1-7, the deacon has to be a problem solver. Most times, these problems become obstacles to worship and tools of division that negatively impact on the church.

Using innovative approaches and thinking outside the box is called for if this task is to be addressed successfully (Vorster, 2004:145-149). By doing so, the deacon frees up the senior minister to focus on his duties, clearing the way for him to growing the congregation spiritually.

As deacons, we aim to act as filter between the congregation and the senior minister, intercepting and solving problems that lie within our sphere of competence and capacity, thereby reducing pressure and time demand posed by these issues on the attention of the senior minister.

**Mission implementation**

‘... Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ... You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ... You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ... You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead’ (NIV, James 2:18-26).

The deacon has the task of ensuring that mission ideas are implemented in a way that is responsible, measurable, accountable, effective, and where possible – sustainable. It often happens that reaching the target becomes more important than the way it is done – leading to many people: volunteers, sponsors, donors, and clergy alike, being wounded (Colson, 1999:131).

We work towards fulfilling our appointment by the local church as Champion of Mission by structuring mission on the grounds of calling, equipping, and sending and focusing on church, community, area, country, and the world as modelled in Acts 1:8: ‘Jerusalem ... Judea ... Samaria ... ends of the earth’. By identifying partners and associates, we endeavour to structure a network through which we
as local church can be involved effectively in all these areas. These could include other churches, NGOs, FBOs, Civil Organisations, and government (local, provincial, and national).

Main areas of focus will include:

**Spirituality**
- Encouraging our people to develop a deeper and closer walk with God,
- Enabling people to listen to God and be obedient,
- Helping people to become righteous in God,
- Growing and exercising spiritual gifts among our people, and
- Moving from playing church to being church (lifestyle)

**Justice & Service**
Encouraging and equipping our people to:
- Develop a lifestyle that demonstrates a balance between justice and mercy, truth and grace,
- Naming and dealing with sin whilst affirming and loving the sinner, uplifting the downtrodden, empowering the disempowered, and
- Offering the powerful and strong opportunities to apply their skills, resources, and capacity for the benefit of the poor, the weak, the marginalized, oppressed, and disenfranchised.
- Advocacy and Awareness of the challenges and possible responses to inspire, encourage, and mobilize practical responses

**Evangelism & Church Growth**
- To Bring, Share, and Live the Good News of Jesus Christ in our lives and the lives of others,
- To understand and appreciate God’s mercy in our own lives and in response become advocates for growth in Christ and in His church, and
- To allow God to use us to bring others to Christ and to a saving and personal relationship as Agents of Change

**Economic Empowerment and Development**
- ‘Teaching people to fish’
- Creating job awareness and a desire to earn a living wage through respectable (non-illegal) employment
- Responding to basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, etc.

**Education**
- Developing the role of the church in education?
- Finding innovative ways to relate and engage?
  - Preschools
  - Early childhood developmental centres
  - Homework centers
  - After school centers
Supportive education
Bible schools
Adult Sunday schools

Of key importance is perseverance, for we read: ‘See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord’ (NIV, Colossians 4:17).

Proclamation
A deacon’s task also includes the proclamation of the Word of God: preaching the Gospel for the salvation of the world. This entails training and developing our skills at preaching and teaching so as to effectively inform, inspire, encourage, uplift, console, and rebuke our people to transform and grow as disciples of Christ.

History of Diaconate
In 1890 in Johannesburg, Rev. Applebe agreed to find a way for Sister Theresa to minister to others. She was a trained nurse who wanted to express her gratitude to her newly found Saviour.

Rev. Applebe ordained her as the first Wesleyan Methodist Deaconess on the Johannesburg goldfields. He wrote, “She was an angel of mercy at many a bedside; fed the hungry ones, lifted fallen sisters, clothed the naked and comforted the sorrowing”.

She died suddenly 18 months later and Rev. Appelbe wrote, “...never have seen around a grave such a crowd of broken men, women and children, into all of whose lives she had brought hope, peace and joy.”

Her gravestone was inscribed: ‘Sister Theresa: Wesleyan Deaconess, A healer of the sick and a friend of the friendless, Lover of little children’.

Sister Theresa was the first of several courageous and godly women who served as deaconesses in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. In 1894 Sister Evelyn Oates sailed for Durban then moved to Johannesburg where she opened a convalescent home.

Later she was sent to Durban again where she ministered to casualties of the Anglo-Boer war, not only nursing them but offering Spiritual support. She became matron at the Kilnerton Girl’s Hostel, but eventually returned to Britain after contracting TB from one of the students.

Deaconesses were involved with visiting the sick, supporting mother’s meetings, leading Bible studies, preaching, street evangelism, assisting with missions and outreach, music and pastoral work which assisted the presbyter minister.
They were British and usually returned to Britain at the end of their service, but their ministry was to all racial groups in South Africa.

One notable Deaconess was Sister Joan Ollerenshaw who trained to be a Deaconess after she was widowed. She worked mainly in Johannesburg and was one of the pioneers in the building of the Central Hall in Johannesburg.

She got the Girl Guides going in connection with Methodist Missions and started the Aged Women’s Home. At one stage she was the only social worker in Johannesburg.

General Smuts recommended her for the Birthday Honours list and in 1924 she was appointed a Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent order of the British Empire, receiving her MBE from King George VI, in recognition of her service to the public in South Africa.

In 1953, the constitution of the South African Order of Deaconesses was accepted. South African’s candidates for diaconal service were trained overseas at Ilkey College in Yorkshire.

Sister Constance Oosthuizen was one of these but when the Conference permitted women to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament she moved into the work of a Presbyter and became the Warden of the Order of Deaconesses.

Later Deaconesses completed “in service” training in South Africa. The South African Order retains close links with the British Order.

In 1979 Sister Mavis Mbilini was the first black women to be ordained as a Deaconess and in 1985 she became the first black woman to be ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the MCSA.

When men were admitted to the Order in the mid-nineties the name changed to the current Methodist Order of Deacons - MOD.

Today the Order has approximately equal numbers of men and women and from all racial groups in Southern Africa. The first Deacon from Swaziland was ordained in 2011, with another since then and we have Deacons in Mozambique, and Botswana as well.

**Calling and Path to Ordination**

*Calling*
Being and working as a Deacon is a particular expression of a calling to discipleship.
All God’s people are called to share in the work of worship, mission, and service, both before God and in the world. The particular ministries of both Deacons and Presbyters can only be understood within this context, as focusing, expressing and enabling the ministry of the whole people of God. All such ministry is seen as service (MCSA, 2015).

The task of a Deacon is to focus on servant ministry in particular … to offer visible expression … of this ministry … to encourage and enable and to undertake this ministry in our own daily lives (MCSA, 2015).

As members of a religious Order, Deacons engage in a life-long commitment to the church and to one another, submitting ourselves to the discipline and direction of the Order, and being faithful to our Rule of Life which encourages spiritual discipline and mutual support.

When ordained, Deacons are received into Full Connexion of the MCSA, with all the benefits and responsibilities which that brings.

The core emphasis of the ministry of the Deacons can be expressed as **witness through service.** This manifests in:

- acts of pastoral care, mercy, and justice
- being and acting as a prophetic sign;
- spoken acts of evangelism
- apologetics
- theological and prophetical interpretation
- teaching
- encouragement
- the articulation of faith and human experience
- leading of worship and preaching

Methodist Deacons bring the Church to the World and the World to the Church. This means we are often called and serve beyond the traditional boundaries of the ‘Church’

**Personal Calling** –
Most of the individuals who candidate for the Methodist Order of Deacons do so after years of involvement in building and implementing specific mission activities and projects. They bring with them a well-developed skill set and a proven track record, and they are encouraged to bring the experience, skills and even the ministry itself into the local church and to use what God has called them to as a tool to create awareness, grow vision, and equip people for mission.

**Path to Ordination** -
- 2 Models of Ministries
Ministry Paths for Deacons

Itinerant & Non-itinerant

Subject to Conference resolutions, a Deacon may be invited to serve in a Circuit following the system applicable to Ministers." (L&D 13.20)

Itinerant Deacons:
- “I will go to whichever Circuit or Station I am appointed. (L&D 4.17.3)
- Mostly stipendiary.
Non-itinerant Deacons
- “...not available for stationing on an itinerant basis” (L&D4.116.1)
- “They may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary (L&D4.116.1)
- Appointed in a Circuit/Station for “one year at a time”. (L&D4.116.8.2)

Functions of Ordained persons
The two Ordained Orders in the MCSA are complimentary but distinctly different:

- **Deacons (Word and Service)**
  The core emphasis of the ministry of deacons can be characterised as **witness through service**. This is expressed in:
  - **Service**: embodied acts of pastoral care, mercy and justice, and being or acting as a prophetic sign
  - **Word**: spoken acts of evangelism, apologetics, theological and prophetic interpretation, teaching, encouragement, the articulation of faith and human experience, and the leading of worship that includes preaching.

As ordained ministers Deacons are required to feed the flock of Christ, to nurse the sick, to care for the poor, to rescue the fallen. You will remember that you are one of an Order whose members must be jealous for its good name, honouring and helping one another. Above all remember that you are first and last, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that all your service is rendered to him.

*To share Christ’s love through service and to help the Church respond to the needs of the wider community.*

- **Presbyters (Word and Sacrament)**
  - As ordained ministers presbyters are called to share in the ministry of the whole Church in a particular way:
    - By preaching and teaching the Word of God as expressed in Holy Scripture;
    - By rightly administering the Sacrament’s of Baptism and Holy Communion;
    - By leading God’s people in worship and prayer;
    - By their counsel, direction and vision, giving order and purpose to the life of the congregation

All such ministry is **service**: service to God in service to the church and the world. At the outset it is clear that Presbyters are committed to a **wider servant ministry to the world**, which includes the specific ministry of sacrament.
However as witnessed in the preceding sections, the Deacon’s call to a ministry of Word and Service has a particular distinctiveness which sets it aside from that of the Presbyter.
- The skills of the Deacon compliment the skills of the Presbyter.
- The partnership between Deacon and Presbyter brings the Church to the community and the community to the Church.
- The Deacon builds bridges between the needs of the community, between Presbyters and Deacons, and laity.
- The ministry of Deacons create and enhance connections between worship and the work of laity in the community: Deacons organize and empower laity to fulfil their calling of service in the local church and in the community.

**MCSA and the Methodist Order of Deacons**

Methodist Book of Order – Chapter 13

'Connexional Committee (p152)
13.3 The Order is under the direction of a Connexional Committee consisting of the Presiding Bishop, the General Secretary, a Bishop, the Warden, and three Ministers, five lay members and two Deacons nominated by the Executive Committee.

13.4 The Connexional Committee shall report and make recommendations to the Connexional Executive on Candidates, Probationers, Candidates for Ordination, and the examinations.

13.5 An Executive Committee may be appointed consisting of the following members of the Connexional Committee: the General Secretary, the Warden, three Ministers and two Deacons. The Committee is also the Examining Committee and the Stationing Committee.

Convocation (p152)
13.6 An annual Convocation of the Order shall be held at a time determined by the Warden in consultation with the Presiding Bishop. The Convocation consists of the Presiding Bishop, the General Secretary, the Warden and the members of the Order. The Presiding Bishop is the President of the Order. Probationers shall attend but may not vote. The Agenda for the Convocation is contained in Appendix 7.

13.7 The Convocation shall nominate a Warden to the Connexional Executive who shall make the appointment. The Warden shall be appointed by Conference for a term of five (5) years and may be appointed for one further term. The Warden shall be the representative of the Order at Conference.

Candidates (p153)
13.8 The primary qualifications for the Order are the sense of a divine call, spiritual and intellectual gifts, the graces of Christian character, and the fruits of Christian service. Candidates shall intend to give their life’s service to the Order.

13.9 The minimum educational standard of Candidates is the Senior Certificate, Matriculation, or an equivalent. Where the primary qualifications are clearly evident, consideration may be given to those who have not yet reached this standard.

13.10 No age limit is laid down for candidates. Candidates must be willing and able to fulfil the conditions of probation that will include academic studies and internship training as laid down by the Order, under the general auspice of the Education for Mission and Ministry Unit.

13.11 A Candidate shall apply through the Superintendent to the Warden who shall supply an Application Form.

13.12 A Candidate shall also provide a recommendation from the Superintendent, and the name and address of the Minister of the Society and a Leader of that Society as referees.

13.13 Once the Candidature has been provisionally approved by the Examining Committee, the Superintendent may nominate the Candidate at the next Circuit Quarterly Meeting. The Superintendent shall forward the nature of the voting to the Warden.

13.14 If the Quarterly Meeting approves the candidature, the Warden shall provide the Superintendent with directions for the Candidate’s appearance before the Examining Committee.

13.15 Prior to appearing before the Examining Committee candidates shall write two assignments as directed by the Examining Committee. One assignment shall be on The Word and the other on Service. A pass mark is 50% in each assignment.

13.16 The recommendation of the Examining Committee and the results of the examinations shall be considered by the next Synod which shall make a recommendation to the Connexional Executive, which shall accept the Candidate or otherwise. Candidates shall give testimony regarding their Christian experience, call to the Order, belief in Methodist doctrine and adherence to Methodist discipline at Synod.

Probation and Ordination (p153)

13.17 Probation is normally four years. Part of the Probation may be in collegiate training as decided by the Connexional Committee. The cost of training is borne by the Training Fund although the Probationer should bear as much of the cost
as possible. Training shall be determined by the Order in consultation with the Education for Mission and Ministry Unit.

13.18 Probationers who have successfully completed their probation shall appear before the Connexional Executive for admission into membership of the Order. They shall be ordained at the annual ordination service.

**Appointment of Deacons** (p154)

13.19 The Connexional Executive, of which the Warden shall be a member, shall decide the appointment of Deacons after the recommendation of the General Committee. Deacons serve under the direction of the Quarterly Meeting and the Superintendent.

13.20 A Deacon may be invited to serve in a Circuit following the system applicable to Ministers, but the Warden shall be consulted at every stage of the negotiations.

13.21 If the Quarterly Meeting decides not to continue with the services of a Deacon, the Superintendent shall immediately inform the Warden.

13.22 A Deacon is a member of the Leaders’ Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting and Synod.

**Stipends and allowances** (p154)

13.23 A Circuit providing an opportunity for service for a Deacon shall pay Connexional Assessments and stipends are paid in the usual manner. The Connexional Executive shall determine the stipends and allowances.

13.24 Deacons are members of the Supernumerary Fund, and contributions shall be made to the Fund and benefits received in terms of the rules of the Fund.

13.25 Deacons shall be admitted to the Long Leave Roster, the conditions and benefits being decided by the Connexional Executive.

13.26 Deacons who are paid a stipend through the Finance Unit participate in the Medical Plan and Extraordinary Affliction Fund on the same basis as Ministers.

13.27 A Circuit providing an opportunity for service for a Deacon shall provide suitable accommodation and shall make adequate provision for travelling.

**Discipline** (p154)

13.28 The disciplinary procedure provided for Ministers in Chapter 11 shall, mutatis mutandis, apply to Deacons.

13.29 Rule of Life: Deacons adhere to the Rule of Life as set out in Chapter 3.

13.30 Status of Deacons
13.30.1 Deacons are recognised by the Church as called of God, and trained and Ordained for the service of the Church;  
13.30.2 Their service is primarily evangelistic and pastoral, but they should not be denied opportunity to exercise gifts of preaching, initiative and leadership;  
13.30.3 They are colleagues on the staff of the Circuit to which they are appointed, responsible to the Superintendent, and thus share in the work of the Circuit.

13.31 Administering the Sacraments  
Ordained Ministers may invite ordained or probationer Deacons to assist in the distribution of the elements at Holy Communion.

Probationers authorised by the Presiding Bishop to administer the sacraments after approval of the Superintendent, may invite any Deacon or lay person to assist in distributing the elements without obtaining the Superintendent’s approval, but shall obtain such approval in the case of probationer Deacons.

13.32 Leave of Absence  
13.32.1 No Deacon shall be without appointment or be absent from the Circuit other than on leave provided for by the Connexional Executive/Conference;  
13.32.2 A Deacon may apply for leave of absence through the Circuit superintendent and Circuit Quarterly Meeting. The Deacon must inform the Warden and the District Bishop of his/her application. The Bishop shall consult with the Warden if necessary. In case of emergency, the Presiding Bishop may grant leave of absence;  
13.32.3 No leave of absence shall be granted unless suitable arrangements for a supply or replacement have been made in consultation with the Warden and Superintendent, and approved by the Circuit Quarterly meeting and Bishop;  
13.32.4 Deacons on leave of absence shall attend the Convocation of the Order and the Synod of the District in which they reside, (unless dispensation is granted) and shall answer the Discipline Questions at both. A Deacon who resides outside the Connexion shall answer the questions to the Warden before Convocation and the Warden shall inform the District Bishop;  
13.32.5 Any Deacon who fails to answer the Discipline Questions is guilty of not observing the discipline of the Church and may be deemed to have resigned from the Order and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa;  
13.32.6 A Deacon, wishing to continue on leave of absence shall reapply annually, prior to the meeting of the Convocation, for continued leave of absence through the Warden who shall
inform the Bishop or the Presiding Bishop if the deacon resides outside the Connexion;

13.32.7 A Deacon on leave of absence who wishes to return to work in the Circuit or elsewhere in the Connexion must give due notice to the Warden who shall inform the superintendent and Bishop or the Presiding Bishop;

13.32.8 A Deacon on leave of absence may continue to be a member of the MCSA pension and medical aid schemes but at no cost to the Circuit or Connexion;

13.32.9 A Deacon on leave of absence who resides in a circuit house must negotiate with the Circuit re occupancy or otherwise.

13.33 Deacons left without Appointment
The procedures provided for Ministers in Chapter 4 shall apply mutatis mutandis, to Deacons.

13.34 Deacons without Appointment (Marriage)
The procedures provided for Ministers in Chapter 4 shall apply mutatis mutandis, to Deacons.

13.35 Maternity Leave
The procedures provided for Ministers in Chapter 4 shall apply, mutatis mutandis, to Deacons’ (MCSA, 2014)

The above extract from the Methodist Book of Order has to be read in conjunction with subsequent resolutions made by Conference.

**Discerning the Call: Vocation**
- People who have made a commitment to follow Christ in their lives.
- People with a deep sense of a life-calling from God and not a potentially passing desire to engage in the church’s ministry;
- People with a strong sense of vocation to the Ministry of Word and Service
- People who have not experienced a failed or thwarted sense of vocation somewhere else (e.g. candidating for Word and Service after failing to meet the grade in Word and Sacrament.)
- People with skills to offer in service and in the worship life of the Church including teaching and preaching.
- People who understand and identify with the Wesleyan ethos.
- People who have above average communication skills.

**Discerning the Call: Spirituality**
- People who are grounded in a life of prayer and immersion in God’s word, attentive to God’s presence in the world in its majesty and misery;
• People with a liturgical sensitivity and presence that enables others to worship, bring the needs of the community into worship and interprets them for the local Church;
• People with a passion for God and for life, and a refusal to allow stagnation to set in, personally or in the Church.
• People committed to a developing spiritual life and a continuing exploration of the servant ministry of Christ in the world;

**Discerning the Call: Relationships**
• People with the ability to relate to people of different ages, race and culture, and social contexts;
• People with an instinctive ability to get alongside people and speak their “language”;
• People with pastoral skills that point to an ability to care for others appropriately.

**Discerning the Call: Leadership**
• Individuals who choose to exercise a leadership role which emphasizes collaborative styles of working with people, and having the necessary social and communication skills;
• People with the ability and willingness to work in a team with presbyters/deacons and laity;
• People with leadership gifts that reflect a willingness to be a servant leader who assists rather than always takes the lead, and does not unsettle or unseat others who have either long-term or short-term responsibilities;
• People who are capable of being a public representative of the church, who is competent and comfortable in the public eye.
• People with organizational gifts that equip and free others to do their work and ministry well.

**Discerning the Call: Word and Service**
• People who show evidence of an engagement with and in the local community, and who are in or envisage a ministry of service.
• People who, through being a catalyst and nurturer, enable each Christian to fulfill their own calling to be a servant;
• People with the ability to get alongside a wide variety of people and work creatively in difficult places, who are at ease alongside people on the edges and taking the church to the community;
• People committed to being the face of the servant Christ to those with needs, communicating love and faith through word and action;
• People with a bias towards working for social justice in areas of social need and often pioneering new work;
- People with communication skills that enable them to preach the gospel in deed and an word;
- Individuals who feel called to be members of a dispersed religious community and who are prepared to build community wherever they might be.

**Year of Call / Intention to Candidate**

- If a person has a sense of a divine calling to a ministry, spiritual and intellectual gifts, the graces and fruits of a Christian character, and intend to Candidate as a Presbyter/ Deacon, they inform their Circuit Superintendent early in January/ February, stating their wish to Candidate.
- Registers for School of Vocation
- Having ensured that the Candidate qualifies to Candidate, the Superintendent submits the name of the Candidate to the Circuit Quarterly Meeting.
- The Candidate appears before Circuit Quarterly Meeting and gives testimony of Call. Circuit Quarterly Meeting makes a recommendation regarding candidature.
- The Superintendent sends an *Intention to nominate a Candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament/Service* to EMMU [and to the Warden of the Diaconal Order in the case of Deacons] before 31 July each year.

**Year of Call/ Intention to Candidate**

**Academic requirements**

**Deacons**

- Be a full member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa for at least two years.
- No age limit is laid down for candidates.
- Applicants must be in possession of a Senior Certificate, Matriculation or an equivalent;
- Local preacher on trial, if candidating as a preaching Deacon;
- Academic requirements:
  - **Higher Certificate in Theology:** Introduction to New Testament (45121); Introduction to Old Testament (45111); Introduction to Theology (45241) and Pastoral Care (45371) (Note: Certificate of Competency in Theology Old Testament and New Testament are NOT accepted)
  - **Diploma in Theology:** Getting to Know the Bible (85100); Systematic Theology 1 (85240) and Practical Theology 1 (85370)
  - **Bachelor in Theology:** Developing Skills for Theological Study (7000); Interpreting Texts (7004) and Engaging with people pastorally and ethically (7002)
Candidates from Mozambique have been given special dispensation to study the Basic Certificate in Theology through the medium of Portuguese at the Khovo Bible School in Maputo.

To be admitted as a Probationer, Mozambican candidates need to have completed the academic level of Introduction to NT (1st & 2nd Part); Introduction to OT (1st & 2nd Part); Homiletics (1st part); Christian Life.

**Year of Screening**

**Deacons (Only)**

Early in January the Warden will furnish Candidates with two entry assignments to the Methodist Order of Deacons. One assignment shall be on Word and the other on Service. These assignments will be presented and evaluated by the Warden (or Delegate). The aim of these assignments are to prepare the Candidate for the District Screening Committee.

The EMMU District Screening Committee also forwards the approved applications to the Diaconal Order’s Connexional Executive & Convocation (that normally meets in April). These candidates will need to attend the Convocation to share their testimony, call to the Diaconal ministry and entrance Assignments. The Order’s Connexional Executive/ Convocation may make additional recommendations to SYNOD where necessary.

**Years of Training / Probation**

**Academic Formation**

- Complete Higher Certificate in Theology;
- Diploma in Theology or
- Bachelor in Theology-degree
- {For Mozambique: Basic Certificate in Theology through the medium of Portuguese at the Khovo Bible School in Maputo}

**TEEC & In-circuit**

**Skills Formation**

- **District Internship:** All Probationer Deacons in Circuit participate in the District Internship Training. A set syllabus for each of the 4 years is drawn up by the Order in consultation with EMMU which inter alia includes projects, assignments and academic training focusing on:
  - Pulpit Skills - Preaching (Trial Services before Synod); Funerals (Project/ Assignment)
  - Teaching Skills (Project/ Assignment on Bible Studies – mainly for non-Preaching Deacons)
  - Pastoral Skills (Project/ Assignment Counselling – marriage, bereavement)
  - Leadership Skills (Project/ Assignment Project management;)
  - Wesleyan Theology (4 essays set by EMMU)
  - Church Polity (Examination set by EMMU)
  - Business Skills (Accounting – examination set by EMMU)
Character Formation
This is assessed by measuring the Probationer Deacon’s ability to demonstrate the ability to promote the values of the Diaconal Rule of Life (Laws and Disciplines 13.29) and their possession of virtues of Servanthood, Stewardship, Integrity and Righteousness.

Character formation and assessment is jointly implemented by Circuit Superintendent, Probationer’s mentor and the Vocational (DSS) formation team

Years in Circuit:
- All Probationer Deacons join Presbyters in the Circuit and participate in the District Internship Training for the duration of their probation (Presbyters: a minimum of two years but no more than four years/Deacons: a minimum of four years but no more than five years).
- This programme is run under the direction of the District Supervisor of Studies/Internship Convener in the District. It has a set syllabus for each year that is drawn up by EMMU (in consultation with the Warden) which inter alia includes projects, assignments and academic training.
- The programme begins each year with a one-week Connexional Seminar in January. Up to a further 8 days but with a minimum of 5 days per year are negotiated in District groups to meet for formation, learning, fellowship, worship and accountability. Every Probationer is expected to be in attendance for the full duration of the agreed internship meetings.
- Synod: Attendance of the annual Synod is compulsory and a Synod Exam (Exegesis) is arranged by the District Supervisor of Studies.
- Convocation: Deacons meet annually for one week and apart from normal business prescribed in the MCSA Book of Order, focusses on developing skills for Diaconal Ministries. All Deacons are expected to attend the convocation.

Year of Exit from Probation:
- In the 4th year of Probation, having completed ALL of the requirements (including ALL academic requirements in the 3rd year) to exit from probation to ordination.
- and having sought the approval of the Diaconal Order’s Convocation in April.
- a Probationer may be considered for Ordination in the following year.
- If a Probationer has not completed all academic requirements, s/he needs to complete them in the 4th year and will be considered for ordination in the 5th and final year of probation.
- The Superintendent appoints a small listening committee made up of at least one ordained minister, a circuit steward, a local preacher and one
other member to engage the Presbyter/ Deacon probationer and make a recommendation to the Quarterly Meeting

- The April QM then forwards its recommendation to Synod and EMMU, through the DSS, commenting on the suitability of the probationer Deacon’s readiness to move to the next phase of their training, viz. the next probation year.
- The District Supervisor of Studies convenes a Screening committee before the District Synod including members of the District EMMU Committee to assess the personal and spiritual growth of the Presbyter/ Deacon probationer, the Quarterly Meeting and the Listening Committee recommendation and report to the EMMU through synod.
- Synods receive the names of all Probationers whose advancement is recommended by the Circuit Quarterly Meetings for consideration and recommendation of advancement by the District Screening Committee.
- Probationers submit the required Assessment Documents (content to be determined from time to time) to EMMU, by 01 June of the year after Synod has recommended their name.
- The General Committee of EMMU, having received all the reports from District Synods, shall on the basis of such reports (through its Assessment Committee) make a recommendation to the Connexional Executive pending satisfactory end of year results.
- Based upon satisfactory reports EMMU recommends Ordination to the Connexional Executive and Conference for the following year.

**Year of Ordination**

- Ordinands meet for an Ordinand’s retreat in January. Ordination Assignments are set.
- Circuit Quarterly Meeting/ Superintendent’s Report on Ordinand
- Ordination Assignments are submitted (the last at the final Ordinand's Retreat)
- Deacon Ordinationds are subjected to an Oral Examination at the Deacons' Convocation
- Ordinands give Testimony at Synod
- Ordinands attend Pre-ordination Retreat (happens concurrently to Conference)
- Admission to Connexion and Ordination at Conference
- Presbyters and Deacons both participate in the same ordination service – one ordination – two orders.

**Relationship between Deacons and Presbyters**

*Comparison*

- Both Deacons and Presbyters are called and ordained into public ministry within the Methodist Church, (that would be in Southern Africa and Internationally). Both are ministers in the MCSA.
• Both are “representative of the whole ministry of the people of God” [Is God calling You: Page 14] to represent Christ to the Church and the world.
• All Methodists, including Deacons and Presbyters, are called to discipleship and sharing in worship, mission and service (Priesthood of all believers). These all exercise their ministry interdependently with all other forms of ministry... in other words lay and clergy need each other in ministry and work together to compliment and strengthen each other’s ministry.
• Deacons are ordained to Word and Service; Presbyters are ordained to Word and Sacrament. As both Orders are ordained to word, both proclaim the Good News of the Gospel through preaching, teaching (formally and informally), evangelism, theological and prophetic interpretation, sharing of testimonies of faith and God’s love and grace.

Role and Responsibilities
Differences between the two ordained ministries are then found in the outworking of the ordinances of Sacrament and Service, as they work in parallel ministry complementing each other’s ministry.

Role and Responsibilities of a Deacon -
• Deacons fulfil a distinctive discipleship role within the church. working alongside the Presbyter to complement their ministry, sharing in their service to God in service to the church and the world
• Focus on visible servant leadership that draws and enables the people of the church to exercise and develop their own God-given gifts, through mission and ministry. A Deacon takes the church to the world and the world to the church to participate in the ‘acts of pastoral care, mercy, justice and being or acting as a prophetic sign”. [What is a Deacon:Page4:5.2]
• Through collaboration they stand in the gap as agents of change, expressing God’s heart for the poor, the outcasts, the broken-hearted, welcoming the stranger, seeking the lost, and highlighting the needs and concerns of their community and the world. This is “Diakonia” (Greek word translated as SERVICE). Jesus, our primary example of servanthood, showed by his way of living, what true service is, “all God’s people for the work of Christian service in order to build up the ‘body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).” [Nordstokke:5]
• Deacons “represent the church, lead with authority and focus on and enable servant ministry”. [Nordstokke:34]
• Follow a Rule of Life that includes personal prayer, intercession for dispersed colleagues and the world, exercising various spiritual disciplines, participating in worship and study, interpretation and proclamation of Scripture; attending the annual Deacons Convocation.
• Responsible for ensuring the well-being of their own families
Role and Responsibilities of a Presbyter -

- A Presbyter represents and leads people in discipleship, spirituality, sharing their faith, justice and grace.
- Encourages the people they serve to share with them in the work of the Church within the Society and in the world.
- Plan worship and ministry relevant to their context.
- Preside over the Sacraments, namely Holy Communion, Baptism (and in the wider context, confirmation), as recognised by the MCSA, i.e. teaching and facilitating acts of devotion, such as, spirituality, prayer, worship, reflection and meditation.
- Carries the pastoral responsibility (oversight) of the society / circuit they serve, offering leadership and visioning in line with Methodist doctrine, including involvement in pastoral care.
- Share a collegial responsibility in the work and ministry of their colleagues, especially the pastoral ministry to each other.
- Follow a Rule of Life, in order to grow as a woman or man in God, personal and public prayer, personal spiritual growth, developing spiritual disciplines to equip them (and their congregations) for evangelism and mission.
- To ensure that their family and personal commitments are met.

Servants previous and current. And personal journey.

Servants Previous and Current -

- Pastoral Assistants
- Director of Methodist Children’s Homes
- Manager and pastoral care of a shelter for the homeless
- Facilitating labour reform in the farming community (rural development)
- Examinations officer for TEEC
- Retirement village pastoral work and nursing care
- Social Work
- Job creation, health care, empowerment
- Rural development - creche’s food support, job creation
- Pastoring congregations where there is no Presbyter
- In relationship and conjunction with with communities creating and managing Self-Help Development programmes
- Helping to look after and maintain rural children foster care homes
- Focussing on marriages and family enrichment through facilitating parenting skills and marriage preparation and enrichment programs. Also providing ministry and counselling focussing on these.
- Disaster Response Mission, Mission Programmes and Mission trips for youth and young adults
- Focus on Social Justice issues for example, fighting against women and child abuse, gender based abuse, poverty, oppression etc.
Focus activities on implementing Biblical Justice

Personal Journey in Service to Jesus

Conclusion
We believe the role of deacon to be one of facilitating the flow of grace and the proclamation of Christ as Saviour. In this, we fully submit ourselves to the guidance and experience of the Church and its leaders and look to Christ for His strength and wisdom, allowing Him to lead while offering Him all glory, honour, and praise as we strive to manifest the teaching of Micah 6:8: 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God': a rewording of Christ’s command to ‘Love the Lord your God ... and love your neighbour as you love yourself’ (NIV).
REFERENCE LIST and Suggested Reading

2. Crain, M.A & Seymour, J.L.; *A Deacons Heart*, Nashville, 2001:54
9. MCSA. (2015). What is a Deacon. MCSA.