

# The Ministry of the Deacon and Provisional Deacon

## A Guide for Staff Parish Relations Committees and Local Churches

This booklet has been adapted by the Virginia Conference to address the specific ministry of the deacon and provisional deacon and is based on a previous Virginia Conference adaptation of a booklet for pastors and Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committees, entitled “Pastoral Expectations”, originally developed by the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. This resource can also be found at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org).

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This booklet refers frequently to paragraphs in *Book of Discipline of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. Unless otherwise noted, all paragraph citations are from the 2012 edition. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* may be ordered from Cokesbury ([www.Cokesbury.com](http://www.Cokesbury.com)).

In this booklet, SPRC refers to the “Staff Parish Relations Committee.”

“The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace, and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world.”  
(¶121, *The Book of Discipline*)

“Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.”  
(¶120 *The Book of Discipline*)

### **1. A MUTUAL MINISTRY**

A deacon/provisional deacon is one of many leaders in the church, which is the Body of Christ. All baptized Christians are expected to exercise leadership according to the spiritual gifts they have been given.

“In 1996, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church reordered the ministry of the denomination in light of a growing understanding that all Christians are called to ministry, and a correlative understanding that ordained ministry is primarily charged with leading others to find a

place for themselves in the ministry that all Christians share. In that reordering, probably the most far-reaching change was the creation of a new order of deacon—an ordained person, a full member of the Annual Conference, non-itinerant, and called to a lifetime of ministry relating the gathered life of the community to servant ministry in the world.” (Robin Lovin, “Critical Issues for the Ordering of Ministry and the Ordination of Ministers,” report to the United Methodist Ordinal Task Force, December 1987, p.1. Quoted by John E. Harnish in *The Orders of Ministry in The United Methodist Church*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2000, pp.110-11)

“Because deacons and elders are rooted in this common ministry [to Word and Service] ... the distinction between the two is a matter of focus .... The deacon focuses on Service and the elder focuses on Word, but both share these common elements in their ordination (Harnish, p. 120).

## **2. A MODEL OF SHARED MINISTRY**

Congregations need to recognize that changing times have called forth a “new” model of ministerial leadership which focuses on equipping laity to do the work of ministry as opposed to a clergy-centered, clergy-dependent church life. Based on practices of the New Testament church, this model of clergy leadership involves:

- Encourage disciples to listen for and hear their own call to serve Jesus Christ
  - Teaching disciples how to reach out in the name of Jesus Christ
  - Nurturing disciples in their journey of discipleship
  - Sending disciples into the world to be the church.

The new model of spiritual leadership includes four essential leadership functions. Fulfilling these functions must be the clergy’s highest priority.

- A. Helping people discover and name the current reality in which they live. With the clergy’s leadership we answer the question, “What are we in the here and now?”
- B. Discerning, naming and casting the shared vision. Together we reflect on the question, “What is the positive future to which God is calling this church, this community, and God’s world?”
- C. Developing bridges. Clergy leadership is called to help the congregation plan actions and develop systems that enable the church to cross the bridge between the current reality and shared vision.
- D. Monitoring the journey. Clergy leaders keep an eye on the whole of the faith journey of the congregation, stepping back from the “busy-ness” of constant doing to pay attention to the big picture.

The deacon/provisional deacon works with the pastor in charge in fulfilling these four tasks. The deacon or provisional deacon will have specific responsibilities as outlined in a job description (see Section 4). It is reasonable to expect clergy to provide leadership in the development of congregational systems which provide a full range of ministries employing the gifts of each disciple/member, but God has called the laity, not just the clergy, to perform these ministries every day as representatives of Christ and the Church.

## **3. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DEACON**

From the earliest days of the church, deacons were called and set apart for the ministry of love, justice, and service; of connecting the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God. This ministry grows out of a long history of deaconesses, home missionaries and diaconal ministers, and the Wesleyan passion for social holiness and ministry among the poor. The specialized ministry of the deacon has been affirmed by the denomination through ordination as a faithful response of the mission of the Church that meets the emerging needs of the future. It is the deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry (§ 328). Additional specifics pertaining to the ministry, authority and responsibilities of the ordained deacon are set forth in Section VII of the *Discipline* (§§328-329).

Persons who are ordained deacon have been examined and recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and elected to full membership by the executive session. Persons being ordained deacon have been appointed at least three years full time as a provisional deacon. Deacons are ordained to Word and Service. Deacons fulfill servant ministry in the world and lead the church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in the world, interrelating worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world. The *Discipline* charges deacons to give leadership in the church's life: in the teaching and proclamation of the Word; in worship, and in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in the congregation's mission to the world; and in leading the congregation in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. As members of the Order of Deacon, all deacons are in covenant with all other deacons in the annual conference and participate in the life of their Order. While deacons are appointed by the bishop, they do not itinerate nor have the same security of appointment as elders. Deacons are appointed to serve in local churches and beyond the local church.

In ¶ 324 and ¶330, the *Discipline* describes the requirements for commissioning and election as a provisional deacon and ordination as deacon and election to full membership. Those requirements include the following educational achievements:

- Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree
- Master of Divinity degree or Master's degree in area of specialized ministry plus at least 24 semester hours of graduate theological studies
- For those over age 35, professional certification in the area of specialized ministry and at least 24 semester hours of graduate theological studies.

In addition, prior to ordination, a deacon must:

- Be previously elected as a provisional member (provisions for which are included in ¶324)
- Serve under Episcopal appointment for a minimum of three (required by the Virginia Conference) annual conference years.
- Respond to written and oral doctrinal exam administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

#### **4. JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Although deacons and provisional deacons serve under appointment, their roles often vary widely; therefore the SPRC is required under ¶258.2.g.7 to develop a job description that delineates the specific roles, duties and tasks with which the deacon will be charged. The deacon's function is not the same as an associate pastor (elder or licensed local pastor), so care should be taken to develop a job description that includes the deacon's area of specialized ministry and leadership in worship and assistance in the sacramental life of the congregation.

For sample job descriptions in areas of specialized ministry, go to [www.VAUMC.org](http://www.VAUMC.org) > Resources > Staff Parish and [www.churchstaffing.com](http://www.churchstaffing.com).

In addition, an employment agreement specifying personnel policies of the local church is important. Since deacons and provisional deacons are clergy, policies related to salary, benefits, maternity/paternity leave, and termination are found in the *Discipline*. The vacation policy is set by the Virginia Conference bishop and cabinet.

#### **5. THE DEACON'S/PROVISIONAL DEACON'S ROLE IN WORSHIP**

**Worship and Sacramental Leadership:** Worship and sacramental leadership is primarily the role and responsibility of elders. However, "deacons give leadership in the Church's life: in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship, and in assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper .... For the sake of extending

the mission and ministry of the church, a pastor-in-charge or district superintendent may request that the bishop grant local sacramental authority to the deacon to administer the sacraments in the absence of an elder, within a deacon's primary appointment." (§328)

**Weddings and Funerals:** Christian marriage is an act of worship for which all United Methodist clergy are responsible. As clergy, deacons and provisional deacons may be authorized by the state to officiate at weddings. The same policies of a local church related to weddings and funerals for the pastor in charge or associate pastor would also apply to the deacon. Deacons and provisional deacons also may preside or assist the pastor at a funeral.

**Vestments:** The stole (Latin *stola*, array) is the primary Protestant adornment to the alb or robe for consecrated and ordained liturgical leadership. The deacon's stole is symbolic of the banner/armor of Christ and worn diagonally from the left shoulder, front and back and fastened at the hip. Ordained deacons elected to full membership wear the stole. (Information on the deacon's stole adapted from "Deacon Vestments" by Roger Dowdy, CROSS-PATHS Ministries, Richmond, VA.)

**Additional Resources:** The Rev. Roger Dowdy has written three resources on deacons and worship as follows: "Introduction: The Deacon in Worship", "Deacon in Word and Table", and "Deacon Vestments". All are available from Roger at [rdowdy-cp@mindspring.com](mailto:rdowdy-cp@mindspring.com).

## **6. THE APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS AND PROVISIONAL DEACONS**

As part of the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church, all deacons are appointed by a bishop.

Deacons and provisional deacons may be appointed to serve (§331.1-2):

- Through agencies and settings beyond the local church
- Through United Methodist Church-related agencies schools, colleges, etc.
- Within a local congregation, charge or cooperative parish
- To attend school as part of their renewal and personal growth.

Deacons are authorized by the Church and charged with leadership in the Church's life in the following areas (§328):

- In teaching and proclaiming the Word
- In contributing to worship and assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper (see Section 5)
- In forming and nurturing disciples
- In conducting marriages and burying the dead (see Section 5 below for more information)
- In embodying the church's mission to the world
- In leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.

In addition, a pastor in charge or district superintendent may request that the bishop grant local sacramental authority to the deacon to administer the sacraments in the absence of an elder, within a deacon's primary appointment in cases where the mission and ministry of the church might be extended (§328).

Because deacons and provisional deacons serve under episcopal appointment, that appointment must be renewed on an annual basis by submitting the "Virginia Conference Appointment Request Form," which serves as a formal request from the SPRC and the deacon to the bishop for the appointment. The Appointment Request Form must also bear the signature of the SPRC chairperson and the deacon. The Appointment Request Form is different from the "Pastor's Appointment Preference Form."

## **7. WORKING HOURS**

It is reasonable to expect full-time deacons/provisional deacons to be engaged in ministry tasks related to the local church, ecumenical community, district, or conference for what is considered “full-time” by the labor laws and norms of our culture (40-45 hours per week on the average). Church work is highly seasonal, however, often requiring more hours some weeks. Deacons should exercise initiative in quieter seasons to compensate for additional hours worked, listening continually to their bodies and spirits to monitor burn-out and spiritual dryness, and allow time for Sabbath as needed.

Effective leadership requires time in spiritual, theological and/or biblical preparation. This task alone may require a significant amount of time, depending on the subject matter and event/class and the priority placed by the church on same for which preparation is required. Performing secretarial or janitorial tasks is not generally considered to be the best use of the deacon’s calling, gifts and time.

## **8. SUPERVISION**

United Methodist deacons/provisional deacons are accountable to expectations, roles, and responsibilities defined in *The Book of Discipline*. It is the responsibility of the Bishop, Cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry to interpret the Discipline and, along with the Order, hold deacons and provisional deacons accountable to these expectations (§307.4-5 and §329). Deacons and provisional deacons experience ongoing supervision through annual reports and other supervisory meetings and consultations with the district superintendent (§419). Provisional deacons are also supervised by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

In the local church, the deacon’s or provisional deacon’s primary supervisor is normally the pastor in charge, acting as the “administrative officer of the local church” (§340.2.c.1). District superintendents also act in a supervisory role with deacons and provisional deacons (and all other clergy) pursuant to §419.

Since deacons and provisional deacons do not have security of appointment, special attention shall be given to termination procedures that allow time for seeking another service appointment. Such consideration includes

- 90-day period to final termination (§331.10e), except for causes as listed in §2702
- No dismissal without the deacon’s prior consultation with SPRC, overseeing district superintendent and presiding bishop (§331.10e).

### **Annual Evaluation for Deacons and Provisional Deacons Appointed to a Local Church:**

Believing in the hope made at every deacon’s commissioning and ordination that we are all going on to perfection, an annual evaluation is to be done for each appointed clergy and staff member. The *Discipline* in §258.2g(5) lists one of the duties of the SPRC is to “provide evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastor(s) and staff in an on-going effective ministry and for identifying continuing educational needs and plans.” The role of the SPRC is to make sure this happens. A “best practice” is for the SPRC to actually do the evaluation for the pastor in charge. Then, the pastor in charge would make sure all other appointed clergy and staff were properly evaluated and then report the results to the SPRC.

Two kinds of evaluations have been identified. One is called a “formative evaluation”, which focuses on professional development based on areas of strength and areas of weakness in ministry performance. Another kind is “summative evaluation”, which deals with the continuation of the appointment and employment agreement.

The Annual Clergy Evaluation recommended by the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and Cabinet for the “formative evaluation” can be found on the Virginia Conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) > Resources > Pastor/Staff Parish Relations (see Section 5). This

annual “formative evaluation” is to be completed between April 1 and June 1 annually, to avoid being done at the same time as a “summative evaluation” (usually in January) or budget time. For appointed clergy, the evaluation report is to be submitted to the district superintendent by June 1.

In setting up this evaluation, the person to whom the deacon/provisional deacon reports directly (supervisor) will work with the deacon/provisional deacon to identify six to nine persons with whom the deacon/provisional deacon works to participate in the evaluation discussion. The supervisor will also participate. The instructions for the process of evaluation can be found on the conference website as listed above. Questions to guide the evaluation are found on page 1 of the Annual Clergy Evaluation. The deacon/provisional deacon’s job description needs to be made available ahead of time to the participants. All participants should be encouraged to give honest feedback and input.

When the evaluation is completed, the supervisor and deacon/provisional deacon will work together to develop an action plan for areas needing/desiring growth. The results of the evaluation and the developed action plan are to be signed by the supervisor and the deacon/provisional deacon. The evaluation report, including the action plan, is to be submitted to the SPRC and the district superintendent by June 1 annually. This time of evaluation is to be upheld in prayer, confidentiality, and the truth spoken in love and with grace.

#### **9. SABBATH**

All Christians are called to a time of Sabbath, to follow the example of Christ, who sought time away for his spiritual health and renewal, taking seriously the ancient command to “Remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy.” Deacons are expected to set an example for their congregations by taking Sabbath time. This Sabbath time is negotiated with the SPRC and respected by all. If an emergency arises during the deacon’s Sabbath time requiring the deacon or provisional deacon to return, another Sabbath time is arranged in its place. Sabbath is a time of spiritual and physical rest and renewal and should be respected by all members of the congregation for the ongoing service of the deacon.

#### **10. CLERGY SELF-CARE**

Deacons and provisional deacons are required by scripture, tradition, and covenant with The United Methodist Church to love and care for themselves by practicing habits which are conducive to physical, emotional, spiritual, and social health. Deacons and provisional deacons are expected to practice on a regular basis spiritual disciplines which are a means of grace in their lives. These disciplines include scripture reading, prayer and devotional time, communion, fasting, accountability groups, and acts of mercy. Exercise and healthy patterns of eating and resting are expected. Local congregations should encourage deacons to exercise self-care in these ways when it appears that such care is not given priority. The Virginia Conference Self-care Covenant for Clergy (available at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)) is a helpful guide.

#### **11. CLERGY FAMILY CARE**

Deacons and provisional deacons are called by scripture and tradition to care for their families. Many deacons and provisional deacons struggle balancing the dual covenants of family and vocation and need the support of their local church at the point they make difficult decisions about priorities.

#### **12. THE DEACON’S FAMILY**

Congregations contribute to a deacon’s or provisional deacon’s health and effectiveness by treating family members as individuals rather than extensions of the deacon/provisional deacon or employees of the church. Decision-making about their church membership, attendance, and involvement belong exclusively to them, as do all other choices and decisions laypersons are

permitted to make in the course of their lives. The Virginia Conference Thrival Kit is a resource for clergy families.

### **13. SUPPORT AND BENEFITS FOR THE DEACON/PROVISIONAL DEACON**

Clergy are asked at the time of ordination if they have indebtedness which might prove embarrassing. The assumption behind the question is that clergy must be content with the compensation they receive and will not be tempted to take additional work, leave unpaid bills behind, ask their churches or church members for advances and loans, or resort to other desperate measures to stay afloat financially.

**Paychecks:** Deacons/provisional deacons should never be put in the position of having to ask for their paychecks or accept less than the amount agreed to in charge-conference action. For Conference staff, paychecks are issued twice a month, on the 10th and 25th. Local churches might want to use this plan.

**Loans:** According to the Church and Clergy Tax guide, churches that make low-interest or no-interest loans to ministers or lay employees may be violating state nonprofit corporation law and generating taxable income. It is recommended, therefore, that a deacon/provisional deacon needing money borrow only from public lending institutions. Occasionally, deacons/provisional deacons are given property without charge, such as automobiles, homes, and equipment. These “in-kind” transfers must be valued and reported on Form W-2s or 1099-MISC as taxable income.

**Salary:** “Deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish (§625.2) not less than the minimum established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for elders. Provisional deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish (§625.2, .4) not less than the minimum established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for provisional elders. When deacons or provisional deacons are appointed to less than full-time ministry in a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish they shall receive a salary that is no less than the minimum salary for elders or provisional elders, prorated in one-quarter time increments (see §331.6d).” (§331.10b).

“Deacons and provisional deacons shall participate in the denominational pension and benefit plans and programs. They shall participate in the health benefit and supplemental programs of the annual conference subject to the provisions and standards of those programs as established by the annual conference when health coverage is not provided by another source.” (§331.10.c). The SPRC presents salary proposals to the Finance Committee for their approval.

The Finance Committee can make their own recommendation of salary to the Church Council while the S/PPRC makes their recommendation to the Church Council as well. If the Church Council receives the recommendation and believes a change is necessary, Church Council is urged to review thoroughly the recommendation from the S/PPRC. The Charge Conference sets the salary of the clergy “the pastor and other staff appointed by the bishop” upon approval of the Church Council (§247.13). Salary-setting should be done apart from the annual evaluation of the deacon/provisional deacon.

**Health and Pension:** Deacons and provisional deacons appointed full time to United Methodist churches in the Virginia Conference are eligible to participate in the VA Conference Health Plan. Deacons and provisional deacons appointed full time or less than full time shall participate in the United Methodist Pension Plan. There are no health benefits for less than full time deacons or provisional deacons. Deacons and provisional deacons appointed at least 50% or more shall participate in the United Methodist Life and Disability Plan. For the pension, life and disability

plans, the local church pays the costs. For the health plan, the cost is shared by the local church and the clergyperson. For details, contact the Virginia United Methodist Pensions and Benefits, Inc. office.

**Housing Exclusion:** Deacons and provisional deacons, as clergy, are eligible for the IRS Housing Exclusion allowance. This is a provision in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Service which permits clergy to exclude (for tax purposes) the total cost of utilities, furnishings and/or other housing-related expenses for the maintenance of their place of residence, up to the fair rental value of their home. Not to be confused with a “housing allowance”, the Exclusion amount is not an addition to the deacon’s salary. The Exclusion amount is determined by the clergyperson (who is accountable to the IRS), based on the needs of the individual, and designated as an untaxed portion of the annual salary already paid by the church. The amount claimed in the Housing Exclusion must be reported on Form 26 of the SPRC Charge Conference Forms, included in the SPRC recommendations to Charge Conference, and approved by action (vote) of the Charge Conference.

#### **14. MILEAGE AND ACCOUNTABLE REIMBURSEMENT**

The United Methodist standards for reimbursement are in agreement with IRS standards. A deacon/provisional deacon is reimbursed by the local church at the IRS rate for miles driven in relation to church or connectional work (calls, visits, meetings, and travel between churches on a charge). For purposes of accountability to the IRS, the deacon/provisional deacon is required to keep a mileage log, which includes date, destination, beginning and ending mileage. The total miles are turned in regularly to the church/charge treasurer, but the log itself is considered confidential.

For more information on business miles, check the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov>. The standard business mileage rate is published annually by the Conference Treasurer’s Office, which also sends timely updates when the rate is changed mid-year. The Virginia Conference Accountable Reimbursement policy is different than that published by the General Council on Finance and Administration. The full text of the Virginia Conference policy can be found under [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) > Administrative Services > Policies and Forms.

#### **15. VACATION, LEAVE AND OTHER TIME AWAY**

Good vacation time benefits ministry. The Virginia Conference Vacation Policy for all clergy is as follows:

The Virginia Conference Cabinet Guideline for Clergy Vacations is:

Four weeks’ vacation shall be available beginning the first year of appointment and every year thereafter for all full-time clergy in the Virginia Conference.

This policy is applicable to licensed local pastors, provisional members, associate members, and clergy members in full connection.

At least one day per week should be considered personal time, apart from vacation.

The number of paid vacation days for less-than full-time deacons is usually negotiated at the time a deacon is appointed, but generally does not exceed that of a full-time deacon.

#### **Continuing Education**

Continuing education for deacons is a requirement of the denomination (§351), and time should be allowed for fulfilling this requirement. Continuing education is not to be considered vacation time.



Deacons are required to undertake a continuing education and spiritual growth program which benefits the disciple-making ministry of the local congregation by furthering the deacon's professional development, and spiritual formation and growth. The *Book of Discipline* states that a minimum of one week each year and a minimum of one month during one year of every quadrennium (§351.2) be allowed for continuing education.

The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry requires deacons to receive at least one CEU per year and eight per quadrennium. The deacon always consults with the pastor in charge and the SPRC in advance about the type and timing of any educational plans. Provisional deacons participate in a required program of continuing theological education coordinated by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

### **Sick Days**

When clergy become ill, they need to be given time and space to recover. The district superintendent should always be notified when a deacon/provisional deacon is not able to fulfill full-time duties because of chronic or acute illness/es. Local church personnel policies can define sick day policies for clergy and lay staff.

### **Leaves**

The *Book of Discipline* contains information and guidelines for the following kinds of leaves for which the deacon/provisional deacon does not remain under appointment:

- Voluntary Leave of Absence (which includes personal leave, family leave and transitional leave): granted and/or renewed by vote of clergy members in full connection upon recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry (§354)
- Involuntary Leave of Absence: requested by the bishop and district superintendent(s) without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member pursuant to stipulations in §355
- Sabbatical Leave: up to one year. Granted for a program of study or travel approved by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry for associate members or clergy members in full connection who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years, or in a less-than-full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception in to full or associate membership (§352)
- Clergy Medical Leave: allows continuation of relationship to Annual Conference for clergy who are members of an annual conference but unable to perform their ministerial work because of medical and disabling conditions. Requires recommendation of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions, plus the majority vote of the executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference (§357).

### **Maternity/Paternity Leave**

Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one fourth of a year, is available to deacons and provisional deacons with the approval of the SPRC and the district superintendent. The leave is granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Compensation will be maintained for no less than the first eight weeks of leave. During the leave, the clergy person's annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and welfare benefit plans will remain in force (§356).

### **Family and Personal Days:**

Congregations need to allow clergy occasional absences due to family crises, such as illness or death. Celebrations such as reunions and weddings are generally coordinated with vacation Sundays. These policies should be applied with utmost cooperation and sensitivity between deacons and congregations, considering both the needs of the local churches and of the deacon's family. If there appears to be a problem in this regard, it is imperative that the deacon/provisional deacon, the pastor in charge, the SPRC, and the district superintendent

meet to seek a solution. Local church personnel policies can include family and personal leave policies for clergy and lay staff.

**16. HOLIDAYS:**

Holidays for clergy typically include secular celebrations: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day. Christian holidays are work days for deacons, although compensatory days off are in order. If a secular holiday falls on Sunday, deacons should be supported when they arrange for compensatory time off. Local church personnel policies can include holiday policies for clergy and lay staff.

**17. CONNECTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Deacons and provisional deacons are not members of local churches, but of the Annual Conference, and so have responsibilities to United Methodism beyond the local church. Deacons/provisional deacons are often called upon to serve on one or more conference or district boards, commissions, committees, or task forces. Deacons are occasionally elected to quadrennial General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences. It is expected that the church will be supportive of this connectional work.

**18. ANNUAL CONFERENCE:**

Deacons attend annual conference in the annual conference where membership is held for the purpose of "sharing with elders in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy." (§329.2) Provisional deacons also attend annual conference with limited voting rights (§327.2). There is also at least one lay member from each charge with an additional lay member for each additional appointed clergy member of the Virginia Conference on a charge. Therefore, a local church with a deacon or provisional deacon appointed to serve would have at least two lay members of the annual conference. The charge is responsible for paying the expenses of their clergy and lay members to attend the annual conference.

**19. OTHER RESOURCES FOR SPRC'S**

The 2012 *Book of Discipline* (§258.2) describes the purpose, function, and responsibilities of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee in the Local Church.

*Guidelines: 2012-2016 Pastor Parish Relations, available at Cokesbury ([www.Cokesbury.com](http://www.Cokesbury.com)).*

General resources for Staff Parish Relations Committees on the [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) web site under Resources > Pastor Staff Parish Committee include:

- Overview of Responsibilities
- Personnel Issues
- Parsonage Issues
- Appointment Issues
- Annual Evaluation.

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