

# Handbook

for

## The Order of Deaconesses



in the

Reformed Episcopal Church

2020

# Handbook for the Order of Deaconesses



in the  
Reformed Episcopal Church  
Anglican Church in North America

– A.D. 2020 –



The original contents of this handbook were approved by the General Committee, the Committee on Constitution and Canons, the Committee for Doctrine and Worship, the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and the House of Bishops of the Anglican Province of America meeting in executive session April 6-9, 2005, in Summerville, South Carolina.

The information contained herein is intended for use in conjunction with *Canons 22, Of Deaconesses*,\* as authorized by the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

\*[See appendix C]

This 2020 edition includes revisions made to Canon 22, *Of Deaconesses*, at the 55th General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church meeting in Dallas, Texas in 2017. In addition, practical guidelines for Deaconesses in parochial ministry have been updated; the revised *Form for the Setting Apart of a Deaconess* from the REC *Book of Occasional Services* replaces the older form; and suggested hymns for Deaconesses have been included.

(The Reformed Episcopal Church and the Anglican Province of America decided in 2019, that their Deaconesses in each jurisdiction would be better served to have separate handbooks to meet the needs of each jurisdiction more fully.)

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Order of Deaconesses

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– 2020 –



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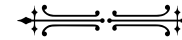
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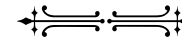
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For those who have been Set Apart and those who will be, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to The Rt. Rev. Royal U. Grote, Jr., Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of Mid-America of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and to Dss. Tina Jenkins of the Anglican Province of America for their prayerful and gracious support, guidance, and contributions toward the compilation and approval of this handbook.

A.M.J.  
2005



## PREFACE

Since the original version of this Handbook was published in 2005, many things in the Church have changed. The major change has been that The Reformed Episcopal Church (REC) became a founding member of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) which officially came into being in 2009; while The Anglican Province in America (APA) remained its own jurisdiction within the Continuing Anglican Church. Although the REC and APA maintain cordial relations with one another, the Bishops of each jurisdiction have decided that our respective Deaconesses would be better served to have separate Handbooks. However, the original foreword has been left in place, since it contains history pertinent to Deaconesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Other changes reflected in this 2020 edition relate to changes in the REC Constitution and Canons approved at the General Council in 2017, especially in regard to Canon 22, *Of Deaconesses*. The list of functions that *may* be assigned to a Deaconess, as well as other practical matters applying to Deaconesses, have also been revised for clarity and consistency and to reflect actual practice which has developed within the Church over the years since the first Handbook was published.

I must reiterate our sincere appreciation for the counsel and support of our late Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Royal U. Grote, Jr., as well as his successor, The Most Rev. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D., in recognizing the vital ministry of those women who have been Set Apart to the Order of Deaconesses in the Church. It is the fervent desire of Bishop Sutton that each parish within the REC will one day employ the ministry of a Deaconess.

In His Service,  
Dss. Annette M. Johnson, M.A.R.  
Trinitytide 2020

## FOREWORD

The Order of Deaconesses is an ancient and Apostolic vocation for lay women in Christ's Church. It is a Scripturally based, theologically appropriate venue for women who feel called to ministerial service. (*Romans 16:1; also cited, I Timothy 3:11*) It is not our purpose here to recount the history of Deaconesses through the ages. Suffice it to say that Deaconesses have been set apart to serve the Church at various times throughout history, and continue to do so today. It may be beneficial, however, to document the revival of the Anglican branch of the Order in the Reformed Episcopal Church (REC) and the Anglican Province of America (APA), since it is to those jurisdictions this handbook is addressed.

Although the Anglican Deaconess Order began to flourish in the mid-1800's in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, it was not officially recognized and established in canon law until 1889. The Reformed Episcopal Church followed a similar pattern, albeit much later. For nearly a century and a quarter since its founding in 1873, the Reformed Episcopal Church had not seen a need to include an Order for women called to ministerial service, even though a number of women had served the church in similar capacities through the years. However, as the denomination began to expand in the 1990's, and people and congregations formerly belonging to other jurisdictions were received into the REC, it became necessary to consider this historic form of ministry for women. In 1995, an Anglican congregation in Katy, Texas, near Houston, applied to become a part of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Serving the congregation was a resident Deaconess, Annette M. Johnson, who had been Set Apart to the Order in the Anglican Church in America in 1993. When St. Matthias Church was received into the REC by The Rt. Rev. Royal U. Grote, Jr., Bishop Ordinary of what was then called the Missionary Diocese of North America (now the Diocese of Mid-America), he accepted Dss. Johnson's credentials as well. She requested a transfer and began to serve under Bishop Grote. Several years later, in 1999, following General Council at which a major revision of the Constitution and Canons was authorized to begin, Dss. Johnson was asked to submit recommendations for a Canon on Deaconesses. At the 50<sup>th</sup> General Council of the REC in 2002, Canon 22, *Of Deaconesses*, was adopted, and the Order of Deaconesses was officially established in the denomination. In January 2003, another Deaconess, Teresa Johnson of Memphis, Tennessee, was Set Apart and several more are currently in training.

The Anglican Province of America considers its heritage to be classical Anglicanism which historically has authorized an Order of Deaconesses. For that reason when the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Province of America were adopted in 1998, Article 22 “Of Deaconesses” was included as part of the original document. The first APA Deaconess, Elizabeth (Tina) Jenkins, was Set Apart at the Provincial Synod held at St. Paul’s Church, Melbourne, Florida in 1998. About this time the uniting of Traditional Anglican Churches gathered momentum. Several jurisdictions joined the APA and with them came Deaconesses who previously had been Set Apart. Currently, the APA has four Deaconesses: Dss. Eunice Brown of Deming, New Mexico, Set Apart in 1983, and now retired; Dss. Suzanne Standifer, of Valparaiso, Indiana, Set Apart in 1995; Sr. Lynda of Charlottesville, Virginia, Set Apart in 1995; and, Dss. Tina Jenkins mentioned above. In addition, there are three candidates presently in training.

Considering the climate of feminism prevailing in other branches of the Church today, one point must be made clear. Although each woman entering the Order is “ordered, or set apart” to this particular office in the Church, the Order of Deaconesses is not included among the traditional three-fold office of ministry constituting Holy Orders, i.e. Deacon, Priest (Presbyter), or Bishop. Christian orthodoxy, to which both the REC and APA adhere, holds that these offices are exclusively male. A Deaconess is an assistant to the clergy, but not a member thereof, and her duties and functions do not include those of a priestly nature. A number of Anglican theologians have described the Order as *sui generis*, unique unto itself. At first glance this description may seem only to confuse the issue. However, it does appear to be a fitting term for the place and function of the Deaconess in the Church.

This position is not intended to diminish a woman’s calling to serve the Church – quite the contrary. The Order of Deaconesses provides a unique office and opportunity for women, compatible with God’s established order and authority which the Church is obligated to reflect. It is not, after all, the question of a woman’s ability which prevents her from being admitted to Holy Orders, but that of authority – the authority granted by God to Man (male and female) in His creation. The roles of men and women are intended to be equal but complimentary, not competing, with the male being the head. Throughout Scripture we see women occupying various positions of authority from heads of state, to judges, to merchants, as well as other seats of responsibility within society at large. However, within the community of the faithful, the Biblical example shows that a woman was never granted priestly authority among the people. The

vocation of women set apart in this context was to prayer, nurture, and service. This concept is reflected throughout Scripture, and was not changed when the New Testament Church was established. By virtue of her office, properly understood and executed, the Deaconess inherently undertakes a certain level of ministerial authority both within and on behalf of the Church, especially among women and children. Nevertheless, she is always subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the men placed over her in the Lord.

Listed within this handbook are the duties and functions of a Deaconess along with requirements for training and admission to the Order. These are based upon the traditions and canon law established in other branches of Anglicanism during the past 150 years and reflect the historical role of Deaconesses through time. Therefore, they are not without precedent. The primary sources were Canon 48, *Of Deaconesses*, from the 1964 Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America with additional stipulations taken from the *Status and Functions of Deaconesses of the Church of England (1939-1941)* as practiced in 1950. Certain additions and changes to these sources were made to meet the specific needs of the REC and the APA, and to conform with their respective Constitutions and Canons. Please keep in mind that some of the specific functions granted to a Deaconess are not intended to be normative in every parish situation. They were included to extend to Deaconesses in remote missionary circumstances, or other special situations, privileges which would not normally be needed otherwise. Any privilege afforded a Deaconess rests with the permission of her Bishop and the incumbent under whom she is assigned. Also, included in the Appendices is *A Form for the Setting Apart of Deaconesses* taken from the third edition (1960) of The Book of Occasional Offices, and authorized for use in the REC and APA.

On behalf of the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church  
and the House of Bishops in the Anglican Province of America, I am

In His Service,  
Dss. Annette M. Johnson  
Eastertide, 2005

### *A Prayer for Deaconesses*

**O**BLESSED SAVIOUR, abide with us who have been set apart by thy Church to serve as Deaconesses that we may be ever mindful of the needs of others, helpful to our sisters in the Order, and assets to our companions in thy ministry. Make us ever conscious that only in Thee can we find healing for the body and rest for the soul. Teach us to build the future on the past and to be anxious about neither. Fill us with faith and trust and zeal for the work which lies before us and grant us that peace which only Thou canst give. Wilt Thou be before us to guide us, above us to protect us, behind us to guard us, and within us at all times to sanctify us. Grant that those who seek the Office of Deaconess may be worthy of their calling and sure of thy eternal love. We ask it all in thy Name and for thy sake, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Concerning  
Deaconesses



Duties & Functions  
Training & Admission

**Concerning the ORDER of DEACONESSES  
in the REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
— *including Requirements for Training & Admission* —

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**I. Ordering.** The Order of Deaconesses is an Apostolic office and ministry recognized as a lay vocation for women. A woman of devout character and proved fitness may be ordered Deaconess by any Bishop of this Church, subject to the provisions contained herein.

**II. Duty.** (a.) The duty of a Deaconess is 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.

**Functions.** (b.) The following are the chief functions which may be entrusted to a Deaconess by virtue of her Office:

- 1.) To care for the sick, the afflicted, and the poor;
- 2.) To give instruction in the Christian Faith;
- 3.) Under the Rector or the Priest-in-charge, to prepare candidates for Baptism and for Confirmation;
- 4.) To assist at the administration of Holy Baptism; and when Baptism is administered privately in the absence of the Priest or Deacon to be the ministrant by virtue of her Office;
- 5.) Under the Rector or Priest in charge, to organize, superintend, and carry out the Church's work among women and children;
- 6.) With the approval of the Bishop and the incumbent, to read Morning and Evening Prayer (omitting the *Absolution* and substituting the *Collect for the Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity* for the same), the Litany, and the Office for the Burial of the Dead in Church or Chapel in the absence of the Minister or a Lay Reader, or at women's gatherings. She may also serve as a Lector at the discretion of the incumbent.

7.) When licensed by the Bishop (*generally in missionary situations*), she may give instruction or deliver addresses during the Daily Offices, but not during Holy Communion;

8.) With approval of the Bishop, and permission of the incumbent, she may distribute the reserved Sacrament to the sick and shut-ins, particularly to women and children, provided she has been properly instructed in so doing, but not in Church or Chapel. She also may accompany the Priest or Deacon on such visitations;

9.) To be a witness in counseling, especially when the person being counseled is a woman or child. Her participation in counseling shall be at the discretion of the Minister in charge.

*(By virtue of her Office, a Deaconess is bound by the same moral and legal obligations as a member of the clergy.)*

10.) 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.

**III. Candidacy.**

*Testimonials &  
Prior Education.*

(a.) A woman desiring reception as Candidate for the Office of Deaconess shall submit to the Bishop of the Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, 1.) a letter of recommendation from her Rector to include evidence of her Baptism and Confirmation, and a declaration verifying that she is a communicant of the Church in good standing; 2.) letters of recommendation from two women communicants of the Church showing that she possesses such characteristics as, in the judgment of the persons testifying, fit her for the duties of that Office; and, 3.) evidence that she is a graduate of a four-year institution of higher learning.

(b.) If the Candidate be not a graduate as aforesaid, and she shall have attained the age of thirty-five years, she must satisfy the Board of Examining Chaplains that she possesses the intellectual ability to enter with advantage upon a course of study preparatory to being Set Apart. To this end, the Board of Examining Chaplains in each



Diocese and Missionary Diocese or District shall develop and publish, with the consent of the Bishop and the Standing Committee or Council of Advice, a procedure of study and examination for those Candidates that do not meet the requirements of Clause (a.) of this Section. Such procedure shall be applied uniformly to all Candidates not meeting the requirements of Clause (a.) of this Section.

*Ember Season Reports.*

(c.) During the period of Candidacy, she shall be under the supervision of the Bishop, and shall report to him quarterly at the Ember Seasons. (After being Set Apart, a Deaconess is required to report annually to her Bishop.)

*Marital Status.*

(d.) It should be understood that a Deaconess dedicates herself to a life-long service, but that no vow or implied promise of celibacy should be required as necessary for admission to the Order. However, if a woman seeking candidacy is already married, or should the question of marriage arise after her ordering, she must be able to convince the Bishop that she will be able to fulfill her vocation to married life as well as that of a Deaconess. The Bishop shall seek to counsel the Candidate's husband and children (if there be such), or, in the case of one already Set Apart, her intended spouse as to the demands and expectations of her Office and to confirm their support of her ministry.

(e.) For due cause the Bishop may terminate any Candidacy.

**IV. Examination required.**

(a.) Before admission to the Office of Deaconess a Candidate shall be required to pass examinations in the following subjects:

- 1.) **Holy Scripture:** The Bible in English; introduction to and contents of the various books; special knowledge of at least one Gospel and one Epistle.
- 2.) **Church History:** A general outline, including the History of the Church in the United States, and special knowledge of the first five centuries, and to include the history of Deaconesses both ancient and modern.

- 3.) **Christian Missions:** History; present extent and methods; at least one missionary biography.
- 4.) **Doctrine:** Contents and teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, including preparation for the Sacraments.
- 5.) **Christian Ethics and Moral Theology:** Particular emphasis on matters pertaining to the counseling of women and children.
- 6.) **Ministration:** The Office and work of a Deaconess; Parish Work and Organization.

Candidates should be qualified in at least one of the following areas:

- 7.) **Religious Education:** Psychology; Educational methods; Church School Management.
- 8.) **Counseling or Social Service:** Principles involved in Christian Counseling, especially with women and children, and in the adjustment of individuals to each other and to the community; the methods of social case work; familiarity with the recognized standards of the work of social organizations including institutions.

In addition:

*Medical training.*

- 9.) First Aid, CPR, Basic Home Care: It is recommended for all Candidates to be certified in an American Red Cross course in First Aid, CPR, and Basic Home Care Skills.
- 10.) EMT Training: Candidates seeking to be assigned to the Missionary field shall be certified as Emergency Medical Technicians. Any Deaconess accepting a Missionary assignment shall be so qualified before embarking for her destination.

(b.) This examination shall be conducted by examiners appointed by the Bishop. The results of the examination shall be certified to the Bishop and to the Standing Committee of the Diocese or Council of Advice of the Missionary Diocese or District.

*Internship required.* (c.) The Candidate shall also be required to serve a minimum of nine months internship, supervised by a Presbyter.

**V. To be at least twenty-three years old, & eighteen months a Candidate.** The Bishop shall not Set Apart as Deaconess a woman under the age of twenty-three years, but that in ordinary circumstances it is advisable that before a woman is admitted to the Order she shall have attained the age of thirty years. Nor shall a woman be Set Apart within eighteen months of her reception as a Candidate, unless the Bishop, with the advice and consent of a majority of the members of the Standing Committee or Council of Advice, agree to shorten the time of her Candidacy; but the time shall not be shortened to less than one year.

**VI. Physical & Psychological examination.** Before admission as a Deaconess the Bishop may require the Candidate to submit to a thorough examination by a physician approved by the Bishop. This examination shall cover her mental and emotional stability as well as her physical condition. Any reports shall be kept on file by the Bishop and shall be submitted to the Standing Committee or Council of Advice with the application to be recommended for admission to the Office of Deaconess.

**VII. Standing Committee recommendation necessary.** When the foregoing specified requirements have been met, the Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Standing Committee of the Diocese, or Council of Advice of the Missionary Diocese or District, may admit the Candidate to the Office of Deaconess. The fact of the Setting Apart of a Deaconess shall be transmitted by the Bishop to the Secretary of the General Council, together with the following data:

- 1.) Her full name.
- 2.) Place and date of birth.
- 3.) Date and place of such Setting Apart.
- 4.) Name of the officiating Bishop.

Any change in the status of a Deaconess shall be likewise notified to the Secretary by the Bishop.

**VIII. Admitted by Religious Service.** No woman shall be recognized as a Deaconess until she has been admitted to that Office by a service prescribed by the

General Council; or, in the absence of such prescription, by the Bishop of the Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District. [See Appendix D]

**IX. Title.** A woman having been thus Set Apart to the Order is properly addressed as “Deaconess”. The appropriate title abbreviation being “Dss.”

**X. Habit.** A Deaconess shall wear a distinctive dress (*habit*) adopted for the Order in witness of her Office and vocation when engaged in the duties of her Office and on official occasions. By tradition, the marks of a Deaconess’ Office are her distinctive collar and silver cross, and a navy blue dress. A common cross and collar adopted for the Order shall be blessed and presented to her by the Bishop upon the occasion of her Setting Apart. Her vesture for formal occasions in the Church consists of a blue cassock, to which she may attach an academic hood, and may include a sash bearing the seal of the Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, in which she is canonically resident, and the seminary she attended. Information concerning the habit may be obtained from the Head Deaconess of the Order in the REC and should be sent to the Candidate once her examination process has begun, or at least six weeks prior to her being Set Apart.

**XI. License & Authority.** (a.) Upon Setting Apart a woman as Deaconess, the Bishop shall issue to her a “Letter of Orders” officially signifying that she has been duly ordered to the Office of Deaconess in Christ’s Church. The certificate shall include the woman’s name, the date and place of her Setting Apart, and signed by the Bishop.

(b.) A Deaconess shall not accept work in a Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, without the express authority in writing of the Bishop of that Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District; nor shall she undertake work in a Parish without the like authority from the Rector of the Parish. No Candidate shall be admitted as Deaconess until she shall have been appointed to serve in some position under the jurisdiction of the Church.

(c.) The Bishop shall issue to any Deaconess canonically attached to his Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District,

a form of identification to be carried on her person stating that she is authorized to function on behalf of the Church and the Diocese in all ways pertaining to her Office.

(d.) A parochial Deaconess should be considered an official member of the staff.

(e.) A distinctive seat in the Church in Choir, or elsewhere in the Chancel, may be assigned to the Deaconess by virtue of her Office.

**XIII. *Diocesan relation.***

When not connected with a Parish, the Deaconess shall be under the direct oversight of the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, to which she is canonically attached. Each Deaconess shall report annually to the Bishop of her Diocese in the form prescribed by the Bishop. A Deaconess may be transferred from one Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, to another by Letters Testimonial (Dimissory). A Deaconess may at any time resign her Office to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese, or Missionary Diocese or District, to which she is attached, but she may not be suspended or removed from office except by the Bishop for cause. A Deaconess thus suspended or removed may demand a trial by a special Court, to be composed of two Presbyters and four Lay communicants, one man and three women, of whom two shall preferably be Deaconesses. The members of the Court shall be chosen by the Standing Committee or Council of Advice. The procedure of the Court shall be according to the rules governing the trial of a Clergyman as provided by Canon.

**XIV. *Stipend.***

A Deaconess, just as a Deacon, serves at the discretion of her Bishop and is usually non-stipendiary. Should a stipend be deemed appropriate, it shall be determined by the Diocese, Missionary Diocese or District, Parish, or institution to which she has been assigned and presented in a written contractual agreement.

**XV. *Pension.***

Deaconesses are eligible to participate in the pension plan provided by the Church and administered by the Board of Pensions and Relief. Each Diocese, Parish, or other agency of the Church employing the regular services of a Deaconess may choose to provide for a pension upon her retirement, at the expense of such employer.

# APPENDICES



- A. An Explanation of the Setting Apart or  
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## APPENDIX A

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE SETTING APART OR “MAKING (*ordering*) OF A DEACONESS”

offered by Dr. Mary P. Truesdell, a Deaconess in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America:

The outward and visible sign in the Sacraments of Holy Confirmation and Holy Orders is the same. In both Sacraments an inward and spiritual gift of grace is conferred, and a certain character created, for each Sacrament, if validly performed, is accomplished for life and not repeated. But the *specific* quality of grace received, varies according to the *specific* intention of each Sacrament. In Holy Confirmation the sevenfold gifts of grace are for the steadfast, mature living of the Christian life. In Holy Orders there is a definite intention, with a specific commission given to execute a specific office of ministry, and the gift of grace that is conveyed is for the fulfillment thereof. If the intention is to ordain a deacon, the commission is given, "Take thou authority to exercise the Office of Deacon . . ." and the gift of grace is for living the vocation and exercising the office of deacon – no more, no less. The character conferred is life-long, can not be erased (except by special ecclesiastical means for cause) though it may be and usually is added to. A priest is both deacon and priest. A bishop holds the three-fold character of deacon, priest and bishop. In the case of a deaconess, the intention is to create a deaconess after the primitive pattern; the commission is given, "Take thou authority to exercise the Office of Deaconess. . . ." The gift of grace is for the living of the vocation and exercising the office of deaconess – no more, no less. The character conferred is life-long, but differs from that of a deacon, in that it *cannot be added to*.

*Quoted from an address entitled,  
“Does the Church Want Deaconesses?”,  
PECUSA General Convention, 1949.*

## APPENDIX B

### **An Example From a Diocesan Customary:**

The Diocese of Mid-America Customary (2013)

#### SECTION IV: **Guidelines on the Diaconate**

Deacons and Deaconesses are engaged in a special ministry of servanthood directly under the Bishop. As such, the life and ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses have much less to do with liturgical functions and Sunday morning activities. It is an active ministry in the world, seeking to serve all people, “particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.”

The following guidelines are offered by the Bishop to assist in the discernment of vocations to diaconal ministry in this Diocese. All persons seeking postulancy should familiarize themselves with these guidelines prior to applying to enter into the ordination or, in the case of Deaconesses, the setting apart process. They must thoroughly discuss them in advance with the Presbyter who is to sponsor their application.

The academic course of study in preparation for diaconal ministry will be prescribed by the Bishop either through an in-house course of study for perpetual Deacons and Deaconesses or a degree program for transitional Deacons. Details are found in the GC Canons or in the *Handbook for the Order of Deaconesses*.

#### **Guidelines for Ordained Deacons & Lay (Set-Apart) Deaconesses**

**Deacons or Deaconesses are usually non-stipendiary.** They do not usually receive a stipend and may not do so without the express permission of the Bishop. Wages, salary, or housing allowances are not to be expected. In certain circumstances, such as a Deacon being called as "Deacon-in-Charge" pending ordination to the Presbyterate, or in the case of a Deacon or a Deaconess being employed for full time, or for substantially full time vocational ministries which are deemed to qualify for exception to this general rule, a salary may be appropriate. Deacons and Deaconesses are, however, to be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses. The reimbursable expenses related to the performance of their duties should be described in the individual contracts negotiated with the Rector or institution to which they are assigned.

**Clerical Collars/Appropriate Attire.** Unless they are engaged in their ministry or in church related activities, *bi-Vocational* Deacons & Deaconesses wear ordinary street clothes when engaged in their *secular* vocation. Exceptions must be approved by the Rector/Vicar or the Bishop. This rule does not apply to transitional Deacons & Deaconesses engaged in full time ministry. In the case of Deaconesses, clerical collars are never worn; proper attire shall be that which has been approved by the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

**Deacons** may serve in the liturgical services of the Church under the direction of the Presbyter to whom they are assigned. Deacons do not officiate at public services of Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (so called Deacon's Masses) without being authorized to do so by the Bishop which will only be granted in special circumstances. Deaconesses perform such liturgical functions as prescribed by Canon Law and shall be vested in the blue cassock of their order.

**Deacons and Deaconesses are assigned** and re-assigned at the will of the Bishop. Accordingly, no Deacon may be "called" by a Rector, Vicar or parish to serve as a curate or interim clergy without the prior approval of the Bishop.

**Deacons and Deaconesses may have seat and voice** at all meetings of the Vestry if the parish by-laws allow, and they shall make a report to the Annual Parish Meeting regarding their ministry. They may not vote at any Vestry or parish meeting.

**Deacons and Deaconesses should have a written contract** in force for one year and reviewed each year. This contract should be renegotiated with the Bishop and the parish or institution to which the Deacon or Deaconess is assigned. This contract should specify the duties, hours, and expenses eligible for reimbursement as well as covering other areas that may be unique to their specific ministry. Those supervising the work of Deacons or Deaconesses shall always be aware that such ministry is voluntary. Therefore, the hours expected must not be more than 10-20 hours per week and must always leave room for occupation and family responsibilities.

**The Deacon may preach** at the discretion of the Rector or Vicar of the parish to which the Deacon is assigned. The content of such sermons should be cleared with the Rector or Vicar before being delivered.

**Deacons and Deaconesses are entitled to seat and voice**, but not vote in the Annual Synod of the Diocese. However, because it is a lay office, **Deaconesses** may be elected by the parish to serve as a lay delegate or deputy to Synod or General Council. In this capacity, they are permitted to vote at the Annual Synod of the Diocese.

**Deacons and Deaconesses are expected to attend periodic conferences** as required by the Bishop and should engage themselves in regular study as a way of improving and reflecting upon their individual ministries.

## APPENDIX C

*From the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church  
as adopted at the 55<sup>th</sup> General Council, 2017:*

### **CANON 22 Of Deaconesses**

**Section 1** The Order of Deaconesses is an ancient and Apostolic lay ministry for women in Christ's Church. A woman of devout character and proved fitness may be Set Apart as Deaconess by any Bishop of this Church, subject to the provisions contained in this Canon.

**Section 2** The duty of a Deaconess is to assist in the work of the Parish, Mission, or institution to which she has been duly appointed, under the direction of the Rector or Priest in charge; or to perform such functions as may be directly entrusted to her by the Bishop who has jurisdiction in the Diocese or Missionary Diocese in which she serves. In no case shall duties of a Deaconess include the performance of any liturgical function that is reserved to men in Holy Orders.

**Section 3 (a)** A woman who is a communicant member of this church and who has attained the age of twenty-three, who desires reception as Candidate for the Office of Deaconess shall submit to the Bishop of the Diocese or Missionary Diocese the following:

- (1) A letter of recommendation from the Rector or Minister in Charge of the parish she attends, to include a declaration that she is a communicant of the Church in good standing
- (2) Letters of recommendation from two women communicants of the Church
- (3) Evidence that she is a graduate of a four-year institution of higher learning. Any Candidate who does not meet this requirement shall have attained the age of thirty-five years, and must provide evidence to the Board of Examining Chaplains that she possesses the intellectual ability to enter with advantage upon a course of study preparatory to being Set Apart.

**(b)** During the period of Candidacy, she shall be under the supervision of the Bishop, and shall report to him quarterly at the Ember Seasons.

**(c)** The Candidate shall also be required to serve a minimum of nine months in an internship supervised by a Presbyter, under the direction of the Bishop.

**(d)** Although a Deaconess dedicates herself to a life-long service, no vow or implied promise of celibacy should be required as necessary for admission to the

Order. However, if a woman seeking candidacy is already married, or should the question of marriage arise after her ordering, she must be able to convince the Bishop that she will be able to fulfill her vocation to married life as well as that of a Deaconess. The Bishop shall seek to counsel the Candidate's husband and children (if there be such), or, in the case of one already Set Apart her intended spouse as to the demands and expectations of her office and to affirm their support of her ministry.

(e) For due cause, the Bishop may terminate any Candidacy. In such cases, the Bishop will communicate his decision and his reasons for termination to the Candidate, to her Rector, and to the Presbyter supervising her Candidacy, if he is not her Rector.

**Section 4** No woman shall be Set Apart as Deaconess within eighteen months of her reception as a Candidate, unless the Bishop, with the advice and consent of a majority of the members of the Standing Committee or Council of Advice, shall shorten the time of her candidacy; and in no case shall the time be shortened to less than twelve months.

**Section 5 (a)** Before admission to the Office of Deaconess a Candidate shall be required to pass examinations in the following subjects:

- (1) **Holy Scripture:** The Bible in English; introduction to and contents of the various books; special knowledge of at least one Gospel and one Epistle.
- (2) **Church History:** A general outline, including the History of the Church in the United States, and special knowledge of the first five centuries, and to include the history of Deaconesses both ancient and modern.
- (3) **Christian Missions:** History; present extent and methods; at least one missionary biography.
- (4) **Doctrine:** Contents and teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, including preparation for the Sacraments.
- (5) **Christian Ethics and Moral Theology:** Particular emphasis on matters pertaining to the counseling of women and children.
- (6) **Ministration:** The Office and work of a Deaconess; Parish Work and Organization.

(b) This examination shall be conducted by examiners appointed by the Bishop. The results of the examination shall be certified to the Bishop, and to the Standing Committee of the Diocese or Council of Advice of the Missionary Diocese.

**Section 6** When all Candidacy requirements have been fulfilled, the Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Standing Committee of the Diocese, or Council of Advice of the Missionary Diocese, may admit the Candidate to the Office of Deaconess, using the Form of the Setting Apart of a Deaconess in the Book of Occasional Services of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

**Section 7** A woman having thus been Set Apart to the Order is properly addressed as "Deaconess," the appropriate abbreviation being "Dss."

**Section 8** When engaged in the duties of her office and on official occasions, a Deaconess shall wear a distinctive dress (habit) adopted for the Order in witness of her office and vocation. A common cross adopted for the Order shall be blessed and presented to her by the Bishop upon the occasion of her Setting Apart.

**Section 9** No Deaconess shall accept work in a Diocese without the express authority, in writing, of the Bishop of that Diocese; nor shall she undertake work in a Parish without similar authority from the Rector of the Parish. A parochial Deaconess should be considered an official member of the staff.

**Section 10** When not connected with a Parish, the Deaconess shall be under the direct oversight of the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese or Missionary Diocese to which she is canonically attached. Each Deaconess shall report annually to the Bishop of her Diocese in the form prescribed by the Bishop. A Deaconess may be transferred from one Diocese or Missionary Diocese to another by Letters Testimonial (Dimissory).

**Section 11** A Deaconess may at any time resign her office to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which she is at the time Canonically resident, but she may not be suspended or removed from office except by the Bishop for cause, with the consent of the Standing Committee, and after a hearing before the Bishop and Standing Committee.

APPENDIX D

# The Form for the Setting Apart of a Deaconess

as taken from

## THE BOOK OF OCCASIONAL SERVICES

Services for Certain Occasions  
not provided in the  
Book of Common Prayer

*Compiled by the*  
Standing Liturgical Commission  
of the Reformed Episcopal Church

Version 3.0  
Revised 2020

# The Form for the Setting Apart of a Deaconess

¶ *All things being in readiness, a Priest shall present to the Bishop, sitting in his chair near the Holy Table, she who is to be Set Apart as Deaconess, saying,*

REVEREND Father in God, I present unto you this woman, to be Set Apart to the Office and work of Deaconess.

¶ *Then shall the Bishop say,*

DECLARE, we pray you, unto those who are here gathered what the office and work of a Deaconess is.

¶ *Then shall the Priest, addressing the People, say,*

DEARLY beloved, that it is agreeable to the mind of Christ that women should do Him service by offices of loving-kindness, we gather from Saint Paul, who saith to the Philippians, Help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, and who also commendeth unto the Romans one Phoebe, a Deaconess of the Church which was at Cenchrea.

Touching the duty of women Set Apart to this office and ministry, the Canons of the Church affirm that it is to assist the Ministry in the care of the poor and sick, in the religious training of the young and others, and in the work of moral reformation. That she may be duly appointed to such service, *has* this woman comes hither.

¶ *Then shall the Bishop say,*

BELoved, we have good confidence that she who is now presented to be Set Apart to the Office of Deaconess is competent thereto, for it hath been so certified unto us, as the Canons require, by those whose word we trust. Nevertheless, if there be any who can allege aught on account of which it is inexpedient that this person be so Set Apart, let protest be now made openly and before all men.

¶ *If no good reason be alleged by any why she should not be Set Apart, the following, the twelfth chapter of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, shall be read for the Lesson.*

ROMANS 12.

IBESECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or



## Setting Apart of a Deaconess



he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

¶ *Then shall be said or sung the Magnificat, or Jubilate Deo (Psalm 100).*

*Magnificat.* St. Luke 1:46-55.

**M**Y soul doth magnify the Lord, \* and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded \* the lowliness of his handmaiden.

For behold, from henceforth \* all generations shall call be blessed.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me; \* and holy is his Name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him \* throughout all generations.

He hath showed strength with his arm; \* he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, \* and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; \* and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel; \* as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever.

**G**LORY be to the Father, and to the Son, \* and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, \* world without end. Amen.

*Jubilate Deo.* Psalm 100.

**O**BE joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: \* serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; \* we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

## Setting Apart of a Deaconess



O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; \* be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.

For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting; \* and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

**G**LORY be to the Father, and to the Son, \* and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, \* world without end. Amen.

¶ *Then, all kneeling, the Bishop shall say,*

*Bishop.* Unto thee lift we up our eyes;

*Response.* O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

*Bishop.* As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters;

*Response.* And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;

*Bishop.* Even so our eyes wait upon thee, O Lord;

*Response.* Until then have mercy upon us.

*Bishop.* O Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Response.* Have mercy upon us.

*Bishop.* O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us;

*Response.* As our trust is in thee.

¶ *The Bishop shall then say,*

**O**ETERNAL God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast in all times accepted and blessed the services of holy women: Look mercifully, we beseech thee, upon these thy servants, about to be Set Apart to the office and work of Deaconess. Protect them in the way wherein they go, and grant that in singleness of purpose and with a willing mind they may worthily accomplish the task committed to them, to thy glory and to the praise of thy Christ, to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, be glory and worship for ever and ever. Amen.

¶ *Then shall the Bishop ask of her the following questions, to which the Candidate shall give answer.*

**D**EARLY beloved in the Lord, who are minded to take upon you this service in the Church of God, have you duly considered how weighty an undertaking this is, and are you prepared with a willing mind to take upon you this office?

*Answer.* I have so considered it, and will do so, by the help of God.

*Bishop.* Will you endeavour faithfully to fulfill the duties of the same?

*Answer.* I will.

## Setting Apart of a Deaconess



*Bishop.* Will you diligently ask of God the grace to enable you to persevere in this endeavour?

*Answer.* I will.

*Bishop.* Will you be diligent in prayer and in reading of the Holy Scripture, and in such studies as help to the knowledge and teaching of the same?

*Answer.* I will so do, by the help of the Lord.

*Bishop.* Will you be obedient to those who are over you in the Lord, cheerfully and faithfully performing the service that shall be appointed to you as Deaconess in singleness of heart?

*Answer.* I will endeavour so to do, the Lord being my helper.

*¶ Then shall the Candidate kneel, and the Bishop shall say,*

**A**Lmighty God, who hath called you to serve him in this holy life, give you power to fulfill this your service acceptably; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*¶ Then shall the Bishop lay his hand upon the head of the person to be made Deaconess, saying,*

**G**OD the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and sanctify you; and so endow you with all faith, wisdom, and humility, that you may serve before him to the glory of his great Name, and to the benefit of his Church and people; and make you faithful unto death, and give you the crown of everlasting life. Amen.

**N**I admit thee to the Office of Deaconess, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

*¶ Here the attending Deaconess, or the presenting Priest, shall present the new Deaconess with the marks of the Order. The Collar and Cross having already been blessed by the Bishop, the following words shall be said by the Bishop immediately after the presentation,*

**R**ECEIVE and wear this Collar and Cross, as a sign of your Office and a symbol of Christ whom you serve, and be a faithful servant and Deaconess in the Household of God.

*Bishop.* The Lord be with you.

*Answer.* And with thy spirit.

*Bishop.* Let us pray.

## Setting Apart of a Deaconess



**O**UR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, They will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*¶ Then, the People kneeling, the Bishop shall say the prayer following.*

**E**NDUE, O Lord, we beseech thee, *these thy servants*, with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Preserve *them* alike from faithless fears and unreasonable desires, that with a steadfast heart and settled purpose *they* may run the way of thy commandments; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*¶ Then shall be said:*

*Bishop.* O magnify the Lord with me;

*Answer.* And let us exalt his Name together.

*Bishop.* O give thanks unto the God of Heaven;

*Answer.* For his mercy endureth for ever.

*Bishop.* O give thanks unto the Lord of Lords;

*Answer.* For his mercy endureth for ever.

*Bishop.* The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*¶ It is desirable that the Service of Holy Communion should follow, the newly Set Apart Deaconess communicating.*

– AT THE COMMUNION –

*The Collect.*

**O**GOD, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding: Pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



*The Epistle.* Romans 15:1-6.

WE then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*The Gospel.* St. Luke 12:35.

LET your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

## HYMNS for DEACONESSES

*(Borrowed from the Lutheran "Deaconess Hymns of Old")*

### CONSECRATION HYMN FOR DEACONESSES

By Sister Helen Gulstad

Tune: "Love Divine, All Love Excelling"

1. Lord, I know that thou hast called me,  
And I would Thy servant be;  
Through this ministry of mercy,  
I would lead lost souls to Thee.  
As I kneel before Thine altar  
To be set apart for Thee,  
Help me, Lord to be surrendered  
To Thy gracious will for me.
2. For the love of Christ constrains me,  
Sister of the weak to be,  
All around me souls are dying;  
Help me, Lord, their plight to see.  
As I wear this cross of silver,  
May I ever faithful be.  
As a deaconess, O keep me  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
3. As I travel down life's highway,  
Help me, Lord, my cross to bear.  
May my footsteps never wander  
From my loving Father's care.  
May I live each day for others,  
Someone's joys and sorrows share;  
As I kneel before Thine altar,  
Hear my consecration prayer.
4. When my servant days are ended,  
And my cross I must lay down;  
When I go to meet my Savior,  
Will mine be a star-gemmed crown?  
May the service I shall render,  
Ever, Lord, unselfish be;  
May my light shine forth so others  
See the love of Christ in me. *Amen.*

### OUR DEACONESES

By Joseph A. Seiss, D.D., L.L.D.  
Tune: "Yours Forever, God of Love"

1. Jesus, Master, Son of God,  
Rich in gifts for human good,  
Given Thyself for us, for all,  
Thou dost many servants call.
2. By Thy mercy and Thy love,  
Through Thy Spirit from above,  
Plenteous grace to each is given—  
Grace to serve the Lord of Heaven.
3. Thanks for these devoted bands,  
Who, with earnest hearts and hands,  
Wait and work the sick to cheer,  
Spreading mercies far and near.
4. Thou hast called them, they have come,  
Left behind their friends and home,  
Thy pure handmaids here to be,  
Moved and drawn by love to Thee.
5. While the sacred cross they bear,  
Grant them Thy rewards to share;  
Be their Help where'er they go,  
Bearing balm for human woe.
6. Guide and bless them on their way,  
Let Thy Spirit be their stay;  
May their numbers, Lord, increase,  
Bring them to Thy heavenly peace. *Amen.*

### KAISERSWERTH DEACONESS HYMN

Tune: "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

1. Blessed Fount of heavenly gladness,  
Jesus, whose are all our powers;  
Thee in sickness, want and sadness,  
To behold and serve is ours.
2. If we bear the sick man's burden,  
Lord, in thankful love to Thee,  
Thou wilt say to us in guerdon;  
Come, ye blessed, come to Me.
3. Where the child with love is tended;  
Where the tears of want are dried;  
Where the prisoner is befriended,  
Thou art Shield, Reward and Guide.
4. Lord, increase in us the fire  
Of Thy Love that longs to bless;  
Be Thy service our desire  
Till it grows pure happiness. *Amen.*

## Hymns for Deaconesses

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### Deaconess Hymn of Baltimore Motherhouse

By Miss W.L. Copenhaver

Tune: "*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*"

1. O Thou from whom the worlds have sprung  
At word of Thy all-wise command,  
Who holdest all the gifts of love  
Within the hollow of Thy hand.
2. Endow me in the name of Christ  
For service of my brother's need!  
Touch Thou my eyes that I may see;  
Touch Thou my feet that I may speed!
3. Not might to rule, but strength I ask,  
To minister to Want and Pain;  
To follow where Thy chastening hand  
Doth conquer loss and make it gain.
4. Give me the love that gives itself,  
Nor recompense, nor honor, asks;  
That sees Thee in the least of Thine,  
And serves Thee in the humblest tasks.
5. Wilt Thou, Lord Christ, with me still serve,  
Or else my toil unblest will be:  
A slave is he who works alone;  
The friend of God, who works with Thee. *Amen.*

*Prayers for the Order of Deaconesses*

**O** GRACIOUS FATHER, we here dedicate both our souls and our bodies to thee and thy service, in a sober, righteous, and godly life: in which resolution, do thou, O merciful God, confirm and strengthen us; that, as we grow in age, we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

**O** LORD of souls, who hast chosen and called us to service in thy Church; all our trust is in thee, for in thee are the springs of our life. Abundantly give us of thy blessed Spirit, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, and use us as it shall please thee for the glory of thy Name. Empty us of self and fill us with the meekness of wisdom. Increase our faith, mellow our judgment, stir our zeal, deepen our affections. Do thou choose for us the work we do and the place in which we do it, the success we win and the harvest we reap. Preserve us from jealousy and impatience, from self-will and depression. Make us faithful unto death, and give us at last the crown of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**O** LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy handmaidens who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



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