



GUIDELINES FOR SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT LAY DEACONS

Reviewed 3/16/2017
Board of Directors
Southeastern District, LCMS

**SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT, LCMS
CERTIFIED LAY DEACON PROGRAM**

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SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

The Diaconate in the Holy Scriptures

The diaconate is a group of people committed to service in and for the Church, a group which has its roots in the New Testament [see Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6]. As the Church catholic has grown, so too, the diaconate has had a history of development and usage.

The diaconate has had a variety of definitions over time and has included a broad range of people, privileges, and responsibilities all dealing with sharing the Word of God and service in the Lord's kingdom.

Purpose of the SED Lay Deacon Program

SED Lay Deacons are trained laity who are granted the opportunity to work under the Office of the Public Ministry in service to members of the local church and to the world through works of mercy and witness as directed.

The purpose of the SED Lay Deacon Program is to encourage lay leadership; to provide some basic and uniform standards for preparation, education, and accountability; to offer opportunities for continuing education, collegiality, and support; to encourage excellence in service; and to be a forum for mutual concerns and needs. The Program also seeks to continue or to bring Lutheran ministry to communities where pastoral leadership is wanting.

Members of the SED Lay Deacon Program

Members of the SED Lay Deacon Program are men and women selected and nominated by a local congregation of the SED and its pastor and approved by the SED's Board of Directors to serve after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ by sharing the Word and doing acts of service.

Members of the SED Lay Deacon Program are those individuals who apply for membership, meet the requirements as set by these guidelines, and subscribe to these guidelines for service and supervision. The title each member has is "SED Lay Deacon."

An SED Lay Deacon's focus of work is in the local congregation and in the surrounding community through that congregation.

SED Lay Deacons are licensed to serve in the SED only. Service in other districts of the LCMS would require the approval of the new district president and/or Board of Directors.

The Work of SED Lay Deacons

Works of mercy and witness that support our life together are at the heart of the work of SED Lay Deacons. The actual tasks undertaken will vary according to the gifts and skills of the Lay Deacon and the needs of his or her congregation and of its surrounding community. All aspects of SED Lay Deacon work are under the supervision of the Supervising Pastor.

Qualifications for Lay Deacons

Personal Considerations

An SED Lay Deacon shall be a confirmed member in good standing of a congregation of the SED and be involved in parish life. SED Lay Deacons shall have the support of their family and shall be of sound moral character and mature faith.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Application and Letters of Support

Application to become an SED Lay Deacon is a two part process. Part I of the Application and a letter of support from the individual's Pastor must be completed prior to admission to the training.

Part II of the SED Lay Deacon Application must be completed to be certified as an SED Lay Deacon Intern, including a letter from the Supervising Pastor and congregational president expressing the support of the parish's governing body, as well as two (2) letters attesting to the moral and spiritual character of the applicant.

Training for Lay Deacons, Part I

As a minimum, applicants for the SED Lay Deacon Program shall have a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED Certificate). Other educational background or experience, including academic, business, etc., will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.

The SED Lay Deacon shall have completed a course of theological education through the Concordia University-New York Lay Deacon Program or another approved course, which includes:

1. Christian Doctrine
2. Old Testament
3. New Testament
4. Theology and Practice of Worship
5. Christian Service and Care
6. Interpreting Scripture
7. Teaching the Faith
8. Sharing the Faith
9. Evangelism
10. History of the Church.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Part II, Service Hour Requirement

In addition to the educational component offered through the Concordia Lay Deacon Training Program, there is an internship whose purpose is to enable the applicant to experience the kind of service that may be expected of him/her as a member of the SED Lay Deacon Program.

The Supervising Pastor is the direct supervisor of the internship. The Supervising Pastor must certify in writing that all hours have been completed.

A total of two hundred (200) hours of practical training are required in the SED Lay Deacon Intern Program. Within the two hundred hours (200), at least twenty (20) hours of experience must be completed in each of the following five areas:

- 1 Visitation – nursing homes, hospitals, shut-ins, etc.
- 2 Teaching – Bible studies, VBS, Sunday School, etc.
- 3 Administration – organize a newly instituted program; be responsible for an area of service in a staff position.
- 4 Evangelism – follow up on guests to church; teach an evangelism course.
- 5 Liturgical Service – assist in Sunday worship, nursing home devotions, etc.

Fifty (50) hours of practical training may be accepted prior to completion of Concordia College – New York coursework. The Supervising Pastor and SED Lay Deacon Intern develop a plan for the remaining one hundred fifty (150) hours of practical experience. These hours may include any one of the above five areas or any other area of parish life.

Internship Supervision

Each applicant's internship supervisor will be a rostered Pastor of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This supervisor shall:

- assist the candidate in establishing goals and expectations for the internship;
- meet with the applicant no less than twice monthly to discuss specific assignments, development, progress and concerns; and
- certify that the SED Lay Deacon Intern has successfully completed the required hours.

All applicants, upon completion of the internship, shall submit a written report of his/her service, describing the nature of and personal reflections on the experience. This shall be submitted to the SED's Lay Deacon Advisory Board prior to the final interview.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Compensation and Lay Deacons

An SED Lay Deacon may receive compensation for service, but this is not expected nor required. An SED Lay Deacon's service is a gift to God and the Church.

It is expected that most members of the SED Lay Deacon Program will continue to hold regular employment and therefore would be involved in diaconal service on a part-time basis. There may be instances where an SED Lay Deacon will serve on staff and receive compensation.

Whenever possible, congregations and other agencies in which Lay Deacons are serving shall meet expenses incurred during such service. It is further encouraged that churches offer support for continuing education. In service to congregations outside of their own, such service shall be approved by the Supervising Pastor and the Pastor of the congregation where service is to be rendered in consultation with the SED President. This shall be done prior to service. Lay Deacons shall normally receive honoraria for such service.

Interview Process and Acceptance for Lay Deacons

An interview shall be conducted once the internship has been completed. This shall be conducted through a face-to-face meeting of the SED Lay Deacon Intern, Supervising Pastor, the SED Lay Deacon Coordinator (or his representative), and members of the Advisory Board. Once a candidate has successfully completed this interview his/her name will be forwarded to the Board of Directors of the SED for final approval. When the candidate has received BOD approval he/she shall be blessed for service as an SED Lay Deacon in a liturgical rite.

Accountability of Lay Deacons

The SED Lay Deacon serves under the supervision of a Pastor appointed by the SED President. The SED Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor:

- 1 Develop goals and tasks for the Lay Deacon;
- 2 Meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and assignments;
- 3 Hear the voice of the lay leadership of the congregation on the perspective and vision they have for the work of the lay deacon; and
- 4 Annually clarify and explain the SED Lay Deacon's position in the congregation.

SED Lay Deacons may serve in an elected position in a parish, though not if they serve on staff, depending on local bylaws and considerations.

SED Lay Deacons shall always be accountable to the SED President, chiefly through the recertification process and triennial review. This accountability shall include a triennial report of the SED Lay Deacon's work [Addendum III], filed with the congregation and the SED Office. It is to be completed jointly by the Supervising Pastor and SED Lay Deacon.

The SED Lay Deacon shall comply with the requirements for continuing education.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Recertification Requirements

SED Lay Deacons are certified for a three-year period. They may be re-certified on a three-year basis without limitation, congruent with the regular Conventions of the SED. Recertification is undertaken after the second year through application for continued service as received through the SED Lay Deacon's congregation and Supervising Pastor. Such application shall include:

- 1 Attendance at an SED Lay Deacon conference, unless excused for service or hardship reasons by the Lay Deacon Advisory Board or the SED President;
- 2 Participation in continuing education, a minimum of one completed opportunity per year (see below: Continuing Education), Lay Training Program courses, or other opportunities approved by the Supervising Pastor; and
- 3 Submission of a triennial report.

Lay Deacons who do not complete the steps for re-certification shall no longer be considered active. SED Lay Deacons may also be removed for three reasons: adherence to false doctrine, neglect of duties/incompetence, and/or an immoral lifestyle. Such removal will be done through the SED President following the Church's usual order.

Continuing Education Opportunities

SED Lay Deacons shall attend a minimum of one continuing education course on a yearly basis. Continuing education may comprise the following:

- Auditing of Concordia – New York Lay Training course.
- Seminars specific to the Lay Deacon Program as offered by Concordia – New York
- Attendance at an SED Tending the Flame or other SED workshop
- Outside seminars approved by the Supervising Pastor as beneficial for the Lay Deacon's particular service. Credit will be given upon a written report by the SED Lay Deacon approved by the Supervising Pastor.

Moving from One Congregation to Another

In the event that an SED Lay Deacon moves to a new location and congregation, continued service in the new congregation will depend on agreement by the new pastor, previous Supervising Pastor, and the Lay Deacon Advisory Board, or district president, if necessary.

The SED President may license SED Lay Deacons for emergency Sacramental ministry in accordance with LCMS guidelines. It is understood that such licensing in the SED is applicable only to the SED and only to the congregation where licensed.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Garb for Lay Deacons

Liturgical attire for the SED Lay Deacon Program follows the local custom of the congregation where the SED Lay Deacon serves. To prevent confusion with the Pastoral office, SED Lay Deacons are not to wear clerical shirts or other clerical garb (Chasuble, pastoral stoles, etc.).

Leadership of Lay Deacons

The SED Lay Deacon Program reports to the SED Board of Directors and its respective conventions.

The SED has a Lay Deacon Advisory Board consisting of the District President (or regional Vice President), Chair, and five other members, both pastors and laity. The Lay Deacon Advisory Board is directly appointed by the SED President and supervised by the Praesidium of the SED. Members serve with the approval of the Praesidium renewable every District regular convention year.

The responsibilities of the Lay Deacon Advisory Board include:

- gathering District-wide, as the Lay Deacon Advisory Board at least annually;
- supervising the SED Lay Deacon Interns in matters pertaining to fulfilling the SED Lay Deacon guidelines;
- conducting an interview with SED Lay Deacon applicants as prescribed in other sections of this document;
- providing SED Lay Deacon Interns with the guidelines and expectations of the members of the SED Lay Deacon Program;
- through the office of Regional Vice President, providing encouragement and counsel to Pastors and congregations concerning the role and expectations of an SED Lay Deacon in the parish.

Additional Items

The SED Lay Deacon Program Guidelines cannot cover every issue or concern. Those issues not covered in this document will be handled in a Christ-like manner, calling upon the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit for proper discernment. The SED Lay Deacon Advisory Board, as the supervisor of the SED Lay Deacon program, will serve as the final arbiter of any issues not covered by this document in consultation with the SED Board of Directors . All changes to this document will proceed through the SED Board of Directors.

SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

Commitment of SED Lay Deacon Program Applicant

I have read and agree to follow the guidelines as presented in this document.

SED Lay Deacon Applicant

Applicant's Pastor

_____ Date

Addendum I – Schedule of Courses

There are ten courses in the Concordia Lay Deacon Study Program. Five (5) courses are taught each year of the two (2) year instructional cycle. A local LCMS Pastor or LCMS Minister of Religion Commissioned shall teach each course. Class sessions shall meet according to the mutually convenient schedule of instructor and student(s). Each course shall consist of 16 contact hours.

Cycle One

- + Christian Doctrine – an overview of the beliefs of the Christian Church with a special emphasis on the Lutheran perspective as explained in the Book of Concord. (September-October)
- + Old Testament – a survey course of the Old Testament, its literature and importance in preparing for the coming of the Messiah and the covenant history between God and His people. (November-December)
- + New Testament – a survey of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and the origins and growth of the Christian message within the Apostolic Church. (January-February)
- + Theology and Practice of Worship – an overview of the history of Christian worship and Lutheran practices, including practical experiences in assisting in a variety of worship settings ranging from traditional to contemporary and blended worship formats. (March-April)
- + Christian Service and Care – a study designed to provide the student with the knowledge, skill and desire to deal gently with those whom they are called to serve, learning to carry each other's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ [Gal. 6:1-2]. (May-June)

Cycle Two

- + Interpreting Scripture– through review of resources [commentaries, historical documents and grammatical tools] teach the student to be an honest, faithful and adept interpreter of Holy Scripture and perceive Christ and His message throughout it. (September-October)
- + Teaching the Faith – examines the principles and practices of Christian education on the parish level with special attention to the Lutheran perspective, enabling the student to lead Bible classes, catechetical studies, etc. (November-December)
- + Sharing the Faith – this course focuses upon the basics of sharing the faith.: purpose, theology, preparation , and delivery. (January-February)
- + Evangelism – developing a strategy for doing evangelism based upon personal mission statements and leadership style, identifying available resources on the local level, and being able to evaluate a mission situation. (March-April)
- + History of the Church: The Apostolic Age through the Reformation – this course is designed to render an understanding of God's work through the first sixteen centuries of the Church, allowing the student to identify and describe key individuals, events and controversies, as well as their impact upon the Church and world today. (May-June)

Because of their related importance, Doctrine-Old Testament-New Testament are taken in that order, as well as Interpretation-Teaching-Sharing the Faith.



Triennial Report of SED Lay Deacon

From the SED Lay Deacon Guidelines

This form is part of the triennial report that the certified Lay Deacon is to complete every 3 years just prior to the SED Convention. It shall be submitted to the Supervising Pastor and the SED Lay Deacon Program Office.

Print or use computer to enter all information.

Personal Information

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Employer (Name and Address): _____

Contact Information

Cell: _____ Home: _____

Email: _____

Congregational Information

Congregation (Name and Address): _____

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Addendum II– Triennial Report

SED Lay Deacon Work

What continuing education have you received over the past year?

Please circle the areas in which you frequently participate as an SED Lay Deacon:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Bible Study Leader | Worship Leader | Evangelism |
| Social Ministry | Sick/Homebound Calls | Youth Ministry |

Other: _____

Continuing Education Completed:

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Signed by the certified SED Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor:

Lay Deacon

Supervising Pastor

Date

This report is to be reviewed by both the SED Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor before being submitted to the SED Lay Deacon Program Office

Addendum III– Application for SED Lay Deacon Blessing

SED Lay Deacon Program

*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.
My Father will honor the one who serves me. John 12:26*

The SED Lay Deacon Program is a group of people committed to service in and for the Church, a group which has its roots in the New Testament and has a history of development and usage in the Church catholic from its beginnings to the present. SED Lay Deacons are trained laity that work under the local Pastor in service to the local church through works of mercy and witness, thus supplementing the work of the local Pastor.

What follows is the application for admission to the SED Lay Deacon Program after completion of the academic courses and leading to blessing as an SED Lay Deacon.

Please note: Completion of the academic program does not automatically qualify an individual for blessing as an SED Lay Deacon.

Completed applications should be given to the individual’s local pastor, who in turn will forward them, with additional required materials, to the SED Lay Deacon Program Office.

May the Lord of the Church bless your study and your service in His name, and to His glory.

Soli Deo Gloria

Personal Information

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Cell: _____ Home: _____

Email: _____

Congregation (Name and Address): _____

Additional Letters of Recommendation

The following letters of recommendation should be submitted with this application:

1. Pastor – recommending the applicant for Lay Deacon service;
2. Congregation – endorsement for Lay Deacon service in the parish;
3. Two [2] letters of recommendation concerning your Christian character, personality and living. These letters should be from individuals, not related, who have known the applicant for a minimum of two recent years.

Please provide a brief autobiographical statement explaining your reasons for applying to become an SED Lay Deacon. [Use additional paper if necessary]

Name:

Narrative:
