

BOM HANDBOOK SYNOPSIS OF ORDERS' FUNCTIONS:

ORDER OF DEACONS AND ORDER OF ELDERS

- The orders were established in 1996.
- They are covenant communities that provide mutual support, care and accountability for their members, in this case for the sake of the life and mission of the church.
- Every ordained deacon becomes a member of the conference Order of Deacons upon election to full membership and every ordained elder becomes a member of the conference Order of Elders upon election to full membership.
- Acceptance of the status of full membership entails a commitment to regular participation in the life of the Order.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ORDERS (¶307)

- Provide theological and biblical reflection and study of the issues facing the church and society for regular gatherings that offer continuing spiritual and vocational development.
- Assist in plans for individual study and retreats
- Develop a bond of unity and commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference
- Build trusting and supportive relationships among members
- Hold members accountable to these purposes

ORGANIZATION OF THE ORDERS (¶308)

- The bishop shall convene and provide continuing support for each Order. This does not limit meetings to only when the bishop is available. However, the bishop might consider an annual meeting with the Orders (collectively or separately).
- The BOM is to provide financial support for the Orders' activities through its budget and other appropriate sources.
- Each quadrennium, the BOM nominates, and the Orders elect from its members, a chair. The chairs coordinate the Orders' activities and are voting members of the BOM executive committee. The chairs are members of the BOM Executive Committee. (¶634.1a)

Activity and Covenant Groups

- These groups should have as their purpose spiritual and vocational development, as well as building bonds of trust, support and accountability. Conferences should avoid impressing other agendas upon these groups. Confidentiality, trust, respect and honesty should be part of their agreed-upon rule. Experience in well-organized covenant groups should help newer clergy interact well in ongoing clergy small groups.
- Given the comparative sizes of the Order of Deacons and Order of Elders in most annual conferences, it is often easier for the smaller Order of Deacons to organize and meet with some regularity.
- Given the itineracy of elders, those groups will need to adjust themselves to changing membership.
- Beginning in 2017, the BOM, through the Orders and Fellowship of LLP and AM, is to provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders and local pastors. (¶350)