

## LAY MINISTRY

### Who is she?

Traditionally recognized by her light blue jacket with its off-white accessories and unique cross, a Deaconess is a woman who has been called to lay ministry in the Church. She has been educated and trained to fulfill the duties of her vocation. She has dedicated herself to lifelong service in the Church and has been Set Apart to the Office of Deaconess by the solemn laying-on of hands by the Bishop. She has, in faith, vowed to prayerfully execute the duties of her Office in obedience to her Bishop and “those over her in the Lord.”

**Requirements for Candidacy are specified by Canon—Apply to your Bishop.**

Rev. 8/08 (Original version by The Rev. Fr. Mark Clavier, All Saints’ Anglican Church, Mills River, NC)

## PRAYER

### Traditional Duties & Functions:

- ❖ To assist in the work of the Parish, Mission, or institution to which she may be appointed, under the direction of the Rector or Priest-In-Charge; or, if there be none such, to perform such functions as may be directly entrusted to her by the Bishop.
- ❖ To care for the sick, the afflicted, and the poor.
- ❖ To give instruction in the Christian faith.
- ❖ Under the Rector or the Priest-In-Charge, to prepare candidates for Baptism and for Confirmation.
- ❖ Under the Rector or Priest-In-Charge, to organize, superintend, and carry out the Church’s work among women and children.
- ❖ With the approval of the Bishop and the incumbent, to read Morning and Evening Prayer (except such portions as are reserved for the Priest) and the Litany in Church or Chapel in the absence of the Minister; and when licensed by the Bishop, to give instruction or deliver addresses at such services.
- ❖ To organize and carry on social work; and in colleges and schools to have a responsible part in the education of women and children, and to promote the welfare of women students.

# A DEACONESS



# IN OUR CHURCH?

## AN ORDER FOR WOMEN

## SERVICE

## BIBLICAL & HISTORIC

## EDUCATOR

### A Brief History

The recognized service of women in the Church dates from apostolic days. The term *diakonos*—literally “servant”—used both for Deacons and, in the early days, for Deaconesses, is applied by St. Paul, *Romans* 16:1 to “Phoebe, a *diakonos* in the church which is in Cenchraea.” Through the letters of St. Chrysostom, we know that forty Deaconesses were attached to the principal church of Constantinople about the year 400 A.D. There are other records of Deaconesses at Antioch and throughout the East, and evidences that the Office was well known in the Church by the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the Middle Ages, the Office fell into disuse.

Because of the social reforms that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a great need became apparent for such a ministry of women. The Bishop of London revived the Order in the Church of England in 1861 and in America by a canon of 1889 (PECUSA). In 1920, the Lambeth Conference urged its restoration throughout the Anglican Communion. During this period, Deaconesses led the way in missionary work, especially in America.

## SOCIAL WORKER

Unfortunately, the Order in America was dissolved into the Diaconate when, in 1976, the Episcopal Church approved the ordination of women to Holy Orders. In other jurisdictions of the Anglican Communion, the Order of Deaconess continues to serve alongside the clergy, even though some of those jurisdictions have also allowed the ordination of women.

When several thousand traditional Anglicans met together at the landmark Congress of St. Louis in 1977 to object to the abandonment of apostolic order in the Episcopal Church, the issue of Deaconesses was addressed. At that meeting, a fundamental confessional charter, known as The Affirmation of St. Louis, which binds Continuing (Traditional) Anglicans worldwide, was adopted. Recognizing the continuing need for a specialized ministry of women, it declares as one of the “essential principles of evangelical Truth and apostolic Order: The ancient office and ministry of Deaconesses as a lay vocation for women, affirming the need for proper encouragement of that office.” Since that time, a number of women have been admitted to the Office in traditional Anglican jurisdictions.

APA Canon 22 officially recognizes the Order of Deaconess, along with requirements for candidacy and traditional duties.

## MISSIONARY

### Are Deaconesses Ordained?

**Yes**, in a literal sense. We are all “ordained” at our Confirmation to the “priesthood of all believers.” Persons admitted to an Order are “ordained” or “ordered” to that particular Office. An Order is an ecclesiastically recognized Office, institution, or community usually requiring its members to take solemn vows upon admission and which has adopted a Rule of Life for its members to follow.

**& No**, in a technical sense. Deaconesses, being female, are not admitted to Holy Orders, that is to the Office of Bishop, Priest, or Deacon. They can have no priestly function in the Church as is inherent to those Orders by the example prescribed in Holy Scripture.

To prevent confusion in this area, the Church of England entitled the rite used at the admission of women to the Order of Deaconesses “The Form and Manner of Making Deaconesses.” In the American church, the rite was entitled “The Form for Setting Apart of Deaconesses.”

## CATECHIST

## COUNSELOR

## ADMINISTRATOR