

Appendix A: Report of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Board of Directors

Sr. Krista M. Anderson, Saint Paul, Minn. (2014)²
Sr. Mary K. Arie, *secretary*, Hordeville, Neb. (2014)^{1,5}
Sr. Davia A. Baldauf, Mount Holly Springs, Pa. (2012)³
Sr. Melinda A. Lando, *chair*, New York, N.Y. (2012)¹
Pr. Dirk G. Lange, St. Paul, Minn. (2014)³
Sr. Carmen A. Ramirez, Bayamon, Puerto Rico (2012)⁵
Pr. Donald A. Stiger, Brooklyn, N.Y. (2012)²
Mr. Bruce Swanson, *treasurer*, Roanoke, Va. (2012)^{1,6}
Bp. Ray Tiemann, Seguin, Texas (2012)
Sr. W. Jean Widmeyer, Saskatoon, SK, Canada (2014)⁴
Pr. Jim Wilson, *vice chair*, Worthington, Ohio (2014)^{1,7}

¹ Executive Committee

² Committee on Governance

³ Committee on Vocation and Education

⁴ Committee on Mission Support

⁵ Committee on Community Life

⁶ Committee on Finance and Budget

⁷ Committee on Communications

Advisors (through 2010)

Pr. Stanley N. Olson, Dubuque, Iowa
Pr. D. Jensen Seyenkulo, Chicago, Ill.

Leadership Staff

Sr. Sylvia S. Countess, *director for vocation and education*
Sr. E. Anne Keffer, *directing deaconess*
Ms. Barbara A. Swartling, *executive director*

Statement of Purpose

The Deaconess Community was formed that skilled and committed women serving through community may complement the ministry of Word and Sacrament as well as the ministry of the whole people of God. This ministry is exercised within the context of the church's mission to proclaim the Gospel, to relate the Gospel to human need in every situation, and to extend the ministry of the Gospel to all the world. The governing description of this unit appears in continuing resolution 16.12.A10.a. printed in Section X of this volume.

Our Mission

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

Our Core Values

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

Historical Context

The Deaconess Community is a not-for-profit corporation registered in Pennsylvania. It is also one of the four public ministry rosters of the ELCA, which include clergy, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and the Deaconess Community. The community uniquely serves both the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) thanks to its earlier relationship within the predecessor Lutheran Church in America (LCA), which served both the United States and Canada. Prior to formation of the ELCA, provision was made to give members of the Deaconess Community full accreditation in both churches.

As part of the redesign of the ELCA in late 2010, the Deaconess Community was recognized as one of nine separately incorporated ministries. In this capacity the community has been invited for the first time to submit a unit report to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. We would like to share with you a brief history of this organization.

The Deaconess Community had its earliest origins in the United States in Pennsylvania in 1884, when seven deaconesses were brought from Germany to superintend the German Hospital in Philadelphia. Thus began the Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses. A second beginning was the action taken in 1889 by the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States to establish an Order of Deaconesses. This in turn led to creation of a Deaconess Board and then a Deaconess Community in Baltimore. The General Synod designated deaconesses as holding an office in the church. A third deaconess community, including Immanuel Lutheran Hospital, was

established in Omaha, Neb., in 1890. These three communities came together in the mid-1960s, at the time of the merger creating the Lutheran Church in America, to form the present Deaconess Community.

(Other, unrelated Lutheran deaconess communities were also established in the United States over the years, though their motherhouses no longer operate. However, the institutions they began often continue, such as Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Ill.; and Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center, Brush, Colo.)

From the beginning of the LCA until 2002, the Deaconess Community operated a single motherhouse in Gladwyne, Pa., near Philadelphia. It provided a retirement residence, a center for study and retreat, and the community's administrative offices. The house was sold in 2002, and in 2003 the community offices moved to the Lutheran Center in Chicago. At the end of 2010, a total of 75 deaconesses resided or served in 22 states and five Canadian provinces. Of this number, 43 were under active call or in internships, 27 were disabled or retired, and five were awaiting call. Today's deaconesses serve in a wide range of vocational settings, including schools, hospitals, social service agencies, non-profit organizations, parishes, and as chaplains in hospitals and elder care facilities. Fewer deaconesses are nurses than at any time in our history.

Today community is embodied in the way deaconesses support and encourage one another, in prayer and in one another's company. An annual prayer calendar invites the community to pray for each sister each month on the date of her birthday. Information is shared through a regularly updated website, a monthly newsletter, and emailed prayer requests. The Deaconess Community is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors, six of whom are deaconesses. Its highest decision making body is the Deaconess Assembly, which includes all sisters and gathers annually to share in worship and Bible study, conduct business, and engage in other community-building activities. Many sisters are also active in the six standing committees listed above.

A "place" in a literal sense has never actually defined the Deaconess Community. Since the community's inception, sisters have worked around the world and throughout North America. In fact, after the property sale, earnings on the invested proceeds have made it possible to further extend the community's ministry through its Mission Grant program. Through mission grants, the community is able to lift up the ministries of agencies that share in its mission and core values. For the 2009 and 2010 grant cycles, mission grants were funded totaling \$437,000. Since inception of the program in 2004, grants totaling \$1,140,000 have been distributed to 49 agencies. (A list of grant recipients can be found on the community's website, www.elca.org/deaconess.) More than 22 percent of each year's operating budget is committed to the Mission Grant program.

Report of Work for 2009–2011

The Deaconess Community board embarked on its current strategic planning process in 2007, culminating in the adoption of a new Strategic Plan. The plan lists six Bridges to Vision and Mission—critical success factors—that have shaped the community's work since implementation began in late 2008. These success factors are listed below, along with a summary of the work done pursuant to the plan for the years reported.

Community Identity

The first goal in this category involved establishing a common understanding of the community that all members can describe. Affirmation of the community's mission, vision, and values was an important action of the 2008 Deaconess Assembly. In 2009, celebration of the community's 125th Anniversary provided another opportunity to focus on community identity, and to relate to others in diaconal ministry through participation in World Diakonia, held in Atlanta, Ga. At this gathering, this community also met for the first time with ELCA diaconal ministers and with members of the Lutheran Deaconess Association.

Strengthening internal communications is a second and ongoing goal which has been coordinated by the director of communications. Electronic communication has become the preferred option for receiving the monthly newsletter, and email is also the primary vehicle for sharing information, along with an enhanced community website (www.elca.org/deaconess). A new pictorial directory was produced in 2009. Thanks to support from the staff of Information Technology, the community is also able to conduct meetings and share documents in a secure Web environment. To assist newly elected board members in beginning their work, a new *Board Orientation* manual was created and was distributed to all directors in 2009.

The goal of building stronger relationships among sisters has been supported by changing the biennial Deaconess Assembly to an annual event beginning in 2010, providing time for social/fellowship events along with business matters. The 2010 Deaconess Assembly was held in Baltimore, Md., with the theme, "A Future with Hope." Gathering at this historic location provided an opportunity for participants to visit the site of the last Baltimore motherhouse and school, and to visit the local cemetery where the bodies of many sainted sisters from that community are buried. The 2011 Deaconess Assembly will gather at Techny Towers, near Chicago, with the theme, "A Future with Mercy." Plans include an opportunity for hands-on participation in a local ministry.

Grow Individually and Community-Wide

Growth in numbers is the first goal, and the expansion of the leadership staff, discussed further below, is intended in part to support growth. The enhanced Deaconess Community website includes useful information for inquirers and candidates. The second goal is to support spiritual health and professional growth by promoting continuing education for all women in the organization. In 2010, a sabbatical provision was added to the

community's personnel policy, and the same year, our directing deaconess, Sr. Anne Keffer, was granted a two-month sabbatical leave. All sisters are encouraged to take advantage of sabbatical and other continuing education opportunities available to them through their vocational settings. Continuing education offerings are announced regularly in the monthly newsletter, and financial assistance is available to sisters to ensure that access is not denied for lack of funds.

A third growth goal is to share the community's commitment to promoting *diakonia* within the wider church. An important vehicle for doing so is sponsorship of the J-Term diaconal discernment course that is offered each January at a Lutheran seminary. The community pays the cost of this course for all inquirers and candidates.

Another example of our commitment to promoting *diakonia* is demonstrated by this community's participation in the recently completed ELCA Regional Consultations on Public Ministries. The community largely funded the first meeting in Florida in 2007, which brought together associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and Deaconess Community members, along with representatives of the churchwide organization. Both our directing deaconess and board chair provided leadership for planning and implementation of subsequent regional events for the three rosters, and for preparation of the final report in 2010 that was submitted to the Office of the Secretary and other recipients. Regular contact with ELCA seminaries, participation in Synod Assemblies, and interaction with synod bishops and candidacy committees are all important aspects of promoting the ministry of *diakonia* throughout this church.

Organizational Structure and Function

The first goal in this category is to "create a structure that will enable us to carry out our mission." The creation of a new executive director position was approved at the 2008 Deaconess Assembly as a first step in creation of the current three-person senior leadership staff configuration. The directing deaconess is responsible for overseeing the pastoral and spiritual care of the individual sisters and the community as a whole. She serves as the Deaconess Community's ambassador and liaison to the church and the world. The director of vocation and education is responsible for implementing, with the Committee on Vocation and Education, the candidacy process and continuing education for candidates and deaconesses. The executive director is responsible for overseeing the management and administration of the finances, programs, and operations of the Deaconess Community, and develops and implements organizational strategy. The three leaders work in partnership with the board of directors to provide leadership, vision, and direction for the organization and community. A part-time internal accountant, and a combined administrator and director of communications, complete the staff configuration. Updated job descriptions were created for each position, and updated personnel policies provide guidance to all staff.

During the past biennium, the organization was also enhanced at the committee level. Each standing committee

created a charter and established term limits for its members. A new Committee on Governance was established to coordinate committee appointments, and to oversee the nomination and election processes for board members and the directing deaconess.

Financial Planning and Monitoring

The community strives to ensure that spending and investment priorities are focused on mission and reflect good stewardship. A more streamlined budget process has been created to invite wide participation and promote transparency. The investment policy was thoroughly reviewed and updated in 2010, with asset allocations revised to manage portfolio volatility. Changes were communicated to our investment managers in mid-2010, and implementation was completed by the end of the year.

The community also receives recurring gifts from several outside sources, and the terms of these significant gifts have been clarified in writing to ensure that the revenue streams will continue into the future.

Visibility

This portion of the plan is intended to promote positive awareness of the Deaconess Community in this church and the world. Over the past biennium, new brochures and display materials have been created for use at Synod Assemblies and other church events. The communications strategy includes a commitment to visit every Synod Assembly and convention in the ELCA and ELCIC over a five-year period. An annual planning calendar, implemented in 2009, tracks participation in various events. Specialized content has also been developed for specialized audiences. For example, "Buttons in the Bayou" were distributed to participants of the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. The enhanced Deaconess Community website, www.elca.org/deaconess, serves as a resource to the community as well as inquirers. A secure "sisters only" page provides forms and resources more specific to the community.

Corporate and Individual Opportunities for Ministry

As a ministry of *diakonia*, sisters seek internships and calls in both traditional and non-traditional settings. The community also seeks opportunities to advocate within this church for ministry to the poor and marginalized.

Financial Summary

The Deaconess Community receives no financial support from the ELCA or the ELCIC. Our operating budget is funded primarily through distributions from three investment accounts that function as endowments—two of which were established with proceeds from the sale of the Gladwyne property. A fourth account, invested with the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust, is a reserve for the annual J-Term diaconal discernment course.

Annual withdrawals from each account are governed by a spending policy so that their value is preserved over time. The investment accounts' value was severely reduced in 2008 due to the financial crisis. The fair market value of investment assets dropped from \$16.4 million at the end of 2007 to \$11.1 million at the end of 2008. By the end of 2009 their fair market value had recovered to \$13.2 million, and by the end of 2010 the fair market value was \$13.4 million.

Reduced investment values have mandated more disciplined spending within a reduced operating budget, yet we praise God for these resources that make us wealthy by most world standards. The community is committed to contributing a tithe of each year's increase in net asset value to our two church bodies. The investment loss in 2008 precluded making tithe gifts in 2009, though gifts were still made to the churches that year in thanksgiving for our connection and shared ministry with them. A year later, in 2010, our net increase of nearly \$2.1 million from 2008 to 2009 enabled us to present combined tithe checks of nearly \$210,000 to the ELCA and the ELCIC.

Budgeted income and expense for 2009 and 2010 are summarized in the table below, along with our projection for 2011.

Major Directions for 2011–2013

The Strategic Plan is regularly reviewed and updated to serve as a road map for setting future goals and priorities. We continue to commit a significant portion of our operating funds to the Mission Grant program as a way to extend our mission and ministry. We will continue to enhance our website as a vehicle for sharing information and staying connected with one another. (The Deaconess Community has been a Facebook group since 2009.) Updated resources on candidacy and internship are being developed to improve the quality of information available to inquirers and candidates. Internal operating procedures are being updated as a resource to office staff.

Finally, the Deaconess Community is committed to living into its newly defined relationship within the ELCA. As transition continues within the churchwide organization, we look forward to being in dialogue within this church to explore ways that we can facilitate and encourage shared ministry and collaboration, for the sake of the Gospel's call to *diakonia*, to do God's work with our hands.

Sr. E. Anne Keffer, *directing deaconess*

Sr. Melinda A. Lando, *board chair*

Ms. Barbara A. Swartling, *executive director*

Year	Total Income Budget All Sources	Total Expense Budget	Actual Expense, Including Unbudgeted Items	Gifts to Churches (Unbudgeted)
2009	\$1,044,748	\$1,033,208	\$939,170	\$10,000
2010	\$985,460	\$954,940	\$1,100,472	\$209,879
2011	\$894,491	\$891,692		