

Learn more about the Synodical Diaconate



Here are some commonly asked questions about the Synod Diaconate:

- **Why a Synod Diaconate?**

An active and committed layperson can receive training for an intentional ministry of serving the congregation through the pastor and yet remain in the local congregation. Properly administered (according to Synod guidelines) the diaconal ministry will help clarify both the lay ministry and the pastoral ministry. The Synod Diaconate provides for a cadre of trained, willing, and ready lay leaders for congregations.

- **What's the difference between the synodical deacon, a diaconal minister, and an associate in ministry?**

Simply put, both the diaconal minister (DM) and the associate in ministry (AIM) are rostered on the national level and called or certified by the Synod. Both require compensation. A synodical deacon is congregational. The deacon serves at the request and pleasure of the pastor of his/her home congregation. There is no compensation for this ministry. The AIM and the DM have national mobility as rostered persons. The synodical deacon is not rostered and has no mobility outside of the congregation. For continuity, requirements for education and training are determined by the Bishop's Office. Synodical deacons do not apply to the Candidacy Committee, but to the Bishop's Office (Oversight Committee).

- **What are the terms of service for a synodical deacon?**

The synodical deacon serves at the pleasure of the local pastor. For this reason the screening process and certification process begins with the pastor. Deacons are not recommended, screened, certified, or called by congregations or congregation councils. Deacons report to the pastor. Service as a deacon terminates if the pastor so chooses or if the pastor resigns. Only if the subsequent pastor so chooses does the deacon resume service.

- **What if a deacon moves outside synod territory?**

The deacon ceases to function as such but may contact the new synod to see if such a diaconate exists in that synod.

- **What if a synod deacon moves to a new congregation within the synod?**

Often laypersons moving to a new congregation are reticent to immediately assume leadership roles. They tend to wait until they feel comfortable in the new setting. Synod deacons can assume leadership roles immediately and are readily accepted by congregational leaders since they are trained and consecrated synod-wide.

- **Does this ministry infringe upon or confuse the ministry of the pastor, DM, AIM, or lay ministry?**

The Lutheran Confessions imply a functional view of ministry rather than a hierarchical or territorial view. As such each of the areas mentioned are differentiated within the ELCA. They have specific areas of responsibilities for ministry in specific jurisdictions. When not viewed territorially or hierarchically, these ministries can clarify and enhance ministry in the church.