



# Application Procedure

Specific requirements for women seeking a vocation as a Deaconess in the Diocese of Fort Worth

## Candidacy Process Overview

A woman who is a communicant member of a parish in the Anglican 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:

- A formal application for Candidacy submitted to the Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese
- 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
- Letters of recommendation from two women communicants of the parish
- 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 academic ability to enter with advantage upon a course of study preparatory to being Set Apart
- Upon acceptance as a Candidate, the following requirements must be met before the Candidate may be Set Apart:
  - An eighteen-month Candidacy period that includes a nine-month internship under the supervision of a presbyter
  - Formal or informal training in Bible and theology
  - Quarterly reporting to and supervision by the Bishop to which the application was made
  - Rule of Life: It is the expectation of the Commission on Ministry that all Candidates for the Office of Deaconess have a Rule of Life that includes the use of a Spiritual Director. A rule of Life is a discipline by which one orders her worship, work, and leisure. It includes a

commitment to reading Scripture, prayer, worship, witness, service, self-denial and faithful stewardship of one's time, money, and possessions. As such, we expect at a minimum such a rule to include weekly attendance at Sunday Eucharist, regular daily prayers, daily Scripture reading as well as adopting the tithe as the standard of giving. If you have any questions about a Rule of Life, daily prayers, or other aspect of the spiritual life of the Deaconess, ask your Spiritual Director or any of the members of the Commission on Ministry.

- If one has an advance degree, a transcript would be helpful.

**(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)** 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 Office. 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.

**(d)** 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 1** 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 2 (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.

(2) Church History: A general outline, including the History of the Anglican 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; and

(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 3** 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

**Section 4** A woman having thus been Set Apart to the Office is properly addressed as "Deaconess," the appropriate abbreviation being "Dss."

**Section 5** When engaged in the duties of her office and on official occasions, a Deaconess shall wear a distinctive dress (habit) adopted for the Office in witness of her office and vocation. A common cross adopted for the Office shall be blessed and presented to her by the Bishop upon the occasion of her Setting Apart.

**Section 6** 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 Rector should officially recognize and support a Deaconess serving in his Parish.

**Section 7** 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 8** 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.

## Deaconess Training Programs

Each candidate should consult her Rector and her Deaconess mentor (if one is assigned) to determine the best options for preparing to take the Deaconess Exam. Factors to consider are the candidate's prior education and her knowledge of Anglican faith and practice.

Formal options for study will be presented to candidates after they are accepted into the program. This list will be updated annually.