

# Guidelines for the Licensed Deacon Ministry

A Handbook for Congregations,  
Supervising Pastors,  
and Licensed Deacons



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## Reason for the Handbook

This handbook is to accompany a congregation, Supervising Pastor, and a Licensed Deacon as they walk together towards accomplishing God's missional goal for ministry in a certain place. For many reasons, a congregation may find itself in a situation where the ministry of a Licensed Deacon may be a blessing. Some of those reasons may include:

1. the lack of a critical number of people who can support and sustain a full time pastor.
2. the need for supporting a local pastor in fulfilling the ministry needs of a congregation.
3. the desire to plant a new worshipping community\*.

It must be clearly understood that Licensed Deacons are not ordained clergy. They serve and fill the functions of an ordained pastor under the supervision of an ordained pastor. This supervision is not only advisable, but also necessary. The pastor retains the responsibility for the ministry to the people of God and delegates duties to the Licensed Deacon through the congregation. In this way both the Licensed Deacon and the Supervising Pastor are blessed, and the ministry of the Gospel moves forward.

This handbook serves as a resource for congregations interested in pursuing a Licensed Deacon ministry and articulates the expectations a congregation should have related to that ministry. It clarifies the process of how a congregation identifies a candidate for Licensed Deacon ministry, how the training is accomplished, and what responsibilities the Supervising Pastor assumes as he mentors a Licensed Deacon. In addition, it serves to lay out for the Licensed Deacon the roles and ministries he might be asked to assume once he is licensed for service as a Deacon.

The Northwest (NOW) District Office enthusiastically supports the ministry that Licensed Deacons fill. In so doing, it has established a protocol for developing the opportunity, training the Licensed Deacon and Supervising Pastor, and finally licensing and releasing the Deacon into the ministry with integrity, accountability, and most importantly, the gifts and skills with which God has endowed the congregation, Supervising Pastor, and Licensed Deacon to accomplish His mission.

Rev. Paul Linnemann, President  
Northwest District – LCMS

## Protocol for Placing a Licensed Deacon into a Word and Sacrament Ministry

The following guidelines will facilitate the process for a congregation considering a Licensed Deacon for ministry in their midst. These guidelines are sequential and in normal circumstances should be taken in order.

1. A congregation identifies a ministry need that can best be served by someone trained for Word and Sacrament ministry. One of those options is to use the services of a Licensed Deacon. The function of a Licensed Deacon is to extend the office of the ministry under the supervision of an ordained pastor.
  - a. The desire for filling ministry needs and determining how to do so is generated and driven by the congregation.
  - b. The congregation determines who might fill that role – ordained Pastor, Licensed Deacon, Specific Ministry Pastor, Regional Supervising Pastor, and/or other options – in conversation with the NOW District Office.
  - c. The congregation may choose to consult with other congregations in their region as they seek God’s guidance.
  
2. The congregation and the NOW District Office determine and agree that the ministry need of the congregation could be served by a Deacon licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry.
  - a. Normally, a local individual who is already a member of that particular LCMS congregation and is presently serving in some ministry functions is identified – one who has the capacity and faith life to live and lead both competently and spiritually.
    - i. The individual does not self-identify, though the emerging understanding of this ministry might be part of that person’s thinking and faith walk.
    - ii. The individual should emerge as a result of God’s creation of circumstances and identification by the congregation as the individual connects and discusses and seeks God’s wisdom and guidance.
    - iii. Once the individual is identified, that person is officially asked to fill the role of Licensed Deacon. It is generally in order that a person being trained to serve a congregation as a Licensed Deacon not hold another position of leadership. This could create a conflict of interest between the Deacon’s activity and the ministry of the congregation. Should a leader be identified to serve as a Licensed Deacon, that leader would ordinarily resign his leadership position before assuming the ministry role.
  - b. One step in the preparation to serve as a Licensed Deacon includes significant training through Mission Training Center (MTC). The following steps begin that training process:
    - i. An approved and signed “Statement of Intent for Training for Licensed Deacon Ministry” (see Appendix A) by the governing body of the local congregation, and the person(s) chosen to fill that ministry is sent to the NOW District Office.
    - ii. The NOW District Office returns to the congregation the “Letter of Acknowledgement for Training in Licensed Deacon Ministry” (see Appendix B) signed by the President of the NOW District. That document is then submitted along with the “Mission Training Center Application” form to MTC ([www.missiontrainingcenter.com](http://www.missiontrainingcenter.com)) in order to begin training (see Appendix C).
  
3. The candidate is trained through MTC (or its partners) with a set of common core areas.
  - a. In some cases, prior training and education may meet the requirements for certain courses.
  - b. An official copy of transcripts and conversation with the MTC Director is required for course comparison.

4. Upon successful completion of all training, the candidate receives a letter from MTC indicating satisfactory completion of all course areas necessary to be licensed as a Deacon for Word and Sacrament ministry. The congregation then contacts the NOW District Office and asks that the process for becoming a Licensed Deacon continue. At that time, the NOW District Office will request required paperwork and will start the interview process. Upon successful completion of the interview, the District President will then review the file and determine whether the candidate is ready for licensure.
  - a. If determined ready, the District President will issue a license for the Deacon to serve, and the congregation will be notified.
  - b. *If determined unready, the candidate is notified of the decision and asked to work with the congregation to determine other avenues for ministry service.*
  - c. Normally, individuals do not function as Licensed Deacons until all training and other requirements have been fulfilled. However, provisional licensing\* for Word and Sacrament ministry is possible in some cases but requires a minimum of training (core areas of Word, Worship, Sacrament, Preaching), supervision by an ordained pastor, and approval by the district office.
5. The Licensed Deacon is then commissioned to serve the congregation during a worship service.
6. The Licensed Deacon is supervised by a rostered, ordained pastor.
7. The re-licensing of the Licensed Deacon is reviewed annually. It is not automatically granted. Criteria for re-licensing includes, but is not limited to the following:
  - a. ongoing need for Licensed Deacon ministry in the context of the congregation.
  - b. the Licensed Deacon's faithful capacity to meet the ministry needs.
  - c. the Licensed Deacon's compatibility with the congregation's vision for ministry.
  - d. the Licensed Deacon's commitment to continuing education, taking at least one course or seminar per year through MTC (see Appendix D).

If it is determined that renewal is appropriate, the individual is once again authorized and licensed to serve as a Licensed Deacon for another year.

### **Some Additional thoughts**

#### **\*On Missional Communities** *(refer to \* on page 2)*

Only congregations may ask to be served by a Licensed Deacon. Missional communities and gatherings of Christians may be served by a Licensed Deacon certified under the umbrella of the congregation that has begun and is supporting that ministry.

#### **\*On Provisional Licensing** *(refer to \* on page 4)*

Provisional licensing is considered only in special circumstances of need. If a congregation believes it is facing special circumstances requiring provisional licensing, a conversation between the congregation and the NOW District Office is required.

### **On Women and Their Service**

Women are welcome and encouraged to be trained through MTC for congregation and faith community ministries. Only men may be trained as Licensed Deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry.

## **Supervision of the Licensed Deacon by an Ordained Pastor**

All Licensed Deacons are required to be supervised by an ordained pastor. This supervision includes:

1. Regular, scheduled meetings between the Licensed Deacon and the Supervisor. The agendas for these meetings should include a review of the Licensed Deacon's teaching and preaching, an assessment of the state of the ministry, and conversation about plans for the future.
2. Submission of the "Annual Report Form" to the District Office.
3. Regular participation in the Supervisors and Deacons group on the NOW District website. This may include participation in the SundaySermon program run through MTC, connecting and accessing material through the group site on the website, and conference calls with the President's Office.

The Supervisor is accountable to the District President and is responsible for providing feedback to his office.

## Pastoral Guidelines for a Pastor Supervising the Work of a Licensed Deacon

1. The supervising pastor shall faithfully and carefully oversee the work of the Deacon for whose ministry he is responsible.
  - A. He shall supervise the preaching and teaching of the Deacon. He shall see to it that the Word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is taught in its truth and purity and in accordance with the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as contained in the Book of Concord.
  - B. He shall supervise the Deacon's administration of the Holy Sacraments in cases where the Deacon is authorized because of prolonged absence of an ordained pastor. He shall see to it that the sacraments are administered according to the divine command of Christ and in accordance with usage of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and, specifically, of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He shall also see to it that the Guidelines of the Synod concerning the administration of the Sacraments as set forth in Resolution 3-05B of the 1989 Synodical Convention (Wichita) are followed.
  - C. He shall encourage and guide the Deacon to minister to all members of the congregation of every age and social condition, to visit the sick and the dying, to admonish the indifferent and the erring, and to do so in an evangelical manner.
  - D. He shall encourage and assist the Deacon in promoting the spiritual welfare of every member of the congregation through Bible study, personal and family devotions, and in other appropriate ways.
  - E. He shall supervise the Deacon as he instructs the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word of God and the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in order to prepare them for communicant membership in the congregation.
  - F. He shall supervise and assist the Deacon in promoting and guiding the mission activity of the congregation, specifically, to encourage evangelism; that is, to reach out to the surrounding community with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, to encourage support of mission work through District and Synod, and to train members of the congregation for the work of evangelism.
  - G. He shall supervise and assist the Deacon in the work of parish administration, so that the policies and procedures of the congregation serve to help it achieve its mission for Christ and so that the work of the congregation is carried out in an orderly and appropriate manner.
2. The supervising pastor shall not only supervise the work of the Deacon but shall also encourage him, set him an example of Christian conduct, and be supportive and helpful to him, freely sharing ideas, insights, experience, and other help so that, by the grace of God, the combined efforts of the supervising pastor and the Deacon will result in the edification of the congregation and the upbuilding of the Church of Jesus Christ, both in the local community and throughout the world.
3. The supervising pastor is also the pastor who has assumed responsibility to oversee the congregation which is being served by the Deacon.
4. As the one responsible for the oversight of the congregation being served by the Deacon, he shall apply the divinely ordained discipline of the church in a manner agreeable to the Word of God and, as much as possible, keep the Deacon informed of his activity in this area.

## Vital Values and Behaviors for Supervisors and Licensed Deacons

Before determining who might be considered to fill the functions described above, it is important that the person identified models and examples the Scriptural gifts, skills, and attitude of a servant to serve in such a capacity in the church and for the people of God. Paul pens that instruction in his letter to Timothy. He writes:

1 Timothy 3:1-13

If anyone wants to provide leadership in the church, good! But there are preconditions: A leader must be well thought of, committed to his wife, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he's talking about, not be over-fond of wine, not pushy but gentle, not thin-skinned, not money-hungry. He must handle his own affairs well, attentive to his own children and having their respect. For if someone is unable to handle his own affairs, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a new believer, lest the position go to his head and the Devil trip him up. Outsiders must think well of him, or else the Devil will figure out a way to lure him into his trap. The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. No exceptions are to be made for women – same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not over-fond of wine. Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith.

**Today's English Version (from The Message)**

These are enumerated as follows:

1. Above reproach – integrity, consistency.
2. The husband of one wife – committed, fidelity, healthy boundaries.
3. Sober-minded – temperate, predictable, steady.
4. Self-controlled – can say 'no,' doesn't live led by false desires.
5. Respectable.
6. Hospitable – wants to share his life, enjoys being in relationship.
7. Able to teach – enjoys helping others learn and understand God and His word clearly.
8. Not a drunkard – knows boundaries, manages consumption of food and drink.
9. Not violent but gentle – use words not fists.
10. Not quarrelsome – sees the positive, is uplifting, lets the Spirit be in charge of his heart.
11. Not a lover of money or material things – seeks God's kingdom first.
12. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?
13. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil – not prone to pride and easy to fall.
14. Good reputation/well thought of by outsiders.

## Licensing, Certification, and Certificates – A Distinction

### Definitions

**Licensing:** An endorsement granted, monitored, assessed, and managed by a district for an individual to fill certain functions determined by the description of the ministry need(s) in the church.

**Certification:** A standard recognized and documented by a district which commends an individual for certain areas of ministry.

**Certificates:** Documentation by Mission Training Center (MTC) for individuals as a result of successfully fulfilling competencies through a course or set of courses and/or activity(ies).

### Description

Individuals desiring to be prepared for ministry functions, roles, or activities within an organization, institution, congregation, or district may be prepared for those ministries through MTC training. Upon successfully completing the training, MTC recognizes the accomplishment by granting certificates of satisfactory completion. Organizations, institutions, congregations, and districts may then use those certificates as proof that individuals are ready to assume responsibilities in areas of ministry related to the training. This is done at the discretion of the organization, institution, congregation, or district.

In the NOW District, MTC certificates are used as one criterion for licensing Deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry. The NOW District licenses only one category of individuals: Deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry. It does not license any other individuals for ministry functions or roles. In addition, the NOW District commends individuals who have completed a series of courses and/or activities through MTC for ministry roles. Though not official positions in the church, the individuals are recognized as bringing competencies which may prove beneficial for congregations desiring to bring expertise to ministry roles and functions.

### Procedure

MTC grants certificates to individuals who satisfactorily complete single, individual opportunities (workshops, seminars, conferences). In addition, MTC grants certificates to individuals who satisfactorily complete MTC courses (one-on-one with a mentor/teacher, online with an MTC instructor, at a local Field MTC). These courses may also be packaged into identified and specific tracks which prepare leaders for specific outcomes.

**MTC certificates are only granted when the MTC standard of rigor and accomplishment is successfully met through the training opportunity.**

**Appendix A**

**Statement of Intent for Training for Licensed Deacon Ministry**  
Northwest District ~ Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod



Congregation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email & Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_



We, the governing body of \_\_\_\_\_,

decided at the  council;  congregational meeting;  other \_\_\_\_\_ (please

describe) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to encourage the following man/men:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

to pursue training for Licensed Deacon Word and Sacrament ministry.

Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_ Office/Position \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Office/Position \_\_\_\_\_



*The desire for filling ministry needs and determining how to do so is generated and driven by the congregation. This form must be signed by two authorized representatives of the congregation, including the congregational pastor if available, and then submitted by mail to the President’s Office, Northwest District, 1700 NE Knott St., Portland, OR 97212, or by email to susanl@nowlcms.org. Upon receipt and review of this statement of intent, the district president may return a Letter of Acknowledgement for Training for Licensed Deacon Ministry via email to the contact person, or conduct further conversation with congregation leadership. Note: for men pursuing Licensed Deacon training through MTC, the Letter of Acknowledgement is a required document accompanying the MTC Application.*

**Appendix B**

Letter of Acknowledgement for Training for  
Licensed Deacon Ministry  
Northwest District – Lutheran Church Missouri Synod



Name of MTC applicant(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Of

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

I have received the Statement of Intent for Training for Licensed Deacon Ministry stating the desire of the above named congregation to encourage the named applicant(s) to pursue training for Licensed Deacon ministry through Mission Training Center.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. Paul Linnemann, President  
Northwest District – LCMS

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

**(Submit this form along with the MTC Application to begin the process for course work for Licensed Deacon ministry.)**

*<sup>2</sup>Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.  
<sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:2-3 NIV*

## Appendix C

### Mission Training Center (MTC) Application

Concordia University – CALL

2811 NE Holman St,

Portland, OR 97211

Office: 971-302-7595

[www.MissionTrainingCenter.com](http://www.MissionTrainingCenter.com)



Equipping apprentices of Jesus  
for active ministry in the field

MTC admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin

**Name:** Enter name.

**Address:** Enter address.

Enter city.

**City**

Enter state.

**State**

Enter zip.

**Zip**

**Birthdate:** Enter date.

**E-mail:** Enter email.

**SS#:** Enter #.

**Married:**  YES  NO **If married, name of spouse:** Enter name.

**Home Church (Name, City, State):** Enter text.

**Home Pastor's Name:** Enter name.

**Number of years in current congregation:** Enter #.

**If a Lutheran, # of years as a member:** Enter #.

**Why I am interested in taking MTC courses (choose one):**

- To prepare for ministry in my community/faith community/congregation; for my own personal development
- To prepare for entrance into a future training institution
- To prepare for service in my church's larger organization (synod, district, headquarters)
- To specifically prepare for entrance into EIIT (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology) program in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- To specifically prepare for entrance into SMP (Specific Ministry Pastor) program in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- To begin the process for becoming a Licensed Deacon in a district of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

**Name of LCMS District:** Enter district name.

*(Those intending on becoming a Licensed Deacon in the **Northwest District** submit the "Letter of Acknowledgement for Training for Licensed Deacon Ministry" signed by the NOW District Office with this application form. Contact Susan Lorenz, [SusanL@NOWLCMS.org](mailto:SusanL@NOWLCMS.org) for further information).*

- To begin the process for attaining another recognized designation in a district of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

**Name of LCMS District:** Enter district name.

**Recognized Designation Title:** Enter title name.

**High School, Post-High School, College, University Education:**

Enter text.

**What Biblical, missional courses or leadership training have you led and/or taught for others?**

Enter text.

**Please use this space and/or a separate piece of paper to 1) describe some of your ministry and missional work and activities, and 2) explain why you feel God is calling you to this training.**

Enter text

MTC encourages that leaders in the faith community/congregation are supportive of a student's training and studies. Therefore, MTC asks that the student identify two references (one should be a pastor/mentor) who support the student's learning journey. If the student's intent is to become a Licensed Deacon, enter EIIT, SMP, or other higher education institutions, these references are required. In addition, if any MTC student wishes to use MissionBook, a FREE tool for tracking and monitoring a student's progress as well as connecting the mentor and student, the Pastor/Mentor name is required. To learn more about MissionBook's usefulness, see [www.MissionTrainingCenter.com](http://www.MissionTrainingCenter.com) and click MissionBook.

**Name of Pastor/Mentor:** Enter name.

**Pastor/Mentor's Ministry Role in Faith Community:** Enter role.

**Address:** Enter address.

Enter city.

**City**

Enter state.

**State**

Enter zip.

**Zip**

**E-mail:** Enter email.

**Phone #:** Enter #.

**Checking this box indicates signature approval of Pastor/Mentor** **Date:** Enter date.

**Name of 2<sup>nd</sup> Reference:** Enter name.

**Reference's Ministry Role in Faith Community:** Enter role.

**Address:** Enter address.

Enter city.

**City**

Enter state.

**State**

Enter zip.

**Zip**

**E-mail:** Enter email.

**Phone #:** Enter #.

**Checking this box indicates signature approval of Reference** **Date:** Enter date.

**Checking this box indicates signature approval of Applicant** **Date:** Enter date.

Please save this form, then email it as an attachment to [MTC@MissionTrainingCenter.com](mailto:MTC@MissionTrainingCenter.com). Your email will serve as your signature. If you are not able to save and email the form, print and mail it to the address below. In addition, please mail a check for the **\$30.00 one-time application fee** payable to Mission Training Center to:

**Mission Training Center**

Concordia University – CALL

2811 NE Holman St.

Portland, OR 97211

If you have any questions, please contact [MTC@MissionTrainingCenter.com](mailto:MTC@MissionTrainingCenter.com) or call: 971-302-7595.

**Appendix D**

Mission Training Center  
Continuing Education Form for Re-Licensing Deacons



Equipping apprentices of Jesus  
for active ministry in the field

Name of Licensed Deacon:

\_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Give a brief description of the MTC approved continuing education opportunity.

Share the top three significant learnings gleaned from the opportunity.

Relate a brief description of how the learnings apply to local ministry.

Share a brief summary of the conversation with the supervisor related to the learning opportunity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Licensed Deacon Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**(Submit this form along with any other materials when applying to be relicensed as a Licensed Deacon in the NOW District.)**



## CONTINUING EDUCATION CRITERIA FOR LICENSED DEACONS – NORTHWEST DISTRICT LCMS

All Licensed Deacons, in order to be re-licensed, must “enroll” in some type of continuing education opportunity. Minimum criteria for fulfilling this requirement as defined by the NOW District Office and managed by Mission Training Center (MTC) is found below.

- 1) All MTC courses (8hr and 16hr) may be used for re-licensing. Upon completion, the Licensed Deacon will receive a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion to be used in the re-licensing process.
- 2) Other options for continuing education are possible.
  - a. Workshops, seminars, and conferences similar but not limited to:
    - i. Best Practices Conference.
    - ii. Wiki 5-2 Conference.
    - iii. Seminary Symposia.
    - iv. Stephen Ministry Program.
    - v. University CEU Offerings.
    - vi. Regional Pastor Conferences.
    - vii. District Gatherings.
    - viii. Some Online options.
  - b. These types of opportunities normally are more significant than a Saturday morning, one evening, or few hour event. The options listed above normally span several days. Several of these options might be combined to complete the continuing education requirement. Please contact MTC to verify that the continuing education opportunity selected fits the CE requirement. Finally, MTC with the NOW District approves all continuing education opportunities to be used for licensing.
  - c. MTC expects opportunities which satisfy the continuing education requirement to be equivalent to an 8hr MTC course. Those MTC courses require:
    - i. Attendance at a minimum of 8hrs of learning (therefore, one Regional Pastor Conference might fulfill only a partial continuing education opportunity for a year).
    - ii. A minimum of one significant book read in the area of learning.
    - iii. A project or ministry application task which takes the learning and applies it the ministry in which an LLD is immersed.
    - iv. In addition, each of the above items are assessed by the supervising pastor.
  - d. Once approved, these options require the MTC Continuing Education Form (page 3 of the annual review) to be completed which includes:
    - i. A brief description of the learning opportunity.
    - ii. Top three significant learnings gleaned from the opportunity.
    - iii. A brief description of how the learnings apply to local ministry.
    - iv. A summary of a conversation with the Licensed Deacon’s supervising pastor related to the learning opportunity.
    - v. The form signed by the Licensed Deacon and his supervising pastor.