



Placements Committee

Purpose

These specified ministries are distinct yet inter-related. They should not be seen as separate. Specified ministry provides leadership and facilitates the ministry and mission of the church. While the ministry of deacon has a primary focus on the community beyond the gathered congregation, and the ministry of Minister of the Word focuses on building the life of the gathered congregation, there is a two-way relationship as the congregation takes the Gospel to the world and as the Gospel in the world builds up the congregation.

Some deacons are in congregation placements where they are the sole specified ministry agent. A deacon in such a placement has to be able to bridge and balance each focus. It requires particular skills and may require the congregation to have a different expectation of ministry if the placement is to be fruitful for both minister and congregation.

Scope

This information is based on a paper prepared by the Uniting Church in Australia National Executive of Diakonia following a resolution of the 2002 Diakonia National Conference. It was prepared as a guide to Joint Nominating Committees, deacons, Pastoral Relations Committees, Placements Committees and all those responsible for the education of deacons.

Deacons are sometimes called to congregational placements when there are no outreach community placements available. Conversely, at times there are placements specifically diaconal in ministry emphasis for which no deacon is currently available, and for which a Minister of the Word may be discerned as having the appropriate gifts.

Important criteria

1. Does the congregation have a strong sense of call to be involved in social welfare needs or social justice issues in the community?
2. Is there already in place a mission plan and/or program in these areas?
3. Is there a mission team already at work, or willing to work in this plan or program?
4. Is the leadership of a suitable deacon essential or highly desirable to further this mission plan/program through particular ways? These may include:
 - special skills and experience
 - pastoral support for the mission team and “client group”
 - ability to interpret the Gospel to the wider community
 - ability to reflect theologically with the congregation on their welfare and justice mission.

Presbytery representatives on the JNC have a responsibility to explain to congregational representatives the differences between the specified ministries. It may be helpful to invite a deacon to visit a meeting of the JNC to assist in this.

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Situations where a deacon placement may be suitable

This is not an exhaustive list, because the church is always called to a ministry of service and this should not be seen as an optional extra. Congregations located in situations such as the following could well consider whether the leadership of a deacon will enhance their mission to their community.

- Multi-cultural communities, multi-faith communities and congregations sharing properties cross-culturally.
- Communities where there are a significant number of Indigenous people.
- Urban and rural communities where there are a significant number of low-income people.
- Congregations in inner-city areas and ones located in larger shopping centres where there is a desire to make significant contacts.
- Locations with a significant number of marginalised people (e.g. people with drug and alcohol problems, mental health problems, single parent families) or where the congregation has a ministry with institutions such as a hospital, prison, detention centre or boarding houses.

Considerations in a conversation with deacon exit students

- Whether their call to ministry includes the normal duties of Minister of the Word (preaching, presiding at sacraments, leading worship, pastoral care, Christian education, involvement with congregation administration, i.e. with nurturing, encouraging and building up the people of God and preparing them for mission).
- Whether a rewarding and fruitful ministry may be ahead in this setting, taking the above criteria into consideration.
- That the student is encouraged to speak plainly to the JNC about her/his understanding of their ministry and how it may be exercised in the placement.
- Exploring issues such as time balance, particular ministry focus, and how this might differ from the congregation's previous experience in ministry.
- That the work of a full-time Minister of the Word plus a full-time deacon cannot be accomplished—so what is to be the balance? There must be a plan in place for a lay team to share in some of the responsibilities of Minister of the Word (e.g. preaching, leading worship, pastoral visitation) and/or of the diaconal ministry.
- A written statement about the deacon's experience and call and about the local situation should be presented to the meeting of the congregation in the event that the JNC decides to recommend that a deacon be called.

Revisions and reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author/reviewer	Approved
1	2002	Based on a paper prepared by the, following a resolution of the 2002 Diakonia National Conference. Provide guidance to those involved in placements relating to Deacons	National Exec of Diakonia UCA	National Exec of Diakonia UCA
1	8 Jan 18	Review and update previous documentation	D Fender, Ass Gen Sec	D Fender, Ass Gen Sec



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

DEACONS AS SOLE AGENTS IN A CONGREGATION

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