

The Fund for the Diaconate - Historic dates

Including Deaconesses and The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses

- 1857 September 27: Four deaconesses ordained by Bp. William Whittingham of Maryland: (Mary?) Evaline Black, Catherine Minard, Adeline Blanchard Tyler (12/8/1805-1875), Carrie E. Guild (d. 5/11/1880, Cambridgeport MA)
- 1862 July 18: Elizabeth Ferard ordained as a deaconess in the Church of England by Bp. Archibald Tait (London)
- 1864 Late December: Three deaconesses set apart/instituted by Bp. Richard Wilmer of Alabama
- 1868 General Convention first discusses deaconesses
- 1872 Seven deaconesses set apart by Bp. Abram Littlejohn of Long Island
- 1881 Deaconess House organized in Louisville, KY
- 1885 January 6: Bp. Wilmer layed hands on/ordains Mary W. Johnson
- 1885 June 29: Bp. Wilmer layed hands on/ordains Mary Catherine Friggell
- 1889 Deaconesses authorized by General Convention
- 1913 Church Pension Fund was created by General Convention; no provision made for Deaconesses
- 1919 General Convention recommends that deaconesses be included in the Church Pension Fund, but that board states deaconesses are not “clergy”.
- 1922 There are 226 deaconesses alive in the Protestant Episcopal Church USA, the most of any year. By 1960, there were 86 deaconesses alive.
- 1926 September 29: National Conferences of Deaconesses resolves that a Retiring Fund should be created to replace the Emergency Fund. Dss. Mary Crosby pledged \$100, and the other twenty-two present collected \$94.25. A committee was appointed to arrange for the incorporation of the new organization.
- 1927 September 30: Robert W. B. Elliot, Chancellor of the Diocese of New York, presented the Certificate of Incorporation and the Bylaws to the National Conference of Deaconesses (NCD). Those assembled (more than 57) voted to create The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Legal papers were approved later that day by the NY Supreme Court.
- 1965 September 13: Dss. Phyllis Edwards invested and recognized as a deacon by Bp. James Pike of California.
- 1970 Last of some 500 deaconesses ordered (9/20: Shirley Woods - later priested); General Convention voted to ordain women as deacons instead.
- 197x The fund name was changed to “The Retiring Fund for Women in the Diaconate in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.”
- 1990 After discussion about whether to disband the Retiring Fund, the members voted to allow male deacons to become members. Dns. Edwin (Ted) Hallenbeck and Shepherd Jenks subsequently elected to the board.
- 1998 Name changed to “The Fund for the Diaconate of The Episcopal Church in the United States of America”.
- 1999 Dss. Frances Zielinski, last deaconess on the board, retired.

- 2011 Dn. Ted Hallenbeck became the first deacon to be president of the Fund (deaconesses served as presidents from its inception until the early 1950's, when laymen were elected).
- 2014 The Fund began a strategic planning process and developed a Road Map for going forward.
- 2015 The Fund and the Association for Episcopal Deacons (AED) gradually begin forming a relationship as sister organizations, sending liaisons to one another's board meetings, and partnering on a booth at General Convention.
- 2018 Name changed to "The Fund for the Diaconate of The Episcopal Church", to recognize the diaconate in overseas dioceses.
- 2019 The Fund and AED began a 3-year collaborative campaign, *Advancing the Diaconate*, with the goal of supporting and improving the lives of Episcopal deacons throughout discernment, postulancy, ordination, active ministry and retirement.
- 2020 As a response to the Covid pandemic, The Fund established Emergency Grants, as a means to assist deacons who sustained a financial loss of income and/or housing related to the pandemic.
- 2022 Sr. Priscilla Wright, the last known deaconess, was interviewed by The Living Church, looking back over her ministry and transitioning into being a deacon. She died 9/11/22 at age 88.
- The Fund began a major expansion of grant opportunities with the establishment of Formation Grants. In doing so, the organization's reach moved beyond responding to only the needs of deacons to helping expand the number of deacons.
- Planned giving with The Fund was established, to make it possible for individuals to leave a legacy that benefits deacons and those in formation.
- 2023 The Fund's Hallenbeck Fellowship was established, to enable deacons in financial need to attend conferences or educational events related to the diaconate and/or The Episcopal Church.
- The criteria for Medical Grants was expanded beyond Covid, to provide help for deacons impacted financially by any Federal-, State-, or Local-declared emergency.
- Medical Grants were established, to provide assistance for direct medical expenses such as hearing aids, dental procedures and medical equipment.

