DEACONESS COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY

April 7 – 11, 2021

OPENING WORSHIP
with
RITE OF ACCOMPANIMENT
and
RITE OF RECEPTION
GATHERING

We rejoice in the gift of technology that allows us to join together across the miles.

*The assembly speaks the words in bold print.*

PRELUDE

OPENING DIALOGUE

*The assembly reads in unison.*

What do I wish? I wish to serve.

Whom do I wish to serve? The Lord, in His poor and needy ones.

And what is my reward? I do not serve either for reward or for thanks, but out of gratitude and love; my reward is that I may do this.

And if I perish in doing it? “If I perish, I perish”, said Queen Esther, who knew not Him, for love of whom I would perish; but He will not let me perish.

And if I grow old? Still shall my heart keep fresh as a palm tree, and the Lord shall satisfy me with grace and mercy.

I go in peace and free from care.
OPENING HYMN

1 O living Breath of God, wind at the beginning upon the waters;
2 O living Breath of God, by whose pow’r the Son came to birth among us;
3 O living Breath of God, bearing us to life through baptismal waters;

O living Breath of God, bearing the creation to wondrous birth:
O living Breath of God, who to the creation gives life anew:
O living Breath of God, sighing with creation for freedom’s birth:

Refrain

Come now, and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant.

O living Breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray.

PRAYER

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Let us pray.

O God, through the ages you have called womxn to the diaconate in your Church. Let your blessing rest now on all who answer that call. Grant then understanding of the Gospel, sincerity of purpose, diligence in ministry, and the beauty of life in Christ, that many people will be served and your name be glorified; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
WORD

FIRST READING

Micah 6:6-8

SECOND READING

1 Peter 4:8-11

HOMILY

Sister Carol Weaver

HYMN

Saviour, thee—my heart I tender,
And would yield myself to thee;
All my powers to thee surrender,
Thine and only thine to be.

Send me, Lord where thou wilt send me,
Only do thou guide my way;
May thy grace through life attend me,
Gladly then shall I obey.

RITE OF ACCOMPANIMENT

Colleen Bernu  Kimberly Dunbar  Rebecca Kolowe

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

Let us pray together.

Gracious and loving God, you have given life to your people by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You have created each of us with unique gifts and called us into specific occupations, relationships and commitments using those gifts. In Baptism, we have been reborn children of God, grafted into the Body of Christ, the Church, and called to lives of faithful service. We give thanks for all these gifts and for those who have been set apart in the diaconate to bring God’s love and justice to all people. Bless the servant leadership of the Deaconess Community and all those here today who continue to discern committing to that Community. Amen.

We gather today as pilgrims on a lifelong journey of faith and discovery. We come to this place as members, candidates and friends of the Deaconess Community, joined together in our desire to serve and love God and neighbor in all that we do.

We give thanks this day for the lives and ministries of those who serve throughout the world as Sisters in ministries of love and service. We ask that God continue to uphold, support and sustain them with a prayerful spirit, boldness of heart, and steadfastness of faith in your service.

We pray this day for Colleen, Kimberly, and Rebecca, who continue in their discernment journey through the Rite of Accompaniment toward membership in the Deaconess Community. As they continue their walk, we pray that God’s blessings and mercy will continue to lead and guide them as we continue together in the ways of encouragement, prayer and deep listening.
As we read in 1 Corinthians 12: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone . . . All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

All of you have responded to the call of God to commit yourselves to a life of prayerful, loving service in the world, and to work for justice and mercy as compassionate servant leaders who speak the truth of the Gospel boldly in the church and in the world.


Deaconess identity is characterized by the formation of bold womxn of integrity and authenticity who celebrate diversity, building communities of faith and love with compassion. Are you willing to enter into a communal discernment process?

Candidates: I am, and I ask God to help and guide me.

A deaconess identity is distinct in its commitment to communal life. Belonging to a community of Christ-centered, prayerful womxn empowers a Deaconess to be bold in the places where they serve, living at the center and at the margins at the same time. As part of your discernment, we invite you to consider the four perspectives at the heart of the Deaconess identity.

Are you willing to learn and appreciate the rich history of our Deaconess Community?

Candidates: I am, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Are you willing to participate in community life as extensively as possible and attend the Annual Assembly?

Candidates: I am, and I ask God to help and guide me

Are you willing to demonstrate generosity and graciousness of spirit in your participation in the life of the Community?

Candidates: I am, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Are you willing to nurture a disposition of prayer through regular worship and the study of Scripture?

Candidates: I am, and I ask God to help and guide me.
Hear now the promise of the Deaconess Community: as you continue your journey of prayerful discernment, we promise to accompany you, encourage you, pray for you, hear your story, respecting your unique gifts and your individual discernment process.

Deaconess Community Members: We promise to be present and available for you, and we ask God to help and guide us.

DoVE: (to each candidate individually) ____________________, receive and wear this pin as a sign of our commitment to walk together in this process of communal discernment. God Almighty, bless, preserve, sanctify you and endow you with all faith, love, humility and wisdom.

DoVE: The Lord be with you.
All: And also with you.

Let us pray together.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

God of justice and mercy, look with favor on these persons who have committed to discern together. Give them courage, patience and wise hearts and strengthen all of us in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and service to others, through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. May it be so.

HYMN:
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

All: And also with you.

Let us pray together:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, support us with your continual help that in all our doings, begun, continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Each of you has made a commitment to the ministry of Word and Service, and you have been ordained to that servant ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Having completed a process of mutual discernment, you now seek to become a member of the Deaconess Community. As a community of prayerful womxn, deaconesses believe that service, spirituality and community cannot be separated. The Deaconess Community holds that the opportunity to grow in grace with a group of womxn over time deepens the commitment to service and strengthens each individual for a full and rewarding ministry of justice and mercy. Deaconess identity is characterized by the formation of bold womxn of integrity and authenticity who celebrate diversity, building communities of faith and love with compassion.
The Apostle Paul writes: “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from 
love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the 
same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish 
ambition or conceit; but in humility, regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you 
look

And from the Epistle of Peter: “Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love 
covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good 
stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has 
received.” (1 Peter 4:8-10)

The Director of Vocation and Education of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical 
Lutheran Church in America (or her representative) presents the candidate(s) for the Rite of 
Reception.

DoVE: Rachel Bailey and Megan McClinton have been endorsed by the Committee of Vocation 
and Education of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and 
approved by the Board of Directors for membership in this Community. It is with joy that I 
present them for the Rite of Reception.

Directing Deaconess: You have responded to the call of God to commit yourselves to a life of 
people and creation in times of suffering and injustice? Will you speak up and out when 
compelled by the love of Christ to do so? And will you remain committed to the work for justice 
and peace in the public sphere?

Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

After prayerful discernment, is it your desire to become a member of the Deaconess 
Community?

Each candidate responds: It is, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Will you seek to understand and embody the values of the Deaconess tradition, and do you 
commit to participate fully in the Deaconess Community?

Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Will you seek to demonstrate generosity and graciousness of spirit as you participate in the life 
of the Community?

Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Will you nurture a disposition of prayer in your life through regular worship, the devotional 
study of Scripture, holy conversation, intercession, continually giving birth to Christ’s love for 
the world?
Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Will you engage in mutual accountability with your sisters that strengthens the prophetic call to public diaconal ministry?
Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Will you be intentional about participating in the life of the Deaconess Community, seeking to form deep and holy friendships that will strengthen our life together?
Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help and guide me.

You have been commended to us for inclusion in the Deaconess Community. Your acceptance entitles you to the privileges of using the title “Sister”, of wearing the deaconess cross and of sharing in the life and responsibilities of this Community. I now ask you, in the presence of our loving God and this assembly: Are you ready to enter this Deaconess Community?
Each candidate responds: Yes, by the help of God.

The Directing Deaconess addresses the members of the Deaconess Community:

I now ask you, are you willing to receive Rachel and Megan as members of the Deaconess Community, and are you willing to support them with your love and your prayers, so that together we may grow together in the Holy Spirit?
Community responds: Yes, by the help of God.

I hereby declare each of you a member of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and invite you to share in its privileges and responsibilities.

Receive and wear the cross as a sign of your calling to serve Christ and Christ’s people, and your membership in the Deaconess Community.

Crosses are given to the new members of the Deaconess Community.

Let us welcome our new sisters.
Community responds: We welcome you as a sister in this Community.

Let us pray. Eternal God, creator of humankind: you anointed with the Spirit Miriam and Deborah and Hannah and Huldah and many others; you chose the virgin Mary to be the mother of your only Son; and you set apart womxn for the ministry of service throughout the history of the church. We remember in particular, the womxn whose bold and passionate ministries established the deaconess communities in North America. We are grateful for this cloud of witnesses that surround and sustain our life together. Bless this community of servants that today welcomes Sister Rachel and Sister Megan into its midst. Sustain the community with your
gracious Spirit so that all our interactions will strengthen our life together for the sake of our witness in the Church and in the world.

All: Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may abound in hope.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

*Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

**ORDER FOR THE OPENING OF ASSEMBLY**

O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?  Micah 6:8

Directing Deaconess: We gather as a Community called to love another,

All: as Christ has loved us.

Sustained by community and motivated by the Spirit,

we walk into each day,

working to seek justice,

and flourishing of all God’s creation.

Let us pray.

O God, you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us through the Spirit’s wisdom and grace as we listen, reflect and live into your call to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Amen.

I declare this assembly to be in session, in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Amen.
1 “I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
2 “I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain.
3 “I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.

All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.

I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?”
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?”
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?”

Refrain
Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“Saviour, Thee My Heart I Render” by John Burton. Tune: HYFRYDOL by Rowald Hugh Prichard.