

## ***What is the Diaconal Ministry Community?***

### **Community Mission Statement:**

*The purpose of the Diaconal Ministry Community is to encourage and empower one another as servants of God and partner with others to bridge church and world.*

Our Community's Guiding Principles:

We are grounded in the Word, through faith, prayer and scripture.

We listen for God's voice – expecting the Holy Spirit to guide us through prayer, scripture, community and the cries of the world.

We work collegially – intentionally making respectful connections with each other and with our partners in ministry.

We seek to raise up effective leaders – empowering them to lead this community as we engage church and world.

We bear witness to God's work in the world – speaking boldly and serving justly in lives of Christ-like service.

### **Community Leadership Team:**

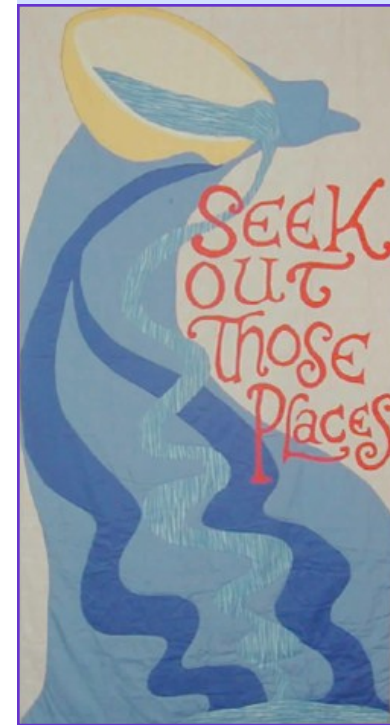
The four members of the Leadership Team of the Diaconal Ministry Community are chosen by ecclesiastical ballot at our gatherings. All consecrated individuals and those who have been extended a call, but who have not yet been consecrated, are eligible for election. A member of the Leadership Team may serve two consecutive terms.

### **Community and Roster: What's the Difference?**

Though similar in membership, the Diaconal Ministry roster and the Diaconal Ministry Community are not the same. The roster is a list maintained by the wider church of those who have been consecrated; it is also the name for the body of ELCA members who have been consecrated. Decisions regarding the roster are made by the churchwide Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit and by action of the Churchwide Assembly.

## ***Diaconal Ministry in the Synods of the ELCA***

***A resource for bishops, synod staff,  
candidacy committees and Diaconal  
Ministry Candidates***



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA

Produced by the  
Diaconal Ministry Community  
of the ELCA

## About this Resource

This resource is designed to improve the communication process between Diaconal Ministry candidates and their synods. It contains information designed to help both candidate and synod navigate the sometimes-murky waters of diaconal candidacy, call and ministry in a synod.

The information in this booklet was gathered from the ELCA Diaconal Ministry website (<http://www.elca.org/diaconalministry>), the Consecration Handbook found on the website (), and a survey of Diaconal Ministers.

We hope it will be of use to you!

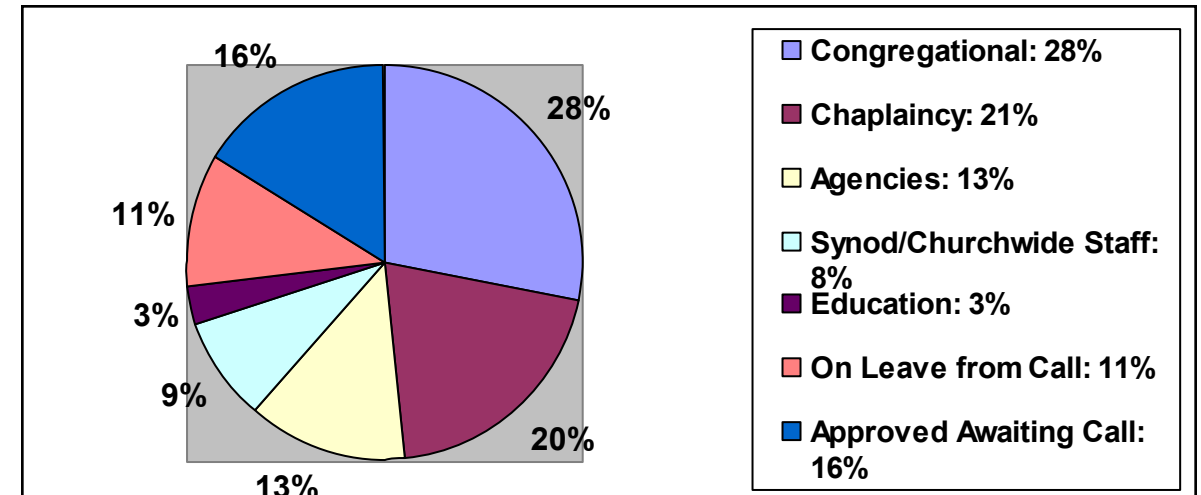
## Questions for Candidates

*The following are some of the most common questions that candidates are asked during the candidacy process. Candidates should be able to answer them fluently and articulately! The way you respond to these questions and other similar ones will set the stage for a strong relationship with your candidacy committee. We hope this resource will help you formulate answers to these important questions.*

- What is diaconal ministry, anyway?
- How do you articulate your own sense of call to diaconal ministry?
- How is your call to diaconal ministry different than a call to ordained ministry? Why not get ordained?
- If you don't want to be a pastor, why not be an Associate in Ministry?
- In what kinds of ministries are ELCA Diaconal Ministers currently serving?

**Diaconal Ministry Candidates:** Once you are consecrated, join CDMTalk, the listserv for consecrated diaconal ministers. It's a tool for creating community among diaconal ministers in the ELCA. For information on joining, go to the website address above.

## How do Diaconal Ministers Serve?



### 1. Congregations

Over one-quarter of our rostered diaconal ministers serve calls in congregations. Most of these calls are to positions of pastoral care, youth and family ministry, or evangelism and outreach. Some serve in campus ministry. Sometimes, diaconal ministers are called upon to provide interim pastoral leadership to a congregation.

### 2. Chaplaincy

About one-fifth of diaconal ministers are chaplains. They have specialized training in chaplaincy and serve in hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospice programs and correctional institutions.

### 3. Agencies

About one in seven diaconal ministers serve the Gospel through ministry in faith-based agencies and organizations. These diaconal ministers are nurses, teachers, physicians, fundraisers, counselors, case workers, social workers, volunteer coordinators and community organizers.

### 4. Synodical and Churchwide Calls

Some diaconal ministers are called to synod or

churchwide ministries. They coordinate ministries such as earthkeeping, candidacy, health ministries, stewardship and development, evangelism and administration.

### 5. Educational Institutions

Some diaconal ministers serve in educational institutions as professors, fundraisers, and program administrators. Their areas of expertise include bible, ethics, theology, vocation, public health & religion and science.

### 6. On Leave From Call

A little over ten percent of available diaconal ministers are on leave from call. Some are on leave to raise families, get more education, or because of limitation to a specific area.

### 7. Approved Awaiting Call

At any given time there are on average thirty candidates who have been approved but are still awaiting their first call. Currently this adds up to about fifteen percent of the available consecrated diaconal ministers and candidates.

## *How Can Bishops and Synod Staff Support Diaconal Ministry?*

### **1.) Support the candidate's search for a call.**

- Take the time to meet with candidates to discuss their gifts, training and possible call situations.
- When appropriate, invite congregations calling a second or third pastor to consider a diaconal minister.
- Be open— diaconal ministry represents a unique opportunity for the church to connect to various local, regional and national organizations and to make Christ known in new places.
- Aid in planning an installation service for diaconal ministers when they find an appropriate call. If the call is synodical, a synod-wide service could be appropriate.

### **2.) Support Diaconal Ministers as they serve in your synod.**

- Invite diaconal ministers, deaconesses, and associates in ministry to participate in First Call Theological Education.
- Include diaconal ministers, deaconesses and associates in ministry in rostered leaders' retreats and communications.
- Assist diaconal ministers in educating others about their roster by lifting up their ministry in synod communications and inviting them to speak at synod events.
- Invite diaconal ministers to preach and assist at synod-wide worship services.
- Lift up and support the organizations in which your diaconal ministers serve.
- Help diaconal ministers, deaconesses and associates in ministry in your synod to find and connect with one another.
- In synod events, publications and prayers, be inclusive! Articulate the names of all of the lay rosters: diaconal ministers, deaconesses and associates in ministry; rather than consolidating or omitting them.

*“Even though my call process took eight months, I was grateful that my bishop worked with me to find ways to ‘make it happen.’”*  
~Diaconal Minister

**This information—and much more—can be found on our website:**  
<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Rostered-Leadership/Diaconal-Ministry.aspx>

## *What is Diaconal Ministry in the ELCA?*

Diaconal Ministers are consecrated for service in ministries at the intersection of church and world.

Diaconal Ministers work to seek wholeness in the world and to help the people of God to live out the Gospel. They are committed to alerting the church to the needs of the world.

Diaconal Ministry is a ministry of Word and Service, sharing the hope of Christ, helping where there is need, and equipping others for healing and justice in the world.

## *The Six Marks of Diaconal Ministry*

### **Be Rooted in the Word of God**

Diaconal ministers are ministers of the Word of God, committed to Christ, and called to be spokespersons for the Gospel, the apostolic faith, and the theological emphasis of this church to God's world.

### **Be Trained to Carry Out a Particular Service**

Diaconal ministers carry out a public ministry of service and witness. With demonstrated competence and expertise in a particular discipline, diaconal ministers may serve both within and outside of congregational settings, in each case bearing responsibility for making the linkages between church and world.

### **Be Committed and Prepared to Equip the Baptized for Ministry in the World and in the Church**

Diaconal ministers along with pastors are called to lead and equip the baptized for ministry. Diaconal ministers support the ministry of the baptized through appropriate programmatic ministries by working with the laity in discerning and encouraging their gifts for ministry.

### **Give Particular Attention to Ministries at the Boundaries Between the Church and World**

Diaconal ministers carry public responsibility to speak for the needs of God's world to the church as well as taking God's saving Gospel to the needs of the world through the actions of God's people both individually and collectively.

### **Exemplify the Life of Christ-like Service Addressing all Forms of Human Need**

The call to diaconal ministry is a lifelong commitment which supports and compliments the ministry of Word and Sacrament, focusing on ministry to the whole person. This “diaconal bias” provides the lens and vision for developing the diaconal mission of the church carried out among and through its members.

### **Be Grounded in Community**

Diaconal ministers need the support and shared vision of a community of leaders committed to a common calling. This grounding in a diaconal community serves as the reminder to seek to build community in all ministry settings.

## *How Can Candidates Be Helpful During Candidacy and the Call Process?*

### **1.) Be proactive!**

- Maintain good communication with your candidacy committee contact person.
- After approval, be in conversation with your bishop and synod staff as soon as possible in your call process.
- Find out which congregations or local non-profit organizations may be looking for new staff members.
- Ask for permission to visit with local ministry organizations to discuss possibilities for a diaconal ministry call.

### **2.) Tell the story!**

- Think of the call process as an opportunity to tell the story and expand the vision of diaconal ministry in the life of the church.
- Remember that some bishops and synods are more familiar with the vision and potential of diaconal ministry than others. Consider this your chance to make a good first impression!

***Remember this: “We are still pioneers, trail blazers and interpreters of this ministry. It goes with the territory.” ~  
Diaconal Minister***

### **3.) Be creative!**

- Put together an information sheet about yourself to share with your candidacy committee and bishop. Include a description of your background and training, your sense of call, and the kind of ministry you envision yourself doing.
- If your ministry is something unusual, help paint a picture of how that call would be lived into, practiced, and even funded.

### **4.) Be prepared!**

- During candidacy, prepare yourself for some of the common questions asked by committees. Be able to articulate your sense of call, how this call differs from the call of all the baptized, and how it is distinct from the call to ordained ministry.
- When you are assigned, research your new synod: are there any other diaconal ministers there? What are their calls?
- When you speak with your bishop, come prepared to give examples of how other diaconal ministers are serving in other parts of the church. Bring a list. Talk to other diaconal ministers who have similar calls to yours. Make sure to include their job titles and the synods in which they serve.

### **5.) Be flexible!**

- Remember that the call process happens differently in each synod. Advocate for yourself, but trust the process too.

## *How Can Bishops and Synod Staff Support Diaconal Ministry Candidates?*

***“I think the most helpful part of my candidacy process was the fact that there was a deaconess on my call committee, who, when the questions of ordination or going ‘all the way’ came up, helped me articulate that I felt called in a different way.”***

***~Diaconal Minister***

### **1.) Be knowledgeable**

- Understand diaconal ministry as an official roster of the ELCA.
- Know and respect the education and training of a diaconal minister: a two-week Diaconal Ministry Formation Event, a master’s degree from an accredited seminary, and 700 hours of field work including at least 250 hours on a specialized project stressing their qualifications in another field or ministry specialty.
- Recognize the wide variety of gifts and the wide diversity of diaconal calls.
- Be familiar with the Diaconal Ministry Community of the ELCA, which is separate from the roster.
- If you have questions, please visit our website or speak with our Bishop liaison, Bishop Ralph Jones (NW Penn Synod).

### **2.) Support the candidate through the educational/candidacy process**

- Educate the clergy and lay members in your synod about the rosters of the ELCA. Encourage the view that the rosters of the ELCA are not hierarchical, but rather differ in type of call.
- Make sure members of your candidacy committee understand the rosters of ministry in the ELCA.
- Give diaconal ministry candidates credit for past experience and education.
- Make sure all candidacy paperwork includes options for diaconal ministry, deaconess and associate in ministry candidates.
- Consider inviting one or more lay rostered ministers to join your candidacy committee.

### **In Candidacy**

At this time, approximately 140 people are in the diaconal ministry candidacy process, and several others are part of the TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) program as diaconal candidates.