



ASSISTING DEACONS IN FINANCIAL NEED

Most deacons in The Episcopal Church serve as non-stipendiary ministry leaders. For the most part, deacons lack church pensions, and may not have adequate savings from secular work to draw upon in times of crisis.

The Fund for the Diaconate (“The Fund”) provides vital financial assistance to close that gap, for these servants of others and of the Church. The Fund is administered by a board of directors (all deacons), and three part-time staff.

AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE FOR DEACONS

GRANTS

- **Supporting Grants** - Provide monthly stipends for basic living expenses or one-time grants.
- **Declared Emergency Grants** - Assist with financial losses due to a Federal-, State-, or Local- declared emergency such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and weather events.
- **Medical Grants** - Provide assistance with direct medical expenses such as hearing aids, dental procedures, medical equipment, and other uncovered procedures or expenses.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

DONATING & PLANNED GIVING

Your donations and planned gifts can make a significant and meaningful impact for deacons who are facing severe financial difficulty.

Donations can be made from our secure website, www.fundfordiaconate.org

Planned Gifts can take the form of:

1. **Bequests** - Name The Fund in your estate plans
2. **Qualified charitable distribution** from IRAs
3. **Name The Fund as a beneficiary** of your retirement account

Visit www.fundfordiaconate.org for more information or to donate.



“I am a grateful recipient of a supporting grant. My thanks to The Fund for the Diaconate and all that they do. Without them, I do not know what I would have done.”

- Deacon H., Supporting Grant recipient, needing assistance with basic living expenses due to a job loss.



“[The grant] gave us some much needed relief with a newborn baby over the course of a good number of months. It was really helpful when we were pretty much depending on my chaplain salary alone.”

- Deacon T., Emergency Grant recipient, whose family was affected by lost income due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A HISTORY OF THE FUND FOR THE DIACONATE

When the Church Pension Fund was established in 1913, no provision was made to include Episcopal deaconesses. Despite letters, meetings, and even a resolution of General Convention, deaconesses were repeatedly refused access to the pension process.

This situation was uppermost in everyone's mind when the National Conference of Deaconesses (NCD) met on September 29 1926. Prior to that, a small emergency fund maintained by the NCD had been barely sufficient to assist the number of deaconesses who needed financial help. When it was resolved that a Retiring Fund should be created, Dss. Mary A. Crosby pledged the first hundred dollars, and an offering taken up from the twenty-two deaconesses present amounted to an additional \$94.25 (over \$3400 in 2023 dollars).

The president of the Conference appointed a committee to arrange for the incorporation of the fund. A year later, at the annual meeting on September 30 1927, the committee presented a proposed Certificate of Incorporation and by-laws, prepared by the Chancellor of the Diocese of New York. Those present voted to approve, and signed the Certificate of Incorporation and bylaws. Later that day it was approved by the Supreme Court of New York, and **The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America** came into being.

From Deaconesses to Deacons

The outstanding feature of The Fund for the Diaconate is that it was begun by the deaconesses, and carried out by them alone until its capital reached \$50,000 - during the Depression. Later, a few lay persons joined the board to manage the finances as the donations accumulated, but the grants were decided upon by the deaconesses elected to the board by their colleagues.

After women were allowed to be ordained as deacons and priests, the number of women supported by the Retiring Fund for Deaconesses dwindled. Following much discussion, the remaining deaconesses and the female deacons of The Episcopal Church voted in 1990 to open the membership to all deacons (female and male, in good standing with their Bishop). In 1998 the name was changed to **The Fund for the Diaconate of The Episcopal Church** to better reflect the original Fund's mission and focus.

Present Day

The Board of The Fund consists of twelve directors: three classes of four deacons, serving three-year terms. The Board elects its own officers; terms begin in January. Board meetings are held in January, May, and October (in a combination of virtual and in-person gatherings). Additional meetings are called as needed, usually virtually.

In 2014, the Board created its first strategic plan to explore how we might broaden our ability to assist deacons. This led to expanded grant opportunities for deacons in need and those in formation, plus opportunities to leave a legacy through planned giving. In May 2026, The Fund revised the plan, to address leadership transitions and sustainability. The Formation Grant and the Hallenbeck Fellowship were suspended while we work to secure one or more donors to underwrite them. A Development Committee has also begun working on a plan for raising significant additional funds through donations and planned giving. The Fund's financial picture remains strong.

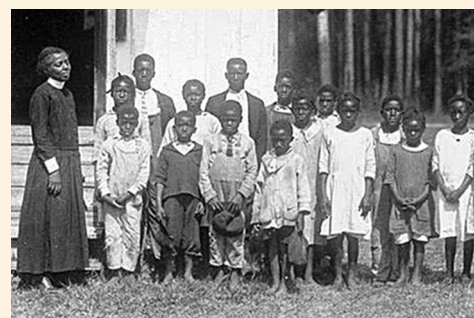


THE DEACONESSES

In The Episcopal Church, deaconesses were faith-filled women who were the early pioneers of servant ministry. Being "set apart" as a deaconess was one of the few ways women could serve the Church in the years before the ordination of women.

Research indicates that the first four deaconesses of The Episcopal Church were ordained by Bp. William Whittingham of Maryland in September, 1857. Several others were ordained or set apart after that, but it was not until 1889 that General Convention authorized the order of deaconesses.

In 1970, the last of some 500 deaconesses were ordained. Later that year, General Convention voted to allow women to be ordained as deacons with the same canonical process as men.



Deaconesses Anna Alexander (above); Harriet Bedell, and Emma Drant (top L-R).

For more information about The Fund's work and deaconesses, visit www.fundfordiaconate.org.

