



Report of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA

Board of Directors

- Pr. Herbert E. Anderson, Berkeley, Calif. (2016) ³
- Sr. Mary K. Arie, Hordeville, Neb. (2014) ⁵
- Pr. Diane K. Greve, Minneapolis, Minn. (2014) ¹
- Sr. Anne C. Hall, Sidney, Neb. (2016) ⁶
- Pr. Violet I. Meek, Columbus, Ohio (2016) ⁶
- Sr. Valerie Sander, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (2016) ⁷
- Sr. Noreen H. Stevens, *chair*, Centerville, Minn. (2016) ¹
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- Bp. Ray Tiemann, Seguin, Texas (2016)
- Sr. W. Jean Widmeyer, *secretary*, Stratford, Ontario, Canada (2014) ^{1,4}
- Pr. Jim Wilson, *vice chair*, Worthington, Ohio (2014) ^{1,7}

- ¹ Executive Committee
- ² Committee on Governance
- ³ Committee on Vocation and Education
- ⁴ Committee on Mission Support
- ⁵ Committee on Community Life
- ⁶ Committee on Finance and Budget
- ⁷ Committee on Communications

Advisor

Pr. Cherlyne V. Beck, Chicago, Ill.

Leadership Staff

- Sr. Krista M. Anderson, *director for vocation and education*
- Sr. Janet A. Stump, *directing deaconess*
- Ms. Barbara A. Swartling, *executive director*

Statement of Purpose

The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) exercises its ministry within the context of this church's mission to proclaim the Gospel, to relate the Gospel to human need in every situation, and to extend the ministry of the Gospel to all the world. Serving through community and in partnership with the other public ministry rosters of this church, skilled and committed deaconesses seek to minister to those in need, especially the marginalized, and to equip, encourage, and further the ministry of the whole people of God. The governing description of this separately incorporated ministry appears in continuing resolution 16.12.A11.a. printed in Section XII of the *Pre-Assembly Report* and e-binder.

Our Mission

Compelled by the love of Christ and sustained by community, we devote our lives to proclaiming the Gospel through ministries of mercy and servant leadership.

Our Vision

Empowered by the Holy Spirit for public ministry, we passionately seek to:

- Embody our mission
- Be a Christ-centered community of women
- Witness to this church and the world

Our Core Values

- A Gospel-centered purpose that proclaims and furthers the reign of God among us
- A prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk taking and innovative service on the frontiers of this church's outreach
- Cooperative partnerships that invite participation, bridge divisions, and accompany others in mission
- Inclusivity in mission that affirms the individual gifts of all people
- Stewardship that respects God's gifts of time, talents, and resources

Historical Context

The Deaconess Community is one of the four public ministry rosters of the ELCA, which include clergy, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers. The community uniquely serves both the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) thanks to its earlier relationship within the predecessor Lutheran Church in America (LCA), which served both the United States and Canada. Prior to formation of the ELCA, provision was made to give members of the Deaconess Community full accreditation in both churches.

The Deaconess Community had its earliest origins in the United States in Pennsylvania in 1884, when seven deaconesses were brought from Germany to superintend the German Hospital in Philadelphia. Thus began the Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses. A second beginning was the action taken in 1889 by the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States to establish an Order of Deaconesses. This in turn led to creation of a Deaconess Board and then a Deaconess Community in Baltimore. The General Synod designated deaconesses as holding an office in the church. A third deaconess community, including Immanuel Lutheran Hospital, was established in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1890. These three communities came together in the mid-1960s, at the time of the merger creating the Lutheran Church in America, to form the present Deaconess Community.

From the beginning of the LCA until 2002, the Deaconess Community operated a single deaconess center in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. It provided a retirement residence, a center for study and retreat, and the community's administrative offices. The community sold the Gladwyne property in 2002 and in 2003 moved its offices to the Lutheran Center in Chicago. At the end of 2012, a total of 72 deaconesses resided or served in 21 states and four Canadian provinces. Of this number, 37 were active (of whom six were seeking calls); 29 were disabled or retired; and seven were invested (of whom five were awaiting calls). Today's deaconesses serve in a wide range of vocational settings, including institutions of learning, hospitals, social service agencies, nonprofit organizations, and congregations, and as chaplains in hospitals and elder care facilities.

Today's community is embodied in the way deaconesses support and encourage one another, in prayer and in one another's company. The Deaconess Community has an 11-person board of directors, of which six directors are deaconesses. [There is currently a vacancy for a deaconess to serve on the board; the treasurer is an officer, who is not a director.] The community's highest decision-making body is the Deaconess Assembly, which includes all sisters and gathers annually to share in worship and Bible study, conduct business, and engage in other community-building and missional activities. Many sisters are also active in the six standing committees listed above.

Report of Work for 2011–2013

Over the past two years, with the help of God, the Deaconess Community of the ELCA has been working to bolster its spiritual and structural core while continuing to reach out in extending Christ's love to others. Deaconess Community members and candidates place high value on prayer for one another and others and have been using Internet technology to communicate prayer needs and celebrations. A "team" style of leadership, inaugurated in the community just a few years ago, continues to be cultivated. Annual assemblies normally reserve a significant portion of time for community-building events and activities.

The community understands itself in the context of this church's wider public ministry, and thus has been participating with associates in ministry and diaconal ministers, as well as clergy, in the ongoing conversation concerning Word and Service ministry. The Deaconess Community also seeks to reach beyond itself in faithful stewardship of its resources for the benefit of the marginalized and those in need and in encouragement for all the baptized to engage in service for the sake of God's mission in the world. Two examples of that outreach are "mission grants" and the "diaconal ministry course."

Mission Grants

Through mission grants, the Deaconess Community is able to lift up the ministries of agencies that share its mission and core values. For the 2011, 2012, and 2013 grant cycles, mission grants were funded totaling \$554,500. Since the inception of the program in 2004, grants totaling \$1,694,500 have been distributed to 67 agencies. (A list of grant recipients and guidelines for grant applications are available on the community's website, www.ELCA.org/deaconess.) More than 21 percent of each year's operating budget is committed to the mission grant program.

Diaconal Ministry: Discernment, History, and Formation Course

The Deaconess Community has commissioned and funded a January elective course on Diaconal Ministry, which currently rotates between Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. The course introduces the historical, theological, and social contexts of diaconal (Word and Service) ministry throughout history, provides opportunity for discussion on vocation and diaconal calling, and affirms and encourages recognition of the importance and knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions as theologically and spiritually foundational writings. Students, candidates, and others are invited to learn about the ministry of Word and Service throughout this church's history, to experience and talk about intentional community, and to provide a safe environment in which to ask questions about faith and service. In 2013, 11 students participated in the Diaconal Ministry: Discernment, History, and Formation Course held at Luther Seminary. The course instructors were Ms. Susan W. McArver, professor of Church history and educational ministries at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and the Rev. Dirk G. Lange, associate professor of worship at Luther Seminary.

Financial Summary

The Deaconess Community is an independent and separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA and, as such, receives no funding from the ELCA or the ELCIC. Its operating budget is funded primarily through distributions from four investment accounts that function as endowments—two of which were established with proceeds from the sale of the Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, property. A fifth account, invested with the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust, serves as a reserve for support of the annual diaconal ministry course. Annual withdrawals from each account are governed by a spending policy so that their values are preserved over time.

The community is committed to contributing a tithe of each year's increase in net asset value to its two church bodies. In 2011 and 2012, the community was able to present combined tithe gifts of \$35,435 to the ELCA and the ELCIC (based on net asset increases in 2010 and 2011). In thanksgiving for stronger investment performance in 2012, it is pleased that its 2013 gift to the two church bodies will be much greater.

Budgeted income and expenses and actual expenses for 2011 and 2012 are summarized below, along with the community's budget figures for 2013.

Year	Total Income Budget All Sources	Total Expense Budget	Actual Expense, Including Unbudgeted Items	Gifts to Churches (Unbudgeted)
2011	\$894,491	\$891,692	\$871,460	\$15,435
2012	\$824,027	\$806,215	\$684,444	\$20,000
2013	\$864,704	\$864,174		

Major Directions for 2013–2016

Priorities for the Deaconess Community include: continuing the mission grant program and the Diaconal Ministry educational and formation course; sustaining an active prayer life; engaging in community discernment and keeping a "systems" perspective in order to nurture the health and the vision of the community; utilizing new and yet-to-be discovered technologies to more effectively communicate internally and externally; and engaging in Word and Service

Task Force conversations and its outcomes with openness, love, wisdom, and creativity so that the mission of the whole people of God may be enhanced.

Rooted in the unchanging grace of God in an evolving world and inspired by the example of deaconess forebears who courageously and innovatively carried Christ's love and freeing word into the needy world of their day, the Deaconess Community seeks faithfully and fluidly to carry on a ministry of serving love and prophetic diakonia in the present time, so that the reign of God may flourish. The community is committed to serving this church and the world as, through example and teaching, it fosters community and empowers others in service.

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