

**40:601 or 801 (for PhD students only) Topics in Methodism: Deacons**  
**The United Methodist Deacon**

Offered in fall 2014: Sept. 12-13, Nov. 14-15, and Dec. 5-6, 2014

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**Description:** An exploration of the possibilities, origins, theology, and ministry of the Order of Deacon in the UMC. The course will include interviews and/or field trips to ministry sites of deacons in the Chicago area as well as academic work. 3 semester hours credit\*\*

**Goals:**

- A. **Knowing:** To know the historical roots of the UM deacon as it is currently envisioned, the theological basis for the diaconate, and the place of the deacon in UM polity. Students will articulate their understanding of how the deacon contributes to the mission of the church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- B. **Doing:** To experience deacons and their ministry and to envision a diaconal ministry that is prophetic and faithful to the call of all Christians. Each student will construct a proposal, consider funding, and how it will lead and equip laity for the transformation of the world.
- C. **Being:** To be a deacon (or a supporter of deacons) with a vision of ecclesiology and ministry that seeks to liberate and empower persons to be co-creators of the reign of God in our multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. Any participants in the class who do not plan to be deacons, can practice articulating and appreciating the identity of those called to be deacons.

**Course Sessions and Structure:**

This course will be offered in a non-traditional format, on the weekends of September 12-13, November 14-15, and December 5-6. (\*\*People who want to participate for continuing education credit would be welcomed as well.) Classes will meet from 2 pm on Friday until noon on Saturday, including a session on Friday night. Some travel around the Chicago area to visit deacons in their ministry settings or communicating via Skype with deacons whose ministry is especially creative is anticipated.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Students are expected to attend all class sessions as the course is highly dependent upon the small group consultation experience. While there may be family or pastoral emergencies, please make every effort to attend each session fully. Contact the instructor if you perceive such an emergency possibility. Active class participation and reading of assigned literature. All students should read all of the required texts and participate fully in this community of mutual learning. Papers should be sensitive to cultural and gender issues.

2. Written statement of your understanding of the development of the deacon as it is currently conceived focused on one particular period of history and how that development affects our current understandings and practice. Papers could explore biblical roots, center on the deaconess, the diaconal minister, our ecumenical partners, General Conference actions, etc. Papers might argue for a change in the current definition of the deacon based on faithfulness to our historical roots or a more faithful response to the call to discipleship. Each student should consult with the instructor as to the topic s/he will pursue. (6-8 pages) [This would be optional for students seeking CEU credit.]
3. Write a proposal for a ministry led by a deacon. Include funding sources, supervision, and how it will lead and equip laity for the transformation of the world. Present this proposal in class (5-10 pages).
4. Read the required books and articles.
5. Five page paper on *My Ministry as a Deacon* which will be due at the end of the semester. It should draw on all the readings, your experiences of meeting deacons, and our class discussions. [Those doing the course for continuing education units will not need to do this assignment.]

### **Core Texts, required reading**

- Margaret Ann Crain, *The United Methodist Deacon: Ordained to Word, Service, Compassion and Justice*. Abingdon: 2014
- Margaret Ann Crain, *The Promise of the United Methodist Deacon in the Twenty-First Century: Partners with the Whole People of God* a monograph published by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, Nashville, TN 2007. Download from [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)
- Margaret Ann Crain, “Who Should Preside at Eucharist?” and other articles in *Quarterly Review* 23:3 (Fall 2003).
- Collins, John N. *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- David Clark, *Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom Community, Diaconal Church, and the Liberation of the Laity*. Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 2005.
- Barnett, James Monroe. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995.

### **Select Bibliography:**

Crain, Margaret Ann and Jack L. Seymour. *A Deacon's Heart: The New United Methodist Diaconate*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Frank, Thomas Edward. *The Polity, Practice, and Mission of The United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.

Orton, Andrew and Todd Stockdale, *Making Connections: Exploring Methodist Deacons' Perspectives on Contemporary Diaconal Ministry*. Durham, UK, Sacristy Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-908381-19-4

Plater, Ormonde. *Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons*. Rev. Ed. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2004.

Vena, Osvaldo. "Gospel Images of Jesus as Deacon: Upsetting the Hierarchies of his Culture" written for The Ecumenical Network for the Diaconate, 2001; available as a monograph through North American Association for the Diaconate, <http://www.diakonoi.org/>.

Vogel, Dwight W. and Linda J. Vogel, "Deacons as Sacraments of the Table." (2006); available at <http://mystagogy.info/mystagogy2/node/7>.

September 12-13: The goal for this weekend is to experience deacons and their ministry and to envision a diaconal ministry that is prophetic and faithful to the call of all Christians. This will include some consideration of the meaning of ordination and the role of sacraments. We will meet some deacons who will share their call and also the practicalities of finding a way to live out that call with integrity. Introduction to the roots of the deacon and discussion of projects for next meeting. Read Crain's book, *The United Methodist Deacon* in preparation for this meeting.

November 14-15: The goal for this weekend is to know the historical roots of the UM deacon as it is currently envisioned, the theological basis for the diaconate, and the place of the deacon in UM polity. We will also learn about the diaconate as it is expressed in other Christian groups. Participants will share their reports of research on development of the office of deacon and how it relates to the current UM understandings (Assignment 2). Discussion of the challenges and requirements of finding an appointment and proposals for ministry settings that are due at the next weekend. Read John Collins' *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* in preparation for this weekend.

December 5-6: The goal of this weekend is that each participant is equipped to be a deacon (or a supporter of deacons) with a vision of ecclesiology and ministry that seeks to liberate and empower persons to be co-creators of the reign of God in our multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. Any participants in the class who do not plan to be deacons can practice articulating and appreciating the identity of those called to be deacons. Participants will share their dreams and proposals with the class for feedback and encouragement. These proposals should include an articulation of how the deacon contributes to the mission of the church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and a plan for funding the ministry. Read other items on the course list as needed in preparation.