

FORMATION GUIDE

The love of Christ compels us. 2 Corinthians 5:14

CONTENTS

- I. The Deaconess Community of the ELCA/ELCIC
- II. Word and Service Ministry
 - A. A Diaconal Identity
 - B. A Deaconess Identity
- III. Life in Community
 - A. History of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA/ELCIC
 - B. Community Life
 - C. Capacity to Keep and Maintain Relationships in Community
 - D. Disposition to Prayer
- IV. Formation Process and Resources
 - A. Deaconess Community Formation Process
 - B. Other Formation Components
 - C. ELCA and ELCIC Formation Resources
- V. Appendixes
 - I. Formation Process for Those Already Rostered Overview
 - II. Parallel Formation Process with the ELCA/ELCIC Candidacy Process Overview
 - III. Community Covenant
 - IV. Rite of Accompaniment
 - V. Rite of Reception (to be added in 2019)
 - VI. Formation Check List

I. THE DEACONESS COMMUNITY OF THE ELCA/ELCIC

The Deaconess Community of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and ELCIC (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada) is composed of womxn* who are called by God to compassionate service in and through the Church and world, compelled by the love of Christ, and sustained by community. Deaconesses have a specific call to a prayerful, Spirit-led, interconnected vision of community as part of their diaconal call.

As a member of the Deaconess Community, a Deaconess is a public leader in the ELCA as a minister of Word and Service or in the ELCIC as a Diaconal Minister. The Deaconess Community is a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA. The work of a Deaconess in the world restores and reconciles communities, pursues justice, seeks peace, advocates for the oppressed, and is inclusive of people of all cultures, races and orientations.

*The Deaconess Community is a Reconciling in Christ community, and therefore boldly affirms and extends hospitality and welcome to all womxn gender identities. This is reflected in our documents with the change of spelling for the word womxn, which is considered an inclusive spelling of all women identifying genders.

II. WORD AND SERVICE MINISTRY

Word and Service Ministry finds its biblical roots in the prophets who delivered God's call for social justice, in the life and servant ministry of Jesus who proclaimed that the last shall be first, and in the witness of those in the early church who followed the call to care for people who are poor, lonely and marginalized. Word and Service ministers serve in specialized areas such as social work, chaplaincy, education, congregational ministry, healthcare agencies, community organizing, outreach development, youth ministry, community non-profits and advocacy. In addition to their specialized calls of service, Word and Service ministers are called and accountable as public leaders to serve with Word and Sacrament ministers in equipping the church to meet the needs of the world.

Individuals discerning a call to public leadership in the ELCA or ELCIC enter in to a process of discernment, training and formation within their church bodies. (See section IV.3)

A. *Diaconal Identity*

Word and Service ministers have a unique *diaconal identity* focused on service. It is an inner attitude formed from Christ-centered spirituality, shaped by study of Scriptures and other Christian texts, and informed by the theological and practical knowledge particularly necessary for servant ministry.

The formation of a *diaconal identity* is both distinctive and deliberate. The distinctive nature of servant ministry is the commitment to work for justice in the public sphere and attend to suffering people and places in God's world. The *diaconal identity* is a deliberate pattern of faithful service that is formed and re-formed in daily dying and rising with Christ in the baptismal covenant.

The Core of *Diaconal Identity* is:

- A distinct perspective of justice and mercy that is informed by Lutheran theological understanding of justice, an articulated understanding of compassionate servant leadership, a well-developed ability to see clearly human need or signs of injustice, and the courage to advocate on behalf of the powerless and vulnerable
- A perspective of bridge-building that promotes innovation and practices accompaniment with others in mission, acknowledges interdependence as God's intention for all creation, honors diversity in all its forms, manages conflict, practices reconciliation, and embodies a spirit of humility in all relationships
- A public witness in and to the church as well as in and to the world which proclaims and furthers the reign of God, attends to what God is doing in the world, and demonstrates a willingness and ability to speak the truth of the Gospel

B. *Deaconess Identity*

A *Deaconess identity* not only embraces the core of a *diaconal identity* but is distinct in its "life together" that is formed in and through community. Belonging to the Community empowers Deaconesses to be bold in the places where they serve, living at the center and at the margins at the same time.

The *Deaconess identity* is a unique expression of the Spirit's call to servant ministry. *Deaconess identity* is shaped in community both for the sake of the community itself and for the sake of the world into which a Deaconess is sent by God to serve. A *Deaconess identity* is the result of a deep inner journey nurtured and sustained through dependable accompaniment, prayerful discernment, and moments of joy in the midst of a community of womxn who see and embrace gifts, strengths and vulnerabilities. *Deaconess identity* requires the formation of bold womxn of integrity and authenticity who celebrate diversity, build communities of faith, and love with compassion.

The Core of *Deaconess Identity* is:

- A unique perspective informed by and supported by participation in an intentional community of Christ-centered, prayerful womxn, involving:
 - an appreciation for its history
 - a commitment to participate fully in the Community's life
 - the capacity to make and keep relationships in community
 - the disposition to prayer

III. Life in the Deaconess Community

Because the Deaconess Community is a non-geographic reality, members of the community are intentional about fostering a sense of belonging to one another. The components of a *Deaconess identity* are the same qualities that members expect of one another in order to hold the Community together. Members of the Deaconess Community utilize communication technologies effectively to enhance praying together and relating to one another in ways that strengthen their shared life.

A. Appreciation of History

Recognizing the important legacy of their history provides energy and inspiration to look to the future. The Deaconess Community carries a particularly rich history and tradition that reaches back to the earliest days of the church itself. Documents as ancient as the early second-century record the existence of women who served as deaconesses and were even martyred for it. In the nineteenth century, the Rev. Theodore Fliedner, a Lutheran pastor in Kaiserswerth, Germany, and his wife Friederike (and after her death, his second wife Caroline), led a revival of the ancient diaconate. In a society that still regarded women's place as solely in the home, they trained women to leave their comfortable spheres and minister in countless areas to the poor, the dispossessed, and the most marginal members of society. By mid to late 19th century, their work had expanded across Europe and to the United States where they exemplified Jesus' ministry of mercy through work in orphanages, prisons, schools, hospitals, hospices, and institutions for children and adults with mental or physical challenges. Today, many Lutheran social service agencies can trace their origins directly back to the work of these deaconesses and others. Deaconesses today carry forward the work of this larger cloud of witnesses in areas just as diverse and needed.

B. Community Life

Deaconesses are committed to a life of mutual nurture and support that takes seriously Jesus' model of a life lived in service and community. At the core of *Deaconess identity* is a commitment for Deaconess and candidates to participate fully in the Community's life. Through thoughtful reflection on the Gospel's mandates, Deaconesses respond in prayer, love, support, care, comfort and forgiveness for one another which strengthens them to reach out to the needs of the world.

Although Deaconesses live geographically wherever God calls them, they meet annually at Assembly for reconnecting, worship, education, inspiration, sharing ministry stories, clarifying Community goals and visions, and sharing fellowship.

The widespread use and availability of social media and the internet provides opportunities for daily interaction and connections between annual assemblies. A frequent service of evening prayer gathers Deaconess across the continent by video or phone around a shared liturgy. Making full use of these various forms of electronic communication, Deaconesses share celebratory personal news, prayer concerns, devotional and educational suggestions, announcements, and discuss topics of community interest and events. Scriptural verses, meditations and prayers are sent out daily online, written by a different Deaconess each month. Annual prayer calendars include the names of every Deaconess, so that over the course of the month, all are remembered in prayer.

Deaconesses actively serve on committees, task forces, focus groups, and the Board of Directors that make decisions and shape the Community's formal structure. Informal support and social events often happen in local areas and through personal communications.

Community life is deep and rich. With many opportunities to engage in community life, relationships between Deaconesses can blossom into deep spiritual friendships. The opportunity to grow in grace with the same group of womxn over years of service allows continuity, perspective, and wisdom to nurture Deaconesses into life-time relationships of caring that in turn allow for a full and rewarding ministry.

C. Capacity to Make and Keep Relationships in Community

Generosity of spirit and graciousness to one another provide the foundation for all relationships in community. In

order to form deep and holy friendships, each is willing to acknowledge vulnerability and seek the well-being of the other. Because the best intentions in all relationships fall short, members of the community will also need to forgive one another. The skills and virtues needed to sustain just and loving bonds include careful listening, clear negotiating, the capacity to set aside personal needs for the sake of the relationship, and, in the words of Martin Luther's explanation of the Eighth Commandment, the inclination to interpret our neighbor's action in the kindest possible way.

D. Disposition to prayer

Prayer is the lifeblood of diaconal community and work. Commitment to an intentional community of womxn and serving all God's children draw these womxn into a sacred space continually giving birth to Christ's love for the world. While many Deaconesses no longer wear a particular garb, they dress daily in the light of baptism, called, enlightened and sanctified for ministry. In love and humility, they serve in cheerful compassion. In freedom from pride, they walk in truth and sincerity with dedication to Christ in all things. The life of ceaseless prayer and a meaningful awareness of God's action in all things is marked by regular participation in public worship, devotional study of Scripture, holy conversation, intercession, thanksgiving, discernment, solitude and mutual comfort and consolation.

IV. FORMATION PROCESS AND RESOURCES

The purpose of formation is to foster individual growth and community identity, deepen one's relationship with God, and empower, equip and sustain womxn to serve and meet the needs of the world. The Deaconess Community accompanies individuals through this formation process, mutually discerning and sharing gifts, strengths and vulnerabilities with one another. As a community of Spirit-led, skilled, prayerful, independent and interdependent women, Deaconesses believe that service, spirituality, and community cannot be separated. During formation, womxn will deepen their prayer and spiritual life, engage in the Community through worship, build relationships, participate in formal and informal events, and become acquainted with examples of inspiring ministries of both present and past deaconesses in the historic tradition.

The call to be a deaconess involves a process of communal discernment. It is a gift of God and a lifelong process of deepening awareness of one's deepest longings and the world's greatest needs in order to understand more clearly God's purposes.

Because discernment is not solely an individual activity, candidates enter faithfully into mutual conversation with members of the Community about the sense of call to ministry the candidate has experienced. Led by the Holy Spirit, candidate and Community reflect together to affirm both the candidate's internal and external sense of call.

A. Deaconess Community Formation Process

INQUIRY: A **woman** considering a call to the Deaconess Community contacts the Director of Vocation and Education (DoVE) of the Deaconess Community. The DoVE engages in conversation and shares information about the Community, including the Formation Guide, and information on the process.

PROCESS: Womxn become members of the Deaconess Community by first entering the Word and Service Roster of the ELCA or the Diaconal Minister Roster of the ELCIC. Candidates may choose to go through both the synodical and Deaconess Community processes at the same time, or they may complete the candidacy requirements for joining the church's roster before beginning the application process for the Deaconess Community.

APPLICATION: The inquirer completes and submits the application to the DoVE.

The application for membership in the Deaconess Community includes:

- Application Form
- Application Fee
- 3 references (including a rostered leader at her home congregation)
- Statement of good standing for women already in the synodical candidacy process or on the roster

The Deaconess Community will follow up to obtain:

- Background check
- Psychological evaluation(s)

APPLICATION FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION: The DoVE and one member of the Committee on Vocation and Education (CoVE) will meet with the inquirer in person or via video conferencing for information sharing and relationship building and determining whether to continue the process as a candidate. Candidates are welcomed and encouraged to attend the Annual Deaconess Community Assembly at any point in the process.

J-TERM COURSE: Diaconal Ministry: History, Formation and Spirituality. This course introduces the historical, theological and social contexts of diaconal (Word and Service) ministry throughout history, provides opportunity for discussion on vocation and diaconal calling, and affirms and encourages recognition of the importance and knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions as theologically and spiritually foundational writings. Students may be awarded three hours of academic credit. This course is suggested to be taken prior to the Rite of Accompaniment, and required before the Rite of Reception.

FORMATION EVENT: Candidates will attend their first Formation Event to learn more about the Deaconess Community and to continue their discernment process. This Formation Event will include educational components, theological reflection, spiritual practices, interpersonal skill development, worship, community and cohort time, and at least two directed conversations with a CoVE member.

DISCERNMENT CONVERSATION FOR THE RITE OF ACCOMPANIMENT: The communal discernment conversation for the Rite of Accompaniment will take place toward the end of the candidate's first Formation Event. The purpose of this conversation is for candidate and Community to learn more about each other and to explore their understanding of their reciprocal relationship and the call to this community. From this conversation the candidate and representatives from CoVE will discern together if the candidate should move forward with the Rite of Accompaniment. Out of the conversation CoVE may provide recommendations and resources that would be beneficial such as spiritual direction, counseling, additional formation experiences, etc.

RITE OF ACCOMPANIMENT: The Rite of Accompaniment celebrates the mutual commitment between the Deaconess Community and the candidate to continue the formation process. During this rite the candidate will receive the Deaconess Community candidate pin.

FORMATION EVENT: Candidates will attend a second Formation Event to continue the discernment process and strengthen and deepen their relationship with the Community. This Formation Event will include additional educational components, theological reflection, spiritual practices, interpersonal skill development, worship, community and cohort time, and at least two directed conversations with a CoVE member. As the process continues CoVE may provide recommendations and resources that would be beneficial such as spiritual direction, counseling, additional formation experiences, etc.

DISCERNMENT CONVERSATION FOR THE RITE OF RECEPTION: The Rite of Reception represents the culmination of the process of communal discernment in which the candidate and Deaconess Community have been engaged and represents an important moment in the life of both candidate and Community.

A candidate must be on the Word and Service Roster of the ELCA or the Diaconal Minister Roster of the ELCIC before becoming a member of the Deaconess Community. Therefore, the discernment conversation for the Rite of Reception will take place after the candidate has been consecrated by the ELCA or ELCIC and has completed the Deaconess Community formation requirements. The purpose of this conversation is to discern the candidate's readiness, compatibility, and call to enter in to the Deaconess Community as a Sister. After the Discernment Conversation, CoVE will make one of the following decisions: positive approval for reception, postponement of reception, denial of reception.

Prior to the Discernment Conversation for the Rite of Reception the applicant will need to:

- Submit a statement from the candidate's synod certifying that the candidate has been consecrated to the roster and is good standing
- submit the brief Rite of Reception essay
- participate in one Deaconess Community Assembly
- attend two Formation Events

If at any time a person's candidacy is ended, the candidate may reapply for candidacy after one year.

RITE OF RECEPTION: The Rite of Reception welcomes the candidate as a member of the Deaconess Community. With this rite the candidate is granted the privileges of using the title, "Sister," wearing the Deaconess Community cross and garb, and sharing in the life and responsibilities of the Community.

B. Other Formation Opportunities (listed alphabetically, not by priority)

The following experiences may be recommended by CoVE for some candidates as a part of their formation process. However, all candidates are encouraged to engage in any of these components that would enrich their formation process.

Accompanying a Sister. This opportunity allows the candidate to become better acquainted with a member of the Community who invites the candidate for approximately 3 days to experience and participate in her daily walk of faith. The Deaconess Community pays candidates' expenses up to \$1,000 to complete this component.

Archives. The Deaconess Community encourages its candidates to learn more about the Community's origins in nineteenth century Europe and the early years of the deaconess movement through a visit to the Community Archives, preserved and managed by the ELCA. Artifacts and accounts of the cloud of witnesses who have gone before inspire resilience, determination, and creativity still informs ministry and life today. CoVE invites candidates to share their findings with the Community so that others may learn and appreciate the gifts of our spiritual diaconal ancestors.

Continuing Education. As the world's needs and forms of service evolve and change, all deaconesses are expected to participate regularly in continuing education. This may include, but is not limited to, events sponsored by their synods or national church bodies, courses related to diaconal ministry and/or theology offered at colleges, universities and seminaries, retreats, seminars, and study trips for the purposes of increasing knowledge and understanding the call for prophetic diakonia in the church and the world. Funding from the Deaconess Community may be available to support these learning experiences.

DOTAC/DIAKONIA. The Deaconess Community of the ELCA/ELCIC is part of a worldwide diaconal movement spanning five continents. The Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean ([DOTAC](#)), of which the Deaconess Community is a member, holds a regional conference every four years. [DIAKONIA](#), the World Federation of Diaconal Associations and Diaconal Communities, is the umbrella ecumenical organization organized in 1947. It also holds a world conference every four years. Deaconesses are encouraged to attend these events whenever possible, and assistance in funding may be available from the community.

Financial Planning Consultation. Utilizing Christian stewardship, candidates may need to seek professional financial advice and implement measures to ensure their ability to fund their education, serve successfully in ministry, and prepare for retirement.

Spiritual Direction and/or Counseling. As public leaders of the church deaconesses are called to be attentive to their spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. Regular and intentional efforts at self-care, emotional health, and spiritual well-being with the guidance of a trained counselor or spiritual director may be helpful.

Synod Assemblies and Conference/Cluster Meetings. Synods gather in assembly to uplift and celebrate ministries and address the issues facing the leaders, congregations, and agencies within the synod and the whole church. Conference/cluster meetings provide a space for leaders to gather together for prayer, support, and business. Staying connected to colleagues and the work and ministry of the synod helps public leaders live out their call and lifts up diaconal ministry.

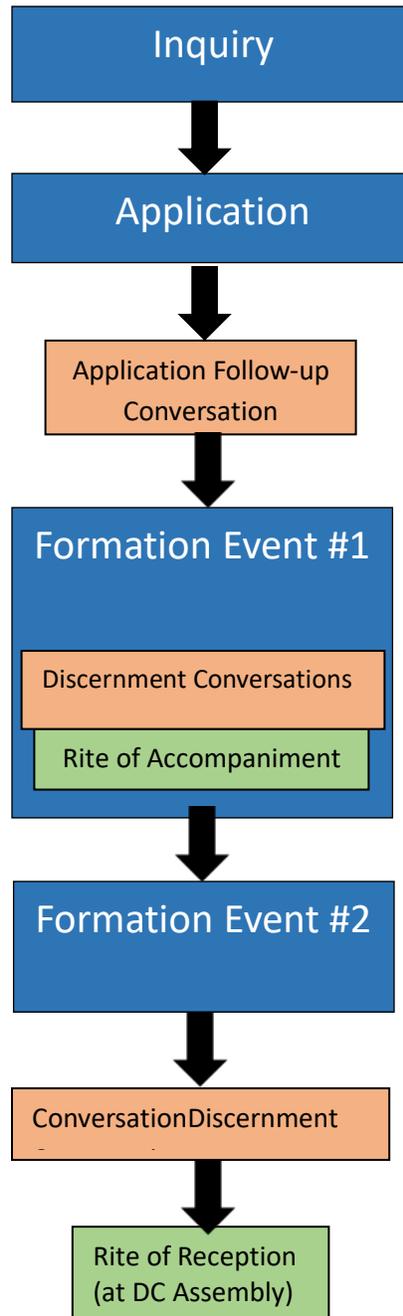
C. ELCA/ELCIC Candidacy Resources

Prior to the Rite of Reception into the Deaconess Community of the ELCA/ELCIC, candidates must be a member of the Word and Service Roster of the ELCA or the Diaconal Minister Roster of the ELCIC. The links below will be helpful resources in learning more about the candidacy processes of the ELCA and ELCIC.

- [Candidacy in the ELCA](#)
- [Word and Service Roster of the ELCA](#)
- [ELCA Seminaries](#)
- [ELCA Synods](#) (your synod office will be your first point of contact in moving forward with the application process)
- [Candidacy for Diaconal Ministry in the ELCIC](#)
- [ELCIC Diaconal Ministry Candidacy Manual](#)
- [ELCIC Seminaries](#)

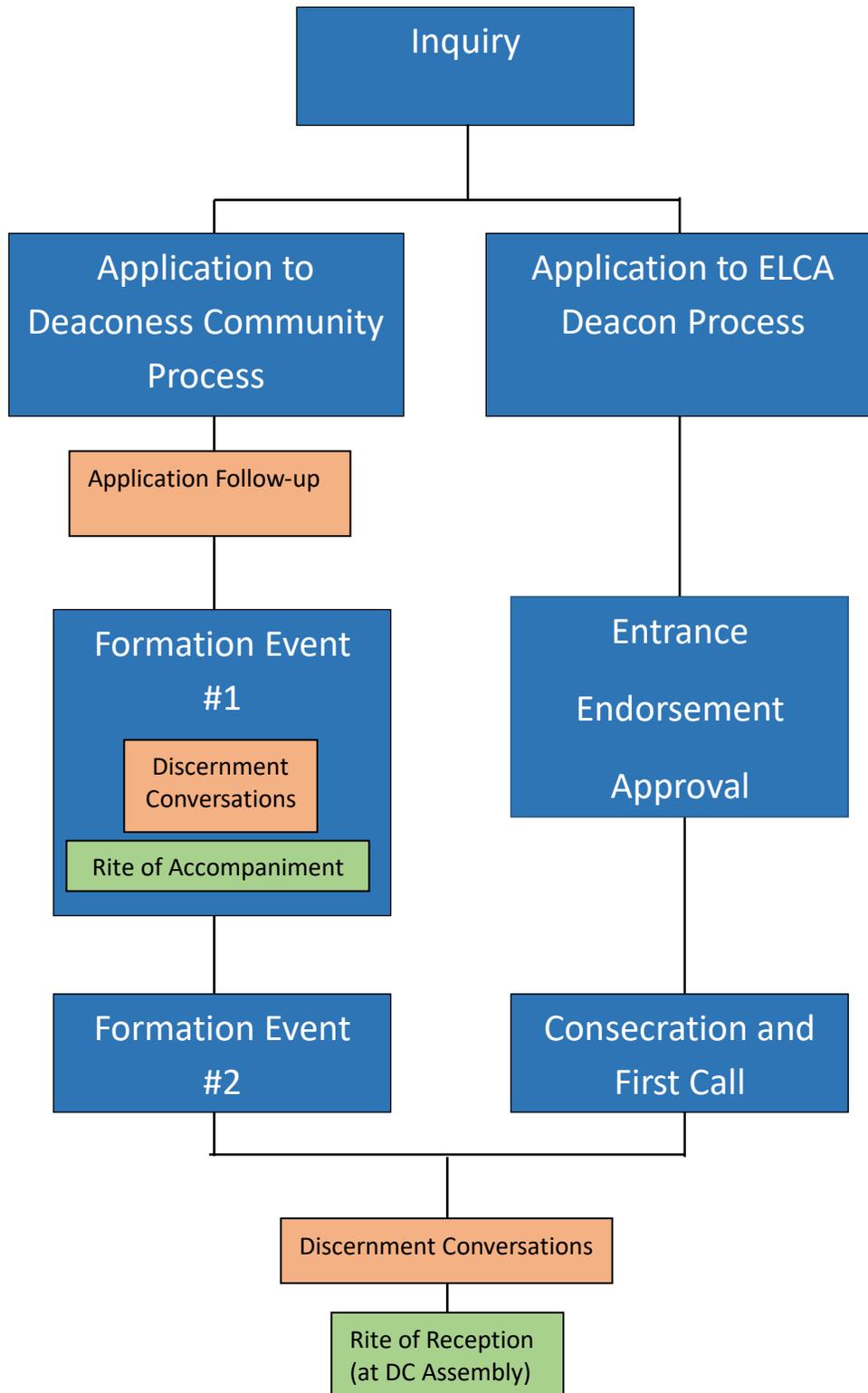
Appendix I

Formation Process for those already Rostered in the ELCA/ELCIC



Appendix II

Formation Process for those going through the ELCA/ELCIC Rostering Process Simultaneously



Deaconess Community Covenant

Preamble: Sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit and as members, staff and leadership of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA / ELCIC, we strive to co-create community life that is prayerful, healthy, and celebratory. Our community is committed to maintaining a work and community life environment that is free from harassment as defined in ELCA Policies. The Deaconess Community further will not tolerate behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive community life environment. Mindful that the Constitutions of the ELCA and the ELCIC govern our consecrated work and inform the ethical conduct of our private lives, we adopt and affirm the following Covenants for our relationships in the Deaconess Community.

1. In our relationships with members, friends, employees and colleagues of our Deaconess Community:

Section 1 and 2 adapted from the ACPE and APC Codes of Professional Ethics

This first section is foundational and informs the subsequent sections.

1.1 We will affirm and respect the human dignity and individual worth of each person when we speak to or about them; when we interact with them and when we work with them or on their behalf.

1.2 We will not speak ill of or treat with unkindness anyone because of race, gender, age, faith group, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or position in the community.

1.3 We will respect the integrity and welfare of those we serve, of those with whom we work, and of those with whom we share community. We will refrain from disparaging them and avoid emotional, psychological, spiritual, sexual or any other kind of exploitation.

1.4 We will approach the religious and political convictions of others with respect and sensitivity and avoid the imposition of our particular values.

1.5 We will respect confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the Constitutions of the ELCA and the ELCIC, and applicable professional standards.

1.6 We will take collegial and responsible action when concerns about incompetence, impairment, or misconduct arise.

1.7 We will first speak directly with anyone with whom we have a concern before speaking to another person about our concern.

2. In our relationship to our Deaconess Community:

2.1 We will speak on behalf of the Deaconess Community or represent the official position of the Community only as authorized. We will distinguish private opinions from those of the Community or ELCA/ELCIC when speaking publicly or publishing.

2.2 We will continue professional education and spiritual growth, including participation in the meetings and affairs of the Deaconess Community.

2.3 We will not make intentionally false, misleading, or incomplete statements about our work or conduct or the work or conduct of anyone else.

2.4 We will maintain professional and constructive relationships with persons employed by our Community as well as with the board members and the wider community.

2.5 We will not use our knowledge, position, professional or community association to secure unfair personal advantage or permit ourselves to be used by others for purposes inconsistent with the foundational standards and beliefs of our community. We will not use community membership for purposes that are inconsistent with our community and ELCA/ELCIC standards.

2.6 We will carry out our community responsibilities in a timely, professional and considerate manner. We will negotiate clear and achievable deadlines and meet them.

2.7 We will follow sound fiscal practices, maintain accurate financial records, and protect the integrity of any funds entrusted to our care on behalf of the community or its members.

3. In Our Spirit of Speaking and Listening in Community and Public Forums:

In all of our speaking and listening we will first of all strive to be attentive to the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

3.1 We will speak only for ourselves and out of our own experiences.

3.2 We will speak our truth respecting both each other and ourselves.

3.3 We will listen to each other with openness and respect for the purpose of “mutual up building.”

3.4 We will listen with empathy and resilience, restraining our emotionally-triggered responses, either positive or negative.

3.5 We will avoid monopolizing the conversation, whether in private conversation or public discussions. We will promote a courteous environment in conversations that provide space for all to speak.

3.6 We will be constructive in our concerns and critiques.

3.7 We will be clear if we choose to share our personal and confidential information. As listeners we will respect confidentiality. We will not knowingly violate another person’s privacy.

3.8 We will refrain from using intimidating speech or behavior.

3.9 We will keep our body language and non-verbal responses constructively congruent with our verbal expressions.

3.10 We will follow agreed-upon rules of order when they apply.

3.11 As Christians we acknowledge that discussion (and/or discourse) may not lead to decisions, change in policy or agreement; we do however, recognize the value of true dialog and honor it.

4. Mutual Accountability:

4.1 Adherence to this Community Covenant is first a matter for self-discipline and prayerful personal discernment.

4.2 We will seek assistance when confused or conflicted about a Covenantal obligation.

4.3 We will speak directly with the one with whom we have a concern as a gracious first response.

4.4 When asked to assist another or witnessing a violation, we will prayerfully consider how best to proceed.

4.5 The Deaconess Community Responsibility and Reconciliation Protocol is available when it is needed.

Soli Deo Gloria

RITE OF ACCOMPANIMENT

GATHERING

GATHERING SONG

We Are Called



1 Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the
2 Come! O - pen your heart! Show your . . mer - cy to all those in
3 Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be



Lord! We are called to be light for the king - dom, to
fear! We are called to be hope for the hope - less so
one! God will reign, and we'll walk with each oth - er as



live in the free - dom of the cit - y of God.
ha - tred and blind - ness . . . will be . . . no more.
sis - ters and broth - ers . . . u - nit - ed in love.



We are called to act with jus - tice, we are called to



love ten - der - ly: we are called to serve one an -



oth - er, to walk hum - bly with God.

Text: David Haas, h. 1957
Music: WE ARE CALLED, David Haas
Text and music © 1988 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60658. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.
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INVOCATION

LEADER: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

ALL: And also with you.

LEADER: Let us pray together.

ALL: Gracious and loving God, you have given life to your people by the death and resurrection of Jesus the 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.

WELCOME

LEADER: We gather together 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 will continue to uphold, support and sustain them with a prayerful spirit, boldness of heart, and steadfastness of faith in your service.

We remember especially this day ___ and _____, who continue in their discernment journey 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.

LEADER: _____ have now expressed their desire to become members of the Deaconess Community. The Deaconess Community is formed by a deep inner journey nurtured and sustained through dependable accompaniment, prayerful discernment, and moments of joy in the midst of a community of womxn who see and embrace gifts, strengths and vulnerabilities. Formed and equipped, the members of the Deaconess Community serve individually and as a whole to impact the broken world through radical hospitality, accountability and partnership. We welcome you into this journey of communal conversation, reflection, and discernment and service.

SCRIPTURE

I CORINTHIANS 12:4-7, 11

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. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good....All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

I PETER 4:8-11

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. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."

PROMISES OF MUTUAL DISCERNMENT

LEADER: 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.

Scripture is rich with stories of people who accompany one another in the life of faith:

Abraham and Sarah, who trusted God to act.

Moses and Miriam, who walked together to freedom.

Ruth and Naomi, who bore one another's burdens.

David and Jonathan, who knew deep friendship.

Mary and Elizabeth, who first welcomed the Word.

Paul and Lois, who mentored young leaders.

Phoebe and Pricilla, who led the early church.

LEADER: 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.

LEADER: 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 she serves, 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 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.

LEADER: 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.

LEADER: 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.

LEADER: 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.

PROMISE OF ACCOMPANIMENT

LEADER: 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.

GIVING THE CANDIDATE CROSS

DOVE: (said to each candidate individually) _____ Receive and wear this cross 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.

CANDIDATES: Amen.

PRAYER

ALL: 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.

SENDING

SENDING SONG

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing



1 Come, thou Fount of ev - 'ry bless - ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
2 Here I raise my Eb - en - e - zer: "Hith - er by thy help I've come";
3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con - strained to be;



streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.
and I hope, by thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.
let that grace now like a fet - ter bind my wan - d'ring heart to thee.



While the hope of end - less glo - ry fills my heart with joy and love,
Je - sus sought me when a strang - er, wan - d'ring from the fold of God;
Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love.



teach me ev - er to a - dore thee; may I still thy good - ness prove.
he, to res - cue me from dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Text: Robert Robinson, 1735-1790, alt.
Music: NETTLETON, J. Wyeth. *Repository of Sacred Music*, Part II, 1813

BLESSING

LEADER: 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.

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Appendix VI

Deaconess Community Formation Process Checklist

Name _____

I. Process of Accompaniment

Date Completed/Submitted

- 1. Investigate online discernment resources at www.deaconesscommunity.org. __/__/__
- 2. Contact the Director of Vocation and Education (DoVE) of the Deaconess Community (DC). __/__/__
- 3. If not on a Diaconal Roster, contact synod candidacy resource staff to begin candidacy process __/__/__
- 4. Complete the Deaconess application and submit to the DoVE. __/__/__
 - Application Form __/__/__
 - Application Fee __/__/__
 - Psychological Evaluation (less than 3 years old) __/__/__
 - Background Check __/__/__
 - 3 reference letters (including a rostered leader from current worshipping community) __/__/__
 - Synod Candidacy Statement of good standing for applicants already in the synodical candidacy process or on the roster __/__/__
- 5. Application Follow-up Conversation __/__/__
- 6. Rite of Accompaniment Essay (submit prior to Formation Event #1) __/__/__
- 7. Attend Formation Event #1 (FE #1) __/__/__
 - Directed Conversation #1 (CoVE Representative: _____) __/__/__
 - Directed Conversation #2 (CoVE Representative: _____) __/__/__
- 8. Discernment Conversation for the Rite of Accompaniment (During FE #1) __/__/__
- 9. Rite of Accompaniment (During Formation Event #1) __/__/__

II. Process of Reception

- 10. Attend Deaconess Assembly __/__/__
- 11. Formation Event #2 __/__/__
 - Directed Conversation #3 (CoVE Representative: _____) __/__/__
 - Directed Conversation #4 (CoVE Representative: _____) __/__/__
- 12. Complete Rite of Reception Requirements __/__/__
 - Rite of Reception Essay __/__/__
 - Statement from candidate's synod certifying that the candidate has been Consecrated to the roster and is good standard __/__/__
- 13. Discernment Conversation for the Rite of Reception __/__/__
 - Rite of Reception Decision __/__/__
 - ____ Positive ____ Postponed ____ Denied
- 14. Participate in the Rite of Reception __/__/__