

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Spring 2005

Vol. 39, No. 1

Lutheran Deaconesses: Their Unique Ministries



Spring 2005
Vol. 39, No. 1

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, SEWARD, NEBRASKA

Lutheran Deaconesses: Their Unique Ministries

3 Reflections

Brian L. Friedrich, President

4 Editorials

6 Serving Christ by Serving Our Neighbor: Theological and Historical Perspectives on Lutheran Deaconesses

Sara Bielby and Arthur A. Just, Jr.

14 Deaconesses: Engaging the Church in Diakonia

Kristin Wassilak

22 LCMS Deaconesses: Who We Are, How to Become One, and How We Can Enrich Your Congregation or Institution

Theresa List

30 Book Reviews

Editor

Marvin Bergman, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Editorial Committee

Editorials

Russ Moulds, Ph.D.

Book Reviews

Rebecca Fisher, Ph.D.

Associate

Daniel Thurber, A.D.

Associate

Brian L. Friedrich, M.Div.

Graphic Design

William R. Wolfram, M.F.A.

Managing Editor

Marlene Block, B.A.



CIRCULATION POLICY—*ISSUES . . . in Christian Education* (ISSN 0278-0216) is published three times a year by the faculty of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska 68434. *ISSUES* is sent free to each church, school, district and synodical office in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Copies are also sent to high schools, colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod.

Individuals wishing personal copies may obtain them as follows: Single copy @\$2.00 each; Subscription @\$6.00; 10 or more copies mailed to the same address @\$1.20 per copy. Call 800 535-5494 ext. 7276 or email mpeetz@cune.edu

Readers are invited to reprint portions of *ISSUES* materials provided that the following credit line appears: "Reprinted from *ISSUES in Christian Education*, Volume 39, No. 1, Spring 2005, a publication of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska."

reflections

WHEN I THINK about *diakonia*, I think about my Grandma Meyer. Could she have been a deaconess (diakonas)? I'm not sure, but I know she taught me to serve and to listen to Jesus.

Grandma was one of five daughters born to Iowa farmers. She served as she grew up. Grandma was 46 when Grandpa died, and she served in keeping the farm and raising three teenage children. Grandma moved to town when her sons married. Then Grandma served her congregation and community.

Grandma Meyer taught me the work and joy of service. Grandma served—like Martha, I suppose.

Grandma also taught me to listen to Jesus. Grandma Meyer taught Sunday school for 21 years. With an eighth grade education, she was the best Sunday school teacher I knew. Even when we were too old to be in Grandma's class, we went to Sunday school with her during summer visits. She told Bible stories using flannel-graph figures. She could recite all six Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism. She knew lots of Bible verses and hymns. She cleaned and washed and baked early in the day to have time for teachers' meetings, lesson preparation, and Ladies' Aid. During many afternoons we found her in her rocking chair reading a well-worn Bible.

Grandma Meyer taught me the hope and salvation that come from Jesus. Grandma loved to listen to Jesus—like Mary, I suppose.

If Grandma had been born in another generation, with different opportunities, might she have been a deaconess? I wonder.

This edition of *Issues* highlights opportunities for Lutheran deaconesses to engage in the ministries of service and to listen to Jesus within and outside congregations. The ministry of a deaconess is that of Martha and that of Mary. A deaconess is called to serve like Martha in caring for the sick, the poor, the grieving, the hurting, and the dying. A deaconess is called to listen to Jesus like Mary in order to tell the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The ministry of a deaconess is a vital extension of the pastoral office that encourages women to use the full array of gifts, talents, and abilities God has given them "as they live and breathe the Gospel as servants of Christ in the midst of his people" (Bielby and Just). Thus, it is our hope that this edition of *Issues* will help you see that "the opportunities for *diakonia* are limitless" as God's people come to know that "their Shepherd indeed loves and cares for them" (Wassilak). As we better understand how *diakonia* is lived out through and by a deaconess in the life of a congregation and the community she serves, it is our prayer that more women will be encouraged to respond to God's call to serve in this "essential ministry of Christ to his Church" (List) and be Marthas and Marys, engaged in *diakonia* now and for generations to come.

Brian L. Friedrich, President

Layout, design and graphics by CONCORDesign
of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska.

Photography: Kira Baldinger

TYPEFACES USED IN THIS PERIODICAL
Titles set in 22 point Mrs. Eaves Roman (Imigree
of Sacramento). Tracking normal.

Subheads set in 13/13 point Mrs. Eaves bold.

By-lines and author information set in 13/13
point Mrs. Eaves small caps.

Footers and folios set in 11 point Mrs. Eaves.

Feature articles set in 11/13 point Mrs. Eaves.

Three column text set in 9/10 point Mrs. Eaves.

"What Do Deaconesses Do Anyway?"

"WHAT DO DEACONESSSES DO ANYWAY?" This is a question that I hear a lot these days as a student in the deaconess program. Finding an adequate yet succinct answer, however, has been harder than I expected. After all, what do deaconesses do?

During my journey through this program, I have had the opportunity to meet and learn from more deaconesses than I even knew existed a year ago. Some care for hospice patients, helping them die with dignity and love. Others serve congregations as directors of caring ministries, ministers of music, directors of Christian education, or other congregational positions. Deaconesses serve as chaplains in hospitals or nursing homes. Some work for non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. And the list goes on. Hearing of their ministries and the myriad of ways they serve God's people, one sees a common thread that runs through each of their lives. The Lutheran Deaconess Association expresses it in its motto: "Faith and Service in Christ."

This makes sense. The very word "deaconess" comes from the Greek word, *diakonia*, which is most often translated "service." As implied by the motto, however, the single word "service" does not fully capture the entire concept of *diakonia*. After all, slaves serve, employees serve, military personnel serve. For some of these, their service is *diakonia*. For some it is not. What makes the difference is the motivation behind the service.

Diakonia is not performed for fear of punishment, hope of reward, or honor and country. *Diakonia* is service gladly given in thanksgiving for all that has been received from God. *Diakonia* is imitating Christ who said, "... the Son of Man did not come to be served (*diakonathanai*), but to serve (*diakonasai*), and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

Just before he gave his life as a ransom for us, he demonstrated how we are to serve one another when he took the position of the lowest slave in the household and washed his disciples' feet. This act, the washing of feet, has become for the deaconess community the symbol of *diakonia*. It exemplifies the duty of all Christians—service to others in Christ's name.

But if, as a Christian, I am already supposed to serve in such a manner, what is the point of becoming a deaconess? Why not just remain as I am and continue to serve as I do? This same line of reasoning could be used regarding pastors. If the whole body of Christ is called to proclaim the Gospel, what is the point of having pastors? Yet we know that the church throughout the ages has set apart certain people, called by the Holy Spirit, to publicly proclaim the Gospel on behalf of the church. Deaconesses, likewise,

are individuals called by the Holy Spirit and set apart by the church to do the work of *diakonia* publicly on its behalf. They are signs to the world that one of the valuable functions of the church is service in Christ's name.

Some have asked, "Might the presence of deaconesses in the church offer fellow Christians an excuse to shirk their own call to *diakonia*? Might the impression be given that deaconesses are the only ones who can and should do *diakonia*?" One of my instructors, E. Louis Williams, executive director of the Lutheran Deaconess Association, responded to my musing on these questions by stating, "I believe that the reason the diaconate exists is ultimately to help the whole church be more diaconal." So, deaconesses don't just do *diakonia*, they help others do it, too. But how?

That brings us back to our original question, "What do deaconesses do anyway?" The short answer is, they serve. But in reality there is more to it than that. Deaconesses serve in Christ's name and on behalf of his church. They dedicate their whole lives to "Faith and Service in Christ" and help others to do the same. And each one does this in her own unique and gifted way.

In the end, maybe the best way to find out what a deaconess does is ask one. She can share with you how she answers the call to *diakonia* through her life and work. She can help you consider how your own service is or can be *diakonia*. Then, together you can marvel at the amazing ways God uses each one of us to serve both the church and the world. "Faith and Service in Christ." *Diakonia*. That's what the church does. That's what deaconesses do.

Sonja Baumeister
Deaconess Student (Plan 4)
Lutheran Deaconess Association
Valparaiso, Indiana
Seward, Nebraska
the_bo_fam@hotmail.com

Why the Church Needs Deaconesses

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, my first contact with a deaconess in the Synod was in Sidney, Montana, in the summer of 1952. Since then I have had numerous contacts with deaconesses in the Synod. I have witnessed the love and devotion to our Lord Jesus which these dedicated women have demonstrated. They have followed in the footsteps of those dedicated women who are mentioned in the New Testament and in early church history: Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1, 2); Priscilla (v. 3); Mary (v. 6); Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12) who served the saints. In a letter to the Emperor Trajan (112 A.D.), Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, mentioned that

he had to put to torture two Christian maidens who were called deaconesses. Canon 19 of the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) made reference to Paulinian deaconesses, and Canon 15 of the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) prohibited placing a woman into the order of deaconesses before the age of forty.

I am pleased to see the revival of the diaconal order after years of decline in our Synod. Today we have a great need to increase the number of deaconesses serving our congregations and the Synod. One of the greatest needs is located in ministry to families. Families, not only in our nation, but in the church, are in trouble. The national divorce rate is about 50 percent. The rate in the church is almost the same. Eighty percent of the divorces are initiated by females (*Lutheran Education*, Spring 2004, Vol. 139/No. 3, pp. 191, 192). We need women trained in marriage counseling who also have received training in biblical and systematic theology to offer a ministry to strengthen marriage. Deaconesses need to be prepared for this ministry in the church.

As I visit congregations I also see another great need for the ministry of deaconesses. We have very few single moms and their children in our churches. Today 1.3 million children are born annually out of wedlock. The statistical figures for young women in the church are not significantly different from those outside the church. Additionally, today almost 40 percent of children live in a household without their biological father. Seventeen million children have no father living with them at all. These women express their concern by saying that no one who has tried to raise children alone has any idea of what they are going through. Sending two male elders or even a pastor to the home for a visit will achieve little. Congregations need to become serious about their ministry to this group in our population. The ministry to these women and their children can best be done by a woman, a deaconess.

Little is being done to assist parents in the training of their children in the faith at home. What is not done in the home cannot be done by the church in its educational programs. Parents need to be assisted in this important responsibility by regular home visits. Again, much of this ministry can be done by trained deaconesses.

We are confronted with an aging population. The percentage of our church members who are at retirement age or older is increasing. People live longer, and the result is that we have more members who are unable to attend worship at the church, who need to be ministered to in their homes through regular devotions and visits by someone who cares. Deaconesses may well be able to assist congregations in developing this very much-needed ministry.

According to Holy Scripture, God created male and female in His own image. The female is created to reflect the image of God

in giving life and nurturing that life. The male reflects the image of God in protecting and supporting the life which is given. Nurturing is needed, not only at the beginning of life, but also at the end of life. It is my observation that a woman does this far better than a man. There is a unique ministry for women in the church that needs to be more fully developed. Deaconesses also need to be trained in theology in order to contribute to the needed ministry of the churches. With both of our seminaries offering post-graduate programs in theology for our deaconesses, I am convinced that the renewal and revitalizing of this ministry in our Synod will bring blessings from our Lord for His people.

The Rev. George F. Wollenburg
President, Montana District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
mtdst286@aol.com

The Distaff Side of Pastoral Care: The Deaconess as Chaplain

FOR A LONG TIME, a portion of the constituency within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been concerned that women studying to be Lutheran deaconesses merely consider their training to be a stepping stone into the pastoral ministry. Some worry that acceptance of women as pastors may eventually spread into the LCMS. The fact that some rostered LCMS deaconesses are serving the Church as chaplains only heightens those fears.

But there are good reasons we have deaconesses as chaplains. First, we need them! While parish settings frame a structure for ministry that works in most circumstances, specialized pastoral care (chaplaincy) provides the "out of the box" opportunities for ministry in the institutional settings, such as nursing homes, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers, where traditional ministry models fall short. Deaconesses in complementary ministry with pastors can serve side-by-side in the struggle to help people in the most dire of life-changing circumstances.

Seelsorge (the care of souls) is the essence of Lutheran pastoral care. It focuses its attention on faithful Jesus at the center of all the changes in a person's life in the ways that He promises in Isaiah 43:2.

Since so much of pastoral care is administered via Word and Sacrament ministry, people most often identify a chaplain with the person of a specially trained male pastor. Just think of the male images embodied in Jesus: Savior, Brother, Lord, King, Good Shepherd. As "the under shepherd," the male pastor is identified with all of them.

But there is a distaff side of Jesus that hasn't been considered since the 12th century. It is

from these images that the deaconess/chaplain complements her male counterparts. In her book, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Caroline Walker Bynum reminds us of the image of the tender, compassionate, nurturing Jesus. Remember this passage? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37). Bynum says, "Medieval images of the maternal also stressed mother-love as instinctive and fundamental; the mother is tender and loving, sometimes dying to give the child life; she tempts or disciplines only with the welfare of the child in mind" (p. 133). Might and tenderness; male and female images. There is both room and need for each.

The titles of "Pastor" and "Deaconess" are ecclesiastical designations that help to define distinct roles in congregational settings. But the title "chaplain," earned through academic and clinical training, culminating in professional endorsement, means something different in the organizational structure of institutions, such as hospitals and nursing homes. Though they are part of the patient's care team, *Pastoral Care* is the only department not directly connected to the medical community, either by their credentialing or job description.

Institutional chaplaincy is the great equalizer. In their presence and contributions, chaplains are a visible reminder to the number crunchers and managerial offices that care of people is their *raison d'être*—a demonstrated reflection of the love Christ offers to us.

The deaconess/chaplain serves in a complementary role with her male counterparts in some distinctive ways. The bond of a deaconess/chaplain with her female patients/residents is crucial when addressing the sensitive issues involving life-changing or disfiguring female surgeries (such as mastectomies and hysterectomies), and the impact the death of children has on them as a result of miscarriage, childhood disease, or motor vehicle accidents.

A woman's emotions and tears are accepted by most of society. Affirmation of male fear by the deaconess/chaplain encourages male patients to release their deepest emotions. A male veteran, fraught with survivor guilt, will disclose to the deaconess/chaplain the remorse he has for living when so many of his war buddies died and release burdens that may have been carried in private for over 60 years. A surgical patient, without his family around, will reveal, in the presence of a deaconess/chaplain, his tears during pre-surgery visits. The visit is cathartic. Through pre-surgery prayer, anxiety is lessened, the patient sleeps relaxed, and a body, now better prepared both mentally and emotionally, offers the prospects for a positive outcome post-op.

For women with special gifts, the deaconess as chaplain offers opportunities to bring Jesus' distaff side to pastoral care. And in the effort to meet a diversity of needs in 21st century health-care, sometimes the deaconess as chaplain may be just *exactly* what The Doctor ordered.

Margaret Anderson
Deaconess and Staff Chaplain
Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center
Brush, Colorado
seelsorge@yahoo.com





SARA BIELBY AND ARTHUR A. JUST, JR.

Serving Christ by Serving Our Neighbor: Theological and Historical Perspectives on Lutheran Deaconesses

LUTHERAN DEACONESSSES SERVE Christ by serving their neighbor. They receive their office of service from the very person of Jesus himself who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Jesus tells his disciples that "I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:27). All Christians are called to this service, but deaconesses embody this life of *diakonia* as called laborers in Christ's church to demonstrate in their lives and actions the mercy and

SARA BIELBY IS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE DEACONESS PROGRAM AT CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA. SHE IS SERVING HER DEACONESS INTERNSHIP AT THE SEMINARY AND ALSO AT ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH IN MONROEVILLE, INDIANA. (bielbysm@mail.ctsfi.edu)

DR. ARTHUR A. JUST, JR., IS PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY AT CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA. HE ALSO SERVES AS DEAN OF THE CHAPEL, DIRECTOR OF DEACONESS STUDIES, AND CO-DIRECTOR OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD INSTITUTE OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND SACRED MUSIC. (justaa@mail.ctsfi.edu)

compassion of Christ. The motto of Lutheran deaconesses says it best: "What is my want? I want to serve. Whom do I want to serve? The Lord in His suffering ones and his poor."¹

As directors of the deaconess program at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, we are overwhelmed by our church's positive response to the service of women in the church. In a church body that does not ordain women, deaconesses provide women with an opportunity to serve in the church that reflects who they are as women. A deaconess brings a uniquely feminine care, perceiving need and responding with gentle helpfulness, expressing the compassion of Christ in a tender, nurturing way. She serves by using her skills and theological training to embody Christ's incarnational care in the midst of suffering. A deaconess serves alongside a pastor, attending to those in need and dwelling with them. She points them to the pastor and the means of grace where Christ comes to them in his body to join them to himself for eternity.

Congregations that are served by male pastors are able to care for the needs of God's people in an essentially masculine way. Without the presence of women serving as deaconesses alongside the pastors, a feminine care is often absent from a congregation's service to her members. Just as a family needs both a father and mother to nurture and teach the children, so also will congregations be blessed by having a pastor and a deaconess serving together, representing the care that is uniquely characteristic of both their offices and their genders. It is this relationship that is modeled by the presence of both a pastor and a deaconess on the staff of our program at Fort Wayne.

Through the deaconess programs in our church we are now able to offer women a rigorous program of theological study. This provides them with the foundation for the charitable life as they live and breathe the Gospel as servants of Christ in the midst of his people. Our seminary at Fort Wayne was founded in 1846 to share the Gospel of Christ as biblically and historically confessed by the Lutheran Church. One of its founders, Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Germany, was committed to the training of deaconesses for service



in the church through acts of mercy and charity. When the seminary began its Deaconess Program in the fall of 2003, it continued to be part of a great tradition of Lutheran deaconesses begun by Pastor Loehe.

The Mercy of Jesus—The Theological Foundation for the Office of Deaconess

EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOT POSSIBLE to establish the office of deaconess from the New Testament, the theological rationale and foundation for the office is clearly affirmed in the person and work of Jesus and in the teaching of St. Paul. For both Jesus and Paul the Gospel must be embodied, that is, the love of God that entered our world in his only Son continues now through us by the Spirit of the Son who comes to us in the waters of our baptism (Galatians 4:3–5). Christ by his Spirit brings us into communion with him and his life that knows no end. His life is now our life. He lives through us, and his love continues in the world through us—through our mouths and hands (Galatians 2:20–21).

Our life in Christ is founded on this remarkable reality—that in this present evil age, Christ dwells among us as Emmanuel, and has rescued us by giving himself up for our sins (Galatians 1:4). Our sins are evidence that this world has been infected with a virus from which we cannot escape. Things are very wrong. Everyone can see it, especially in those people who suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual pain from the consequences of sin—those broken by violence and tragedy, by sickness and death—the very ones deaconesses are called to serve. Only God is able to make right what has gone wrong in this world. He does this by sending his Son from heaven into our world to show us his mercy through miracles of healing the sick and raising the dead. The ultimate miracle that healed the whole creation was that he loved us so much that he was willing to bear all our burdens, even to the point of death, a death through which he brings in the new creation. When he rose from the dead on the third day, he showed us what we will one day become and already are now—bodies washed clean and made holy, healed eternally from sin's dread disease. In Jesus' resurrected body we see ourselves, Jesus



in us and we in him. Heaven and earth are embodied in Jesus and now in us. His mercy for a fallen creation is now present in the creation through our acts of mercy as we bear witness to him in all we say and do.

It is the mercy of Jesus Christ that is at the heart of the theological foundation for the role of the deaconess. Jesus calls us to a life of charity when he tells us to "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). In the early church, the office of deaconess existed as a vocation for women in consecrated service of Christ and His church, providing acts of mercy through various tasks that served the most needy in the church's midst. They served Christ by serving "the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 25:40), providing the hungry with food, the thirsty with drink, welcoming strangers into the community of saints, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and those who are in prison (Matthew 25:35–36). "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" echoes the Old Testament creedal description of God as "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Psalm 103:8). Still today this theological foundation has not changed. Deaconesses continue to carry out the mercy which God in Christ shows to us.

The Service of Women to Jesus

MANY PEOPLE ARE UNAWARE that it was only the loving service and financial means of women on behalf of Jesus and the apostles that enabled him to engage in a three-year ministry of teaching and performing miracles. Luke reports the news that some women put forth their possessions and their time in caring for Jesus and the Twelve ("were serving them"—Luke 8:3). Thus they helped make it possible by providing the human care necessary for Jesus to travel about with his disciples, who themselves served through the Word and healing they brought. Those named in Luke 8 appeared again prominently as witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection. They watched the crucifixion from a distance as they mourned for their Lord (23:49); they came to the tomb early in the morning to finish anointing his body (23:55–56a); they were the first witnesses of the resurrection and



the first evangelists as they reported the passion and resurrection facts to the eleven apostles (24:1-12). These women who were with Jesus since early in his ministry and through the three days of his passion and resurrection became key members of the emerging church in Acts (see Acts 1:14). They were essential links in the "'chain of evidence' for the Christian claims about Jesus,"² helping to transform the Eleven and others who were "eyewitnesses from the beginning" into "ministers of the Word" (Luke 1:2).

According to the theology of the cross (or the "Great Reversal"), to serve is to be great in God's kingdom. Of the eight occurrences of *diakonia*, "service," in Luke, the first three involved women who served Jesus: Peter's mother-in-law (4:39), these women (8:3), and Martha (10:40). In serving, they were following Jesus' own ministry as one of service; by becoming the "least," they are among the "greatest" (Luke 22:24-27). The women's service to Jesus was of great import, particularly in the context of the attitude prevailing in Judaism of Jesus' day regarding the exclusion of women in religious matters. In the kingdom he brings, the Spirit is poured out on his male servants and his female servants alike (Acts 2:18). Whoever does the will of God, which is to believe in him, is his brother and sister and mother, for they "hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21).³

A Corporate Office of Mercy

THE DIACONAL ROLE of women is rightly identified in the context of the life of the church. The church's activities fall into three categories. *Leitourgia*, or Divine service, is the foundational activity of the church where God is serving us with his gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation through the bodily presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament. *Marturia*, or public witness, is our response to the gifts as we confess to God and to the world that which He works in us, namely, our faith. *Diakonia*, or service, is Christ in us in the midst of the world as we act out the love, mercy, grace, and charity God gives to us in Christ amongst one another as he satisfies the needs of our neighbor through us.

These three activities take place in each one of us as we are members in the Body of Christ. This incarnational reality of God's presence in us is also true among us; thus these activities are located corporately in the church. *Leitourgia* takes place regularly in the public worship service at font, pulpit, and altar, as Christ comes to us and as we come into communion with him. In the Divine Service we do not serve ourselves inwardly by turning in upon ourselves, but rather Christ serves us through the office of the public ministry as the pastor stands in the stead and by the command of Christ. Through the pastor Christ speaks His Word and serves His Bride, the church, at His table. *Marturia* occurs both as an act of worship, in the Creed of the church, in hymns and prayers, as well as proceeding from the church into the highways and byways as we bear witness to the hope that is in us. *Diakonia* flows from the altar where we are served, and takes place outside the doors of the worship service, finding expression wherever suffering and sin afflict and infect our lives.

While pastors carry on the work of the apostles among us, deacons and deaconesses are offices created in Christian freedom to ensure that this work of practical, human serving of need is completed. It was in the midst of a particular need that individuals were first consecrated and set apart by the church to administer its care. In Acts 6, the diaconal office is first seen when seven men were appointed to administer the care of the physical need of widows. Those chosen were "full of the Spirit and wisdom" and given the responsibility of acting on behalf of the church. The work they were given was crucial and necessary to the existence of the church as it lived out its daily life. In the same way that justification and sanctification cannot be separated, faith must live by expressing itself as love in action. God's desire and will to extend compassion to both body and soul must be expressed corporately by the church. As the church grew, it continued to appoint and consecrate individuals for tasks on its behalf. One example is Phoebe, who met the needs of the saints in the particular, located church at Cenchreae in a different way—a need which was best met by a woman.

Phoebe—The First Deaconess?

NO ONE REALLY KNOWS for sure what Paul meant when he referred to Phoebe as a deaconess in his letter to the Roman Christians. He calls her "our sister Phoebe, a deaconess (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae" (Romans 16:1). Most scholars believe that what we today know as the office of deaconess did not exist in the New Testament era, although Phoebe's loving service became the foundation for the order of deaconesses in the early church. St. John Chrysostom, a patron of deaconesses, said this about Paul's reference to Phoebe: "Note how many ways Paul dignifies Phoebe. He mentions her before all the rest and even calls her his sister. It is no small thing to be called the sister of Paul! Moreover, he has mentioned her rank as deaconess as well."⁴

Phoebe was a "*prostasis*," or protectress, (Romans 16:2), indicating that she was a person of means and influence in the community which she could lend to saints, both in the public forum and in her own home. She expressed the gift of hospitality, hosting apostles and saints who were about the ministry of the Word in much the same manner as the women in Luke did for Jesus. She probably opened her home for the gathering of the

church, and was entrusted by Paul as an assister and helper, traveling to deliver his letter to the church at Rome.

Regardless of the status of development of churchly offices in New Testament times, Phoebe expressed the service that marks the diaconal office. She is an inspiration for all women who have chosen to serve their Lord as deaconesses. She served others, especially the apostles and saints, because her Lord first served her by giving up his life for her. The name Phoebe comes from the word "*phoibe*," which is translated "radiant." Phoebe's service is commended by Paul since she clearly cast a bright beam of light through her presence in the church. The dormitory which houses our deaconess students in Fort Wayne is named "Phoebe House" in honor of the woman who served alongside St. Paul. Our own Phoebe House stands as a beacon of mercy on our campus, radiant with opportunity for women to serve in our church.

A Brief History Beyond the New Testament

THE FIRST SECULAR MENTION of women ministering to the church is found in the second century in a letter of Pliny the Younger, a



governor in the Roman Empire, to Emperor Trajan, requesting guidance in the matter of persecution of the captured Christians. He writes:

I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition.⁵

This Roman governor testifies that very early on, women who received the gifts of Christ in the church's *leitourgia* shared both the activities of *marturia* and *diakonia* in appointed roles of service on behalf of the church.

The roles of deacons and deaconesses were not exactly parallel. Both deacons and deaconesses were responsible for the care of individuals in need. From the beginning, however, deacons performed liturgical duties and assisted in the public worship. Deaconesses never performed liturgical duties, but rather functioned as leaders and keepers among the women of the assembly, primarily as caretakers of the suffering and the poor who were in need of human care. They also served as supporters and advisors of women catechumens in applying the teaching of the bishop to matters of feminine propriety. They assisted in the baptism of women, visited the sick, took care of the believing women in the homes of unbelievers, and ministered to those who were unable to worship with the faithful.

Formal affirmation of the role of the deaconess is found in the *Didascalia*, dated in the early to mid third century. The chapter entitled "On the Institution of Deacons and Deaconesses" states:

The ministry of deaconesses is necessary for you for many reasons. The fact is that deaconesses are necessary for the houses of pagans where Christian women are also living. Deaconesses can go there and visit those who are ill, serve them in whatever their needs might be and bathe those who have begun to recover from their illness

There should be enough *so that everyone is known and everyone succored*. Thus, old women whose strength has declined and brothers and sisters who are ill should be able to enjoy from the deacons the service they properly need.⁶

The stated purpose of the diaconal offices as instituted in the early church is the same purpose of deaconesses today: to serve so that "everyone is known and everyone succored." Even the most marginal received honor and worth in God's eyes, becoming known to the community through deaconesses who embodied Christ's mercy as they reached out to give help in time of need.

The third through the seventh centuries are known as the "Golden Age of Deaconesses." Deplorable social conditions, coupled with the urgent response of the church to care for those in need, caused the number and work of deaconesses to multiply. St. John Chrysostom both appointed deaconesses and was assisted by them in his service to the saints. Perhaps the most well known of the deaconesses of his era was Olympias, a beautiful young widow of means who lived in Constantinople in the fourth century, where she built a hospital and orphanage and devoted herself to serving the poor and needy. Her noble character and servant heart have been an inspiration to deaconesses to this day.

The presence of deaconesses in the church declined with the approach of the Middle Ages. This was largely due to the fact that the theological foundation of incarnational care from which deaconesses sprung gave way to asceticism, causing the feminine churchly vocation of service to decline and retreat into the cloistered life. While the Reformation reclaimed this theological foundation, it was not until the early 19th century that the deaconess vocation again experienced a resurgence in the Lutheran church under the guidance and separate efforts of both Wilhelm Loehe and Theodore Fliedner.

Both pastors Loehe and Fliedner were instrumental in the planting of deaconesses in the United States. Such efforts were received and carried on by pastors in this country, leading to the establishment of the first Missouri

Synod Lutheran deaconess training school in Fort Wayne during the early 1900s. Today, there are approximately one hundred deaconesses in active service in the LCMS who stand in continuity with Phoebe, Olympias, and all deaconesses who have served their Lord by serving their neighbor.

Standing alongside the pastor who dispenses Christ's gifts as a steward of the mysteries, deaconesses bind up the brokenhearted and the distressed. They go out from the door of the church, and bring in Christ's lost and broken lambs into his sheepfold where the pastor feeds these lambs by bringing them into communion with Christ as he comes to them in Word and Sacrament. Throughout our church today, watch for deaconesses to declare humbly through their *diakonia*: "What is my want? I want to serve. Whom do I want to serve? The Lord in His suffering ones and his poor."

Notes

- 1 This motto was created by Wilhelm Loehe for his deaconesses in Germany.
- 2 Johnson, L. T. *The Gospel of Luke*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 383.
- 3 These paragraphs on the ministry of women with Jesus are adapted from A. A. Just, Jr., *Concordia Commentary: Luke 1:1–9:50 and Luke 9:51–24:53*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House) 1996 and 1997.
- 4 Cited from J. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 30* in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Romans*, edited by G. Bray (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998) 369.
- 5 Weinrich, William. *Readings in Early Church History*. CTS Press: Ft. Wayne, Indiana.
- 6 Martimort, Aime Georges. *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1986, pp. 38–39.





KRISTIN WASSILAK

Deaconesses: Engaging the Church in *Diakonia*

Introduction

THE MISSION of Christ's Body is to proclaim the Gospel in Word and provide the Gospel in Sacraments. But Christ's Body doesn't stop there. What follows is a corporate response of the Church to the Gospel: *diakonia*. The Church cannot be the Church without *diakonia*.

Diakonia is mercy; *diakonia* is love directed towards suffering and need.¹ When Christ's Body shows mercy, it in fact serves Christ (Matthew 25:31–46).

A founder of the modern deaconess movement, Rev. Wilhelm Loehe,² understood diaconal service as essential mission and ministry of the church, belonging to every member and "entrusted to some—deacons [and deaconesses]—on behalf of the many."³ The Church entrusts the diaconate to serve as a reminder for *diakonia*. The diaconate places post-it notes on the Church's mirror: "Christ has shown you mercy!" and "Don't tire of doing good!" and "Whatever you have done to the least of these you have done it to me!"

Deaconesses serve where there is shame, hurt, pain, injustice, bigotry, violence, abuse—wherever people are on the margins. However, the diaconate has no corner on the market of *diakonia*. Instead, the diaconate keeps asking church leaders, "How can we approach ____ diaconally?" Fill in the blank: music, youth, education, outreach, missions, assimilation, volunteer activities, etc. The diaconate also encourages the laity to view their vocations as vehicles for *diakonia*.

Diaconal care comes full circle when it points the sufferer to the true Physician. Loehe

recognized that diaconal care does not have as its primary goal "that the misery of another may be alleviated, but that the soul receives the Spirit For this reason, Loehe could praise spiritual care as an important gift" used by the diaconate to bring souls "who lived in misery to the Gospel of Christ."⁴ The deaconess helps people with the cares of this world, but is also "helping them to keep faith during periods of storm and trial."⁵

In her spiritual care, the deaconess reminds sufferers of their baptism. She reminds sufferers that they have been cleansed at the altar. She applies properly distinguished Law and Gospel to point them back towards the Source of their life. She supports the persistently burdened sufferer to make confession to the pastor in order to receive Holy Absolution (Gospel). She teaches God's Word to prepare people for the difficult Christian life and to make ready their souls for eternal life with Christ. With the tender strength of a woman's touch, she brings a distinctively feminine, compassionate perspective.

Let us explore specific applications for this deaconess role in congregations, institutions, and missions. Both current and new opportunities for deaconesses will be considered.

Engaging Congregations in *Diakonia*

CONGREGATION LEADERS and pastors often ask me, "What can a deaconess do for us?" In this specialized American culture, they are usually looking for a job description. I do provide a list of duties. However, the most *accurate* response I can give is: the deaconess will awaken your congregation to its diaconal work.

Since opportunities for *diakonia* are limitless, the deaconess is not in danger of working herself out of a job. However, "The diaconate as [an establishment] should really exist only until the congregations are joined in preaching and *diakonia*, as husband and wife are joined,"⁶ said Loehe. In the congregation, the heartbeat of this marriage would look like a steady, sinus rhythm of worship to works and back to worship again.

But, as Dr. Kenneth Korby commented, "The LCMS has arrhythmia of the heart."⁷ We have tended to focus on the life of the head

DEACONESS KRISTIN WASSILAK IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEACONESS PROGRAM, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, RIVER FOREST. (crfwassilkr@curf.edu)

to the detriment of the life of the heart beating in response to the Gospel. Other denominations suffer from a lack of blood flow to the heart; those without a clear confession of faith have tended to focus on charitable works and never point to Christ found only in Word and Sacraments.

The deaconess functions like a pacemaker to help restore the church's healthy, functional rhythm. She educates them about the needs of the marginalized and miserable within and without the congregation. She adds to the leadership's effectiveness as she collaborates with the team to provide merciful responses appropriate for their respective offices. While a deaconess may do much hands-on care, she will not be the exclusive congregational caregiver: "Deaconesses are not substitutes for the laity, but she is a seedling of that plant of service,"⁸ said Korby.

Present Service of Deaconesses in Congregations

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH (Galatians 6:10) is full of wandering sheep. The devil, like a roaring lion, is seeking sheep to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He would like nothing more than to see a sheep beyond the flock's edge, alone and vulnerable.

We are that vulnerable sheep. Has your child died? Is your marriage disintegrating? Does death seem near? Have your parents abused you? Are you unemployed? Are you widowed? Do you struggle with mental illness? Do you hate someone? Does your addiction haunt you? Is your debt crushing you? Are you having an affair? Do you have a child with special needs? Are you caring for an elderly parent? The list is endless, isn't it? Satan would have us believe that we have a shoddy Shepherd who has abandoned us.

A deaconess responds to vulnerable people with merciful and spiritual care, demonstrating that their Shepherd indeed loves and cares for them. Of course, no deaconess will have expertise in every misery or malady. However, she is able to identify and engage appropriate church and community resources to provide assistance. She knows the limitations of her abilities, so she builds collaborative relationships with people and agencies to assist

congregants. She knows whom she can trust to care appropriately. And she continues spiritual care alongside the care provided from outside the church.

Unfortunately, despite the value of *diakonia*, only a few more than 100 deaconesses serve in called positions in the LCMS. About half of those serve congregations. That means roughly one percent of LCMS congregations have a deaconess on staff. Although the numbers are small, the works are mighty. In the following ways, deaconesses do and aid *diakonia* and spiritual care in congregations:

- Assist pastor in visitation of the sick, elderly, and infirm;
- Provide regular follow-up to members dealing with long-term crises (disabilities, illness, unemployment, etc.);
- Provide spiritual care for women with special needs, such as domestic violence, pregnancy, perinatal loss, gynecological surgery, mastectomy, and post-abortion grief;
- Follow up with members who have not been to worship, perhaps because of special needs or crises;
- Teach Bible classes, confirmation, VBS, etc., including a special emphasis on *diakonia*;
- Teach developmentally disabled children and adults;
- Develop Bible study and support groups for people with special needs;
- Administrate the alms fund (a.k.a. Good Samaritan Fund);
- Administer the congregation's food pantry/clothing bank;
- Collaborate with the volunteer parish nurse(s);
- Educate lay leaders to serve parishioners in crisis;
- Coordinate the use of parishioners' talents to address human needs;
- Connect needy parishioners with the resources of the community;
- Lead and facilitate Stephen Ministry;
- Serve as family life educators, preparing families to deal with life's challenges;
- Make the congregation aware of and enable their response to human care needs in the congregation, school, LCMS, community, and world;
- Advocate for physical and spiritual support

to parishioners who are dealing with domestic violence, unplanned pregnancy, and AIDS, for example;

- Organize opportunities for the youth's *diakonia* through servant events, mission trips, fundraisers, and community service;
- Lead the congregation in caring for people who are marginalized because they do not speak English, such as the deaf, refugees, legal and illegal immigrants, and displaced families;
- Lead the congregation and school in forming a crisis response plan.

As is common with other church professions, deaconesses serve in other areas according to their talents, education, and abilities. These areas include music, administration, evangelism, youth, nursing, and education.

Future Opportunities for Deaconesses in Congregations

AT A CONFERENCE three years ago, I was introduced to Lyle Schaller, prolific author, church consultant, and observer of American churches. Upon learning of my vocation, he became very excited that deaconesses were alive and well in the LCMS. He inquired about the way the LCMS utilizes deaconesses and then asked, "How many deaconesses are in your schools?" I was taken aback; I didn't understand what he could mean. What might that look like?

Lutheran schools provide access to the lives and needs of parishioners, Christians and non-Christians whose children attend the school. Access to school families in crisis provides the opportunity for diaconal care. A school deaconess may serve as a resource to teachers for diaconal opportunities. She may also care for the teachers and staff, upholding and encouraging them in their service. In almost 20 years of church work, I have heard many teachers express frustration over time limitations preventing their care for troubled students and their families. A school deaconess could assist. It is also common to hear school staffs lament the fissure between their church and school. A school deaconess could help bridge that gap.

Another ministry opportunity is outreach to residents of secular institutions in the vicinity such as nursing homes, jails/prisons, retire-

ment communities, adult day care, hospice, and developmentally disabled group homes. While federal standards require access for residents to spiritual care, many smaller institutions cannot fund it. A deaconess can assist the congregation to bridge this gap between church and world.

A deaconess may also enable these creative approaches to diaconal care:

- Extend diaconal care during conflict; encourage reconciliation as merciful conduct flowing from the mercy shown us by Christ; educate the congregation in biblical peacemaking; mediate conflicts;
- Establish needed community services at the church: Christian counseling, support groups, pantries, child care, adult day care, shelters, affordable housing;
- Expand the church's care for girls and women in areas such as abstinence education, mentoring, dating, domestic violence, post-abortion grief, pregnancy loss, rape, and gynecological needs;
- Establish Spanish-speaking spiritual and human care (fluency in Spanish is attainable through inexpensive immersion education in Central and South America—congregations may send their deaconess for as long as eight weeks of instruction for as little as \$2500);
- Connect congregations with similar needs by engaging a deaconess to do visitations or other tasks for two or more congregations.

Overall, the deaconess approaches every task as a diaconal opportunity. Even during a period when few deaconesses served congregations, Loehe referred to the parish deaconess as the quintessential expression of the diaconate because she expresses mercy not only to a certain category of person, but to every need, every age, and every socio-economic status. In contrast, institutional service of deaconesses tends to be focused, intense, well-defined work among "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

Engaging Institutions in Diakonia

WHEN LUTHERAN AGENCIES were established, there was a clear connection between church and agency, between proclaiming the Word and worship and *diakonia*. The agencies were a major component of the church's life of care. In fact,



by 1900, hundreds of American church-run institutions were administered and staffed by pastors, deaconesses, and active laity.

Today's situation is radically different. Rev. Matthew Harrison, Executive Director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care, explains: "The CEOs of Lutheran institutions who have had theological training or are ordained are disappearing. The clergy with credentials for chaplaincy are both declining in number and aging."⁹ Many times, agencies are connected to the denomination in name only or by a percentage of representation on their board of directors. Many do not have significant numbers of Lutheran staff, counselors, or social workers. Institutions also struggle to maintain uniquely Lutheran spiritual and diaconal care in the face of governmental regulations, declining congregational support, and increasing populations of residents or clients that are not Lutheran or Christian. Mercy for the body is increasingly divorced from mercy for the soul.

The church has a window of opportunity to renew and reclaim relationships with its agencies, to reconnect the Church with her care. Deaconesses can be key players in this effort.

Present Service of Deaconesses in Agencies

APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF of LCMS deaconesses work in called ministries apart from congregations. The work tends to be specialized and often depends on the deaconess having additional education or certification. During the last 15 years, LCMS deaconesses have been involved in the following ministries:

- Spiritual caregiving at residential facilities for emotionally disabled children and youth, and for persons developmentally disabled;
- Parish ministry consultations: deployed staff from Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services;
- Group home administration for persons developmentally disabled;
- Non-ordained chaplaincy in hospitals, nursing homes, hospice, AIDS care;
- Outdoor ministry and program directors;
- Girls' residence hall directors, college and high school;
- Campus ministry;
- Community outreach for Lutheran agencies;



- Lutheran nursing home administration;
- Lutheran social work;
- Writers and editors for the Church;
- Education: school teachers, principals, curriculum development, program directors;
- LCMS District staff;
- LCMS Districts' outreaches to the deaf, older adults, the imprisoned.

Sadly, almost every deaconess employed by an LCMS district has been released due to funding cuts in the last five years. While this has been an excruciatingly painful step for District boards, the decisions communicate diminished priorities for funding *diakonia*. What may the future hold, despite funding challenges?

Future Opportunities for Deaconesses in Agencies

ALTHOUGH THE NEED for deaconesses is as limitless as the needs of people, we can head in a few directions for future service.

First, congregations can band together to provide funding and accountability for a deaconess to serve in a local agency that may or may not be Lutheran. An excellent example of how congregations can work together is The Federation of Lutheran Churches in greater Cincinnati, Ohio. These 21 LCMS churches have worked cooperatively for 80 years to fund an ordained chaplain and two deaconesses in Cincinnati's secular institutions. This template would be applicable for *diakonia* and spiritual care in local nursing homes, prisons, hospices, and shelters.

Second, our communities need what the church's diaconal and spiritual care can offer them. For instance, some shelters for battered women and crisis pregnancy centers would like to connect with their local congregations. They can benefit from a deaconess providing care for victims wrestling with guilt and shame who are facing overwhelming choices. A deaconess can provide a bridge to the sacramental ministry of the congregation and pastor, working together towards a woman's eternal salvation and healing.

Third, deaconesses can infiltrate more Lutheran agencies. The LCMS's "recognized institutions make up roughly one-third of Lutheran Services of American [sic], recently recognized by *The Not-for-Profit Times* as the largest not-for-profit umbrella in America, with



a combined budget of nearly seven billion dollars These institutions serve millions, including tens if not hundreds of thousands of LCMS members. LSA has the world's largest adoption network. One of every three not-for-profit nursing home beds in this country is in a Lutheran institution."¹⁰ Although there are a multitude of job opportunities in these organizations, deaconesses must be certified or degreed in required areas, for example, of business administration, social work, nursing, health care administration, professional counseling, and clinical psychology. Therefore, current deaconesses must seek additional education, and deaconess programs must recruit students who already have professional education. Reclamation will take time, persistence and financial resources to fund deaconesses' continuing education.

Engaging Missions in Diakonia

A SEPARATE SECTION to discuss missions artificially separates the mission accomplished by all congregations and some Lutheran institutions: proclaiming the Gospel and providing the Sacraments so that hearers may come to know Christ as Savior. However, for the sake of discussion, we are devoting this separate section for missions and *diakonia*.

The LCMS mission strategy once included deaconesses in mercy, health care and teaching, working very closely with Word and Sacraments on the mission field. The current LCMS mission emphasis on leadership training and teaching English as a second language means that often *diakonia* is relegated to the personal piety of missionaries but is not part of every mission field's continual, holistic strategy. It is encouraging to see a few short-term opportunities for *diakonia* by medical professionals and agricultural experts. But just as our denomination has a long way to go to live out who we are here in the U.S., so too on the mission field.

The deaconess has a unique perspective valuable for missions. Her expertise in diaconal care reaches women and children in cultures with gender-specific roles and expectations. The deaconess provides care where the pastor cannot or should not go. Many cultures

do not desire specialists in the church, which fits well with the generalist approach for diaconal care by a deaconess.

Present Service of Deaconesses in Missions

GOD HAS BLESSED deaconesses with hearts burdened for reaching the lost. During the last 15 years, deaconesses have served in domestic missions involving international students, deaf ministry, Jewish evangelism, and work among peoples speaking Japanese and Spanish. Spanish-speaking Americans and immigrants surround our congregations in urban and rural areas. Many are separated from their religious ties and are ripe for harvest (John 4:35). We rejoice that the Hispanic Institute of Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, prepares Spanish-speaking women as commissioned LCMS deaconesses. Christ is also served through the many Anglo deaconesses who have become fluent in Spanish during their education or foreign internships.

As the Lord brings a flood of many ethnicities to our doorstep, Concordia Seminary's Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology prepares pastors and, soon, deaconesses, for service principally within their cultural contexts in the U.S.

During the last 15 years, deaconesses and deaconess interns in foreign lands have worked in China, England, Germany, Guatemala, Russia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Venezuela. Deaconesses have cared for the poor and disenfranchised, former prostitutes, homeless, immigrants, orphans, displaced persons, and those with extreme crises of body and soul. Through teaching God's Word and the catechism, the Spirit has brought many to faith.

Some deaconesses have had the honor to help prepare other women for deaconess service. It is thrilling to see women of our partner Lutheran churches entering into deaconess programs in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The needs are great; the workers are few.

Future Opportunities for Deaconesses in Missions

OBVIOUSLY, IT IS A CHIEF MISSION strategy to make available in the language of

the people the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, and these must be taught and explained in the language of the people. Therefore, a persistent need exists for bilingual church workers; the future of deaconess missions depends on recruiting and training bilingual deaconesses.

The future of deaconesses in missions also requires them to respond to severe social needs. Here in the United States and in other privileged countries, there are many public and private social service agencies with which the church can cooperate to provide diaconal care. But in underdeveloped countries, care is often inadequate or inaccessible. The tremendous needs overwhelm any system. Deaconesses respond by doing and enabling the care that is needed: setting up AIDS orphanages, rehabilitation homes, meals for the unemployed, counseling for women pregnant with unwanted children, shelters for the homeless, and drug addiction recovery programs. As the Lord has shown us mercy, we as His body cannot help but show mercy flowing from the Gospel and Sacraments.

Conclusion

THE DIACONATE REMINDS the Church to see Christ "in His suffering ones and His poor"¹¹ and to *respond* to Christ there. A deaconess should be a thorn in the side of the Church at any signal that the Church is being apathetic towards suffering and injustice. She is willing to serve and suffer with those who suffer in order to point them to Christ and His suffering on their behalf.

The future of diaconal work is shaped by the people God places in our path and the burdens to care that God places in our hearts. The exact form, exact structure, and exact job description are only important in that they serve the needs for mercy and care in Church and world.

Satan continually sets up roadblocks to mercy. He has tricked us into de-valuing *diakonia* as a task of the Church. He has tried to reduce the funding for *diakonia*. But he will not win because God's people must be who they are: the body of Christ engaged in the *diakonia* of Christ.

Revivals of the diaconate are happening in

every major Christian denomination. In the LCMS, we have unprecedented opportunities to educate deaconesses at three levels: vocational, undergraduate, and graduate/seminary. We are developing a well-educated, competent, bold, and compassionate diaconate to arouse the Church for its life of care.

May the Lord who has taken us into the death and resurrection of His Son in our baptism and who nourishes us on the body and blood of Christ make us into the vehicle of love and joy in this world until we offer the full and perfect praise forever. Amen.¹²

Notes

- 1 Wilhelm Loehe, *On Mercy*, 1858/1860. Unpublished translation.
- 2 Rev. Wilhelm Loehe served a small parish in Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, during the mid 19th century. He also founded Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and sent many missionary pastors to the U.S.
- 3 Davide C. Ratke, *Confession and Mission, Word and Sacrament: The Ecclesial Theology of Wilhelm Loehe*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001, p. 96.
- 4 Ratke, p. 189
- 5 "Mission of Mercy . . . Women of Action: The Norwegian Lutheran Deaconess Society of Chicago" (Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Illinois, 1985), p. 17.
- 6 Kenneth F. Korby, *Theology of Pastoral Care in Wilhelm Loehe with Special Attention to the Function of the Liturgy and the Laity* (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary in Exile, 1976), 144. Note: If *diakonia* flows freely from and back to worship in your congregation, then a deaconess is not needed. Rejoice!
- 7 Korby, presentation delivered to the Concordia Deaconess Conference, 3/11/98, from author's notes.
- 8 Korby, presentation.
- 9 Matthew C. Harrison, *The Church's Role of Mercy in the Community* (LCMS World Relief and Human Care, 2002), 7.
- 10 Harrison, p. 7.
- 11 From the Deaconess Motto, *The True Deaconess Spirit*, by Wilhelm Loehe.
- 12 From the *Deaconess Litany*, written by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Korby, Valparaiso, Indiana, 1958.



THERESA LIST

LCMS Deaconesses: Who We Are, How to Become One, and How We Can Enrich Your Congregation or Institution

"WHAT IS MY WANT? I want to serve. Whom do I want to serve? The Lord in his wretched ones and his poor. And what is my reward? I serve neither for reward nor thanks, but out of gratitude and love. My reward is that I am permitted to serve." These beginning lines of the *Deaconess Motto* by Rev. Wilhelm Loehe, founder of the Confessional Lutheran Deaconess Movement in the 1800s, encapsulate the heart of deaconess ministry, or *diakonia*. Whether or not your church has a called deaconess, chances are *diakonia* is at the heart of your church's life.

What is Diakonia?

YOUR PARISH PRACTICES *diakonia* when the faithful are instructed, the sick visited, the poor assisted, the suffering comforted, the grieving consoled, the hungry nourished, the fearful encouraged, the lonely befriended, the recovering nursed back to health, the abandoned supported, the ignorant educated, the jaded reassured, the questioners answered, the outsider evangelized. Or rather, chances are that this is the *diakonia* which, ideally, you would like to see occur, or

DEACONESS THERESA LIST IS ASSISTANT TO THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR DIACONAL STUDIES, CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS. (listt@csl.edu)

occur more thoroughly and consistently, in your congregation.

Most churches have only two sources for *diakonia*: the work of the pastor and the work of the volunteer. But there are two problems with these approaches. The first problem is that if a congregation relies largely on the pastor to provide *diakonia*, the pastor will be overtaxed, and worse, will be distracted from the primary responsibilities of his call, providing Word and Sacrament ministry. The Apostles themselves realized that the pastor should not be distracted from his call to Word and Sacrament ministry to provide *diakonia* (to "wait on tables"), and that the Church should not even consider failing to provide *diakonia* because of its proper focus on Word and Sacrament ministry. The second problem is that if a congregation relies largely on volunteers to provide *diakonia*, *diakonia* will likely not attain its necessary position at the heart of the life of the church. Partially this is because the structure of our society leaves the church in chronic need of sufficient volunteers. Partially this is because a congregation needs an *office*—and an officer—of *diakonia*. When a congregation has a pastor, it sends the message that Word and Sacrament ministry is not an *ad hoc* and optional part of the Church's life, but rather a central and essential part of the Church's ministry in the world. When a congregation has a diakonal officer—that ministry for which we deaconesses are trained and called—it says that *diakonia* is an essential ministry of Christ to his Church. God designed the Word and Sacraments to be efficacious unto our justification and our sanctification. The pastor brings the Word and Sacraments to the parishioners; the deaconess brings the fruits of the Word and Sacraments to them. Ideally, the deaconess does not replace volunteers; instead, she both ensures that *diakonia* will take place full-time in the name of the parish, and she coordinates and educates diakonal volunteers so that they might perform their *diakonia* more effectively.

What is a Deaconess?

DEACONESS MINISTRY is commonly described as having three pillars, meaning that there are three main areas of service provided by



deaconesses: spiritual care, mercy care, and teaching of the Christian faith. The goal of all three of these pillars of deaconess ministry is the same, that people be set free by the glorious love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. All three are designed to bring our flesh-and-blood Christ to people who are themselves struggling with the realities of being flesh-and-blood humans. Spiritual care brings Christ to people by perceiving people's spiritual needs and addressing them with a proper application of Law and Gospel to each person's individual circumstances. Deaconesses address both the day-to-day spiritual needs of the individual and the crisis-induced spiritual needs of believer or unbeliever alike. Mercy care brings Christ to people by removing impediments to perceiving Christ's merciful presence. As frail humans, many temporal forms of suffering, born of illness or poverty, heartache or catastrophe, obscure the love of Christ from our view. Deaconesses attend to the temporal needs of people, showing them Christ's love penultimately in the merciful administrations which they bestow on the needy, but always with the ultimate goal of teaching people that it is the eternal mercies of Christ demonstrated at Calvary, not the temporal mercies demonstrated today, which are the bedrock of their peace. Teaching the Faith brings Christ to people by bringing them face-to-face with the Living Word who equips them to witness Christ to others and prepares them to face the challenges which their own lives do or will hold. These three pillars of spiritual care, mercy care, and teaching the Faith are the unifying thread of continuity throughout forms of diaconal service which might otherwise appear to be quite diverse.

Who Becomes a Deaconess and Why?

THE DECISION TO BECOME a deaconess is a complex one. Part of what goes into that decision is a deliberate and calculated conclusion that one's own personal talents are congruous with the skill-set needed to be a competent deaconess. The other part of that decision is much more personal, and occurs when a woman who is considering deaconess ministry from the "outside" has that stirring



sensation inside which makes her feel that she is looking in a mirror, or that, in considering the deaconess ministry, she is coming home to herself and embracing who she has always been.

Frequently, women who end up becoming deaconesses tell the story that, at an earlier point in their lives, they “never knew that deaconesses existed.” Upon discovering this hidden gem of deaconess ministry, women frequently feel like they are looking in a mirror, seeing themselves in deaconess ministry, discovering that they can become professionally who they have always been avocationally.

Deaconesses and the Missouri Synod

DEACONESSSES ARE PROFESSIONAL church workers. The position of deaconess in the LCMS is a called and rostered one, meaning that the deaconess is called by a congregation or institution of the Synod, either to serve therein or to serve in a secular institution, such as a prison or hospital, in the name of the LCMS. Similar to teachers and other non-ordained church workers, deaconesses are considered “ministers of religion—commissioned,” generally participating in the worker benefits program of the calling institution, and generally considered to be self-employed.

Deaconesses are not new to our Synod. The LCMS has had deaconesses serving in America for fully as long as the church body now known as the LCMS has existed. As both the faces of the American concepts of professional education and the process for the training of church workers has changed over the years, so has the nature and location of deaconess education. Since 1979, by virtue of synodical resolution, deaconess training has been conducted by LCMS institutions of higher education. In 1980, Concordia College (now University), River Forest became the sole institution offering the deaconess program to LCMS women. Since LCMS deaconesses major in theology and since the heart of diaconal ministry is spiritual care, already since the inception of the River Forest Deaconess Program, discussions between LCMS deaconesses and other LCMS theologians were exploring the possibility of educating deaconesses at our synodical seminaries. By resolution of the



2001 synodical convention, our two seminaries were authorized to begin deaconess programs. As a result, we currently have three synodical institutions which offer deaconess programs: Concordia University, River Forest, which maintains the B.A. program and the colloquy program; Concordia Theological Seminary, which offers an M.A. program; and Concordia Seminary, which offers both an M.A. program and deaconess certification via the Hispanic Institute of Theology.

In earlier days, deaconess education was not the unique venue of the Synod. In early American Lutheran history, deaconesses were either educated in Germany and then sent to work in the United States, or they were trained locally by the myriad of regional Lutheran church bodies. In 1911, the Synodical Conference, which was the union of conservative Lutheran synods of the United States, decided to begin educating deaconesses to serve within the various synods of the conference. A pamphlet written in that year by Rev. Hertzburger, son of a former deaconess,¹ argued that a woman could and should serve in any ecclesial capacity save that of the Office of Public Ministry (the pastoral office). In clarification of just what constituted the pastoral office, Hertzburger clarified that the Christian woman has no role within the worship service (*Gottesdienst*) of the community. Outside of the worship service Hertzburger contended that not only *could* women serve the Lord freely, according to their skills and interests, but that the Church was *obligated* by God to make use of the gift God had given to the Church in the personages of women. God had given both deaconesses and pastors, with both their common and their unique spiritual gifts, to the Church, and it was shameful when the Church did not embrace both deaconesses and pastors. Interestingly, this argument was proposed in *response* to the proliferation of deaconesses in the less Confessional and less Scripturally faithful Lutheran conference known as the General Synod. Pastor Hertzburger wanted to see Scriptural and Confessional Lutherans embrace deaconess ministry, and the Synodical Conference concurred. The conference began offering Scripturally and Confessionally

focused diaconal education in the name of the conference and for the benefit of congregations and institutions formally or informally affiliated with the conference. By the 1940s, this conference-oriented deaconess education had become university-based education in theology and *diakonia*, and the location of this education was Valparaiso University. To this day, Valparaiso offers a pan-Lutheran deaconess program.

Earlier in our history, graduates of the Valparaiso University Deaconess Program were eligible to be rostered deaconesses of the LCMS. This is no longer the case. One reason is that there is no longer a conference of conservative American Lutheran church bodies which are in altar-and-pulpit fellowship with each other. Another reason is that the *Zeitgeist* of the Valparaiso University Deaconess Program has changed and now deviates from the conservative Lutheran position, most notably in favoring the ordination of women. The Valparaiso University graduate herself may be quite conservative and confessional, and may hold unswervingly to her LCMS convictions (if she is LCMS); but since the program encourages women's ordination and other positions not consistent with the convictions of the LCMS, Valparaiso University Deaconess Program graduates must colloquize to obtain LCMS rostering. Currently, all rostered LCMS deaconesses are either graduated or colloquized by LCMS institutions of higher learning, or they graduated from Valparaiso University at a time when the LCMS was still rostering graduates of the Valparaiso University Deaconess Program.

Deaconesses: Professional Conferences

PARISHES AND INSTITUTIONS which are familiar with LCMS deaconesses will have already discerned that two main different deaconess conferences exist. These two conferences are professional associations of deaconesses. A deaconess could graduate from any given deaconess program (Synodical or that of Valparaiso) and choose not to join a professional conference. However, most deaconesses do choose to join a professional conference, partially for purposes of professional enrichment, but especially due to a sense of

sisterly community. Historically, deaconesses have been identified both by the recognition of the Church (which currently is attained by approved theological and vocational education) and the sisterly community between deaconesses themselves. This community results from the "sisterhood" of identity and purpose between deaconesses, often despite superficial differences in diakonal job descriptions. In fact, until quite recently, American Lutheran deaconesses were known not by that title, but rather by the title of "sister." In a few pockets of American Lutheranism and in most areas of international Lutheranism, deaconesses are still known as "sisters."

The two main deaconess conferences to which LCMS deaconesses generally belong are the Lutheran Deaconess Conference (LDC) and the Concordia Deaconess Conference (CDC). The LDC tends to be comprised of graduates of the Valparaiso Deaconess Program, and therefore has members of several different Lutheran church bodies. The CDC is comprised of rostered LCMS deaconesses (generally deaconesses actively serving in or retired from called positions). The uniforms, properly called garb, of the two conferences differ. (Deaconesses of either conference have the option of wearing or not wearing their garb.) The LDC formal garb consists of a navy blue dress or suit worn with the pin which is the symbol of the LDC, namely a Jerusalem cross with a bowl of water, symbolizing the service Christ rendered by washing the disciples' feet. Navy is worn because it is traditionally a common uniform color for practitioners of service professions. Informally, LDC deaconesses can wear the pin with any outfit. The CDC has only formal garb, which consists of the navy blue suit or dress, and two crosses: a three-inch gold cross stitched on the left sleeve and a one-inch version of the same cross pinned over the heart. This golden cross is comprised of stylized fish laid nose to nose (symbolizing the Christian call to be "fishers of men"), whose tails flair out like Easter lilies. This symbol represents the gift of eternal life (hence the gold) won for us by Christ on the cross, which is the heart of the message (hence the positioning of the two crosses near our hearts) which we herald to others (hence the Easter lily shape).

Diakonal Education

THE NATURE OF THE CURRICULA of the Synod's various deaconess programs is similar, independent of which educational institution the deaconess student chooses to attend. We maintain a continuity of educational standards between the various schools which offer deaconess programs. This continuity consists of educating deaconesses to be competent theologians and competent practitioners of *diakonia* in its three major forms of teaching the Faith, furnishing spiritual care, and providing mercy care. This education takes place both in the classroom and in the field. Deaconess students at all three institutions major in theology and take core classes in diakonal history and practice. In addition, all deaconess students do field work, or on-the-job training, in congregations and institutions.² Since some deaconesses are called to serve in congregations, and others are called to serve in institutions such as nursing homes, hospitals, and prisons, ideally deaconess students will experience field work in both congregational and institutional settings. Finally, all deaconess students serve a one-year long, full-time internship in a congregation or institution, for which they are compensated with salary and benefits.

Although core characteristics of deaconess education are consistent among different synodical schools, each program has its individual specialties and foci as well. The unique specialty of Concordia University, River Forest is the B.A. Deaconess Program. This program leads the graduate to a B.A. in theology, producing graduates certified in deaconess ministry. This program is five years long—four years of liberal arts education majoring in theology and specializing in *diakonia*, and one year of internship.³ Concordia Theological Seminary maintains an M.A. program leading the graduate to an M.A. and certification in deaconess ministry. The unique specialty of the Fort Wayne program is that it has two distinct foci: general theological education with an emphasis in specific diakonal courses, and in human care. Concordia Seminary maintains both the Hispanic Institute of Theology's deaconess



program, which is a distance-education program for native Spanish speakers seeking to become deaconesses, and the M.A. program in Deaconess Studies. The unique specialty of the St. Louis program is that it offers the largest number of specialized deaconess theology courses. All three schools offer courses in deaconess history and skills for deaconess practice. In addition, Concordia Seminary has two courses dedicated to issues which deaconesses need to be able to address competently, namely, the role of women in the Church and special spiritual needs of women. Both seminary programs are about three years long, two years of academic and one year of internship.

Concluding Thoughts

WOMEN IN THE LCMS who find that they have a desire to serve their Lord in the areas of spiritual care, mercy care, and teaching of the

Christian Faith should consider the office of deaconess. Likewise, if you know a woman who demonstrates a servant heart, who cares for hurting people, and who loves to study God's Word and share it with others, recommend the deaconess program to her and share what you have learned about diaconal ministry. If your congregation or institution is interested in calling a deaconess, it has two options. If interested in calling a deaconess from the field, one contacts the District Office and requests to call a deaconess. If interested in calling a deaconess who is being newly placed into the field, one contacts the three schools with deaconess programs and requests a candidate. In addition, a congregation or institution can aid in the education of a deaconess and can determine if a deaconess would be right for them by employing a deaconess intern for a year. Interns are available from all three schools. Contact may be made with:



Concordia Seminary
Deaconess Studies Program
801 Seminary Place
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-505-7150
decuirg@csl.edu
www.csl.edu

Concordia Theological Seminary
6600 North Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46825
260-452-2210
bielbysm@mail.ctsfw.edu
www.ctsfw.edu

Concordia University
7400 Augusta Street
River Forest, IL 60305
708-209-3136
1-800-285-2668
www.curf.edu/departments/deaconess

Notes

- 1 Until the mid-1960s, deaconesses were single women, in accordance with the post-industrial revolution western expectation that married men focused on paid employment and married women focused on child-rearing and household management. If and when a deaconess decided to marry (which was encouraged), she resigned the diaconal call in favor of her "call" to be a wife and mother. As social ethos changed, so did this requirement.
- 2 Congregations and institutions near the program schools may request field workers.
- 3 All program lengths given for all three schools presume the beginning student; students who have previous higher education in required areas may have shorter programs on a case-by-case basis. Concordia University, River Forest in particular offers a colloquy program for women who are already deaconesses but who are seeking LCMS rostering.

book reviews

Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization

Alvin J. Schmidt

Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Zondervan, 2001

[CHRIST] CLIMBED the high mountain, He captured the enemy and seized the booty, He handed it all out in gifts to the people (Ephesians 4:8 *The Message*).

Alvin Schmidt's *Under the Influence* serves as specific and powerful commentary on this text and its context—Ephesians 4:1–16. As the apostle Paul in these verses looks ahead, down the aisle of history, anticipating the impact God's people, faithfully taught and led, would make on the culture around them, so Schmidt looks back up that same aisle two millennia later to evaluate that impact. Both writers agree that the grace of the Lord Christ working through love cannot help but transform everything it touches. Thus, down through the centuries, faith working through the Savior's love has:

- Amplified the worth of the unborn, the newly born, and children.
- Created conditions in which justice and liberty can thrive.
- Elevated the dignity of marriage and sexuality.
- Transformed the freedoms and self-determination of women.
- Revolutionized attitudes toward the sick, the dying, the weak, the poor.
- Accented a vocational view of work and its significance.
- Provided fertile soil in which science, music, literature, art, and architecture could flourish.

Christianity has indeed transformed civilization, as Schmidt's subtitle claims! Chapter by chapter, overwhelming evidence supporting this contention nearly bludgeons readers into the admission that without the work Christ began and his Christians have continued (Acts 1:1), civilization as we know it would not exist.

No doubt aware of the charges of triumphalism that could easily attach to his work from both academic and theological quarters, Schmidt contextualizes his theses, meticulously documenting them with impeccable sources and carefully attributing the motivation for

the contributions of Christianity to authentic faith in the physical resurrection of the Lord and the forgiveness that flows from his cross and open tomb.

Chapter by chapter, specific facts tumble so rapidly from the pages that reading becomes almost tedious. We begin to feel we've heard it all before. But many of us, indeed perhaps the vast majority of us, have not! And that seems to be Schmidt's very point.

Our society suffers from a collective amnesia in regard to the seed from which the garden of our civilization's compassion, our freedoms, our scientific advances, and our artistic endeavors have sprung. Forgetful of their source, we have fallen little by little into the trap of believing we can continue to harvest the fruit that springs from a sanctified Christian worldview while neglecting the plant that bore it. Painful lessons will likely follow in the wake of this experiment. That is the first take-away from Schmidt's work.

The second challenges all who like to think of ourselves as servant leaders. As we consider the bold and imaginative approaches Christians in other eras have invented and executed to address the needs of the societies in which they lived, so their zeal and creativity should surely rally the same passion and ingenious action in God's people today. Touched by the love of Jesus and empowered by his resurrection, we see and seize opportunities to serve by leading. Service, in and of itself, is important. But only servant leadership will continue the world-changing legacy left by those who have gone before us. May those who come behind us find us faithful!

Dr. Jane Fryar

Associate Professor of Education
Concordia University, Nebraska
jfrayar@cune.edu

Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart

Kenneth Haugk

St. Louis, Missouri:
Stephen Ministries, 2004

KENNETH C. HAUGK is a pastor, clinical psychologist, and the founder and executive director of Stephen Ministries, an organization that trains lay members of congregations to help their fellow Christians in times of crisis.

Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart is written from the perspective of his previous education coupled with insights, hunches, and observations made during his wife's struggle with cancer. The subsequent research project which he undertook to validate his personal impressions involved more than 4,000 participants and resulted in this book dedicated to helping one to become better equipped to walk with people through their valleys of grief.

Dr. Haugk points out that most people really do desire to help rather than hurt their friends and family members when crisis enters their lives. The obstacles that turn well-intentioned actions into painful experiences are numerous. First, most people really desire to fix the *problem* but instead try to fix the *person* by offering solutions to help this individual get past or over the grief. He also indicates that people do not want to face or experience the pain, so they may encourage others to deny theirs, setting up an impression that their pain is either unacceptable or unusual. These actions are hurtful in that the person either experiences additional trauma or tries to deny rather than work through it.

Correctly admonishing us that we are incapable of changing or healing people, the author frequently reminds us that God is the only one capable of that action. What we can do is be with our suffering loved ones. We can listen to them as long as they want to speak. We can cry genuine tears of mutual grief with them. We can sit with them in silence, just letting our presence speak to them of our care and concern. We can bring examples of God working in our own lives to help us when we felt lost and alone. We can even encourage their expressions of anger at God with the acknowledgment that God is indeed in control.

The author offers practical suggestions such as: remembering that people need to rest instead of being inundated by phone calls; recognizing the importance of learning when and how humor can be helpful; and knowing when and which words from God to use at different times. The power of listening rather than talking is offered as an extremely important part of helping rather than hurting. Though a relatively short book, *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart* is full of good advice and frequent biblical references as well as a reminder of how hurtful clichés are. A reader may already be aware of some parts of the author's presentation. Still,

it is a book written from both the head and the heart, with a passion about a subject that can come only through experience.

Gloria DeCuir

Deaconess, Assistant to the Dean of the
Graduate School for Diaconal Studies
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
decuir@cs.edu

**Transform your Church with
Ministry Teams**

E. Stanley Ott

Grand Rapids, Michigan
William Eerdmans, 2004

CHURCH WORKERS, whether pastor, deaconess, teacher, or director of Christian education, have a common struggle: making volunteer work in the church meaningful for the volunteer. Committees meet once a month, discuss a few issues and go home. A common frustration for the volunteer is that little is accomplished and there is little connection to fellow committee members. Stanley Ott's book, *Transform your Church with Ministry Teams*, attempts to give the professional church worker or lay leader a new perspective on volunteer work. He focuses on philosophy and theory behind volunteer organizations, transitioning these ideas to ministry teams, and nurturing ministry teams through Bible study and fellowship.

The first portion of the book deals with the principles behind the traditional committees and the philosophy behind ministry teams. At first glance, we might be inclined to dismiss ministry teams as a traditional committee thinly veiled with new terminology, but Ott disagrees. He distinguishes ministry teams from traditional committees in that ministry teams include spiritual nurturing and fellowship as part of their purpose for existence. They do not neglect their ministry purposes, but strive to be equally focused on the tasks and the people.

The balance of task and process does not become completely clear until the third section of the book. The primary distinction that Ott makes between traditional committees and ministry teams is the nurturing characteristic

that is foundational for a team. He dedicates the final three chapters to this topic and provides a helpful model for team fellowship and discipleship that can be used in any situation.

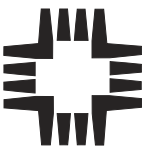
In the middle portion of the book, Ott provides many suggestions and insights to developing ministry teams. As a veteran pastor, team coordinator, and author, he has remarkable qualifications in developing teams and fills this section with anecdotal stories and reflections on his personal experiences. He is decidedly optimistic about the transition process including the recruitment and development of leadership for the teams and identification of team members. The text includes practical methods for skeptical readers to quietly integrate into their ministry without completely restructuring a more resistant congregation. Among his quiet integration tactics are modeling ministry team principles by paid and professional staff of the congregation. Ott suggests that the staff is the first place to initiate the transition.

The book is geared specifically towards those who are ready to make the transition from traditional volunteer committees to a ministry team emphasis. Readers that are interested in developing a volunteer service that extends beyond completing tasks and contributes to personal and spiritual development can draw from Ott's models and experiences. If the reader is well read on the topic of ministry teams, Ott's book could seem to be a mere repetition of the other literature on the topic. However, his analysis of this particular aspect of volunteer work is clear, concise, and potentially helpful to any church worker or lay leader who serves on or with committees or wishes to develop new ministry teams.

Alaina Kleinbeck

Director of Christian Education student
Concordia University, Nebraska
Alaina.Kleinbeck@cune.org





CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

800 North Columbia Avenue
Seward, Nebraska 68434

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Seward, NE
Permit No. 4

Return Service Requested.

Route to: _____

