

The Fund for the Diaconate - Historic Dates Including Deaconesses and The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses

1840s – 1930s Indigenous deacons

- 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
- 1906 Emergency Fund set up by National Council of Deaconesses to help their members in financial distress
- 1913 Church Pension Fund was created by General Convention; deaconesses not included
- 1916: General Convention requests that Church Pension Fund includes deaconesses; CPF board declines to reconsider its decision
- 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.
- 1925? Final (failed) attempt to get deaconesses into Church Pension Fund
- 1926 September 29: Gathering in Manhattan, the National Conference of Deaconesses resolves that The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses 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.

- 1953? Central House for Deaconesses in Chicago established.
- 1965 September 13: Dss. Phyllis Edwards invested and recognized as a deacon by Bp. James Pike of California. First deaconess to be invested and recognized as a deacon
- 1970 General Convention allows women to become deacons; deaconesses allowed to become deacons; deacons allowed to join Church Pension Fund. Last of some 500 deaconesses become deacons.
- 197x The Retiring Fund for Deaconesses name was changed to “The Retiring Fund for Women in the Diaconate in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.”
- 1974 Central House for Deaconesses becomes National Centre for the Diaconate
- 1975 Diocese for Central Florida ordains 15 to permanent diaconate
- 197x Ormonde Plater- First deacon to be board president of the Center for the Diaconate
- 1977 Women allowed to be ordained as priests; clarifies diaconal call as distinct from gender
- 1979 New BCP – New vision of the diaconate reflected in Diaconal Ordination
- 1979? First issue of DIAKONEO published
- 1981 Ormonde Plater’s *The Deacon in the Liturgy* is published. Subsequent books followed, into the 2000's.
- 1986 National Centre for the Diaconate becomes North American Association for the Diaconate (NAAD)
- by 1988 Over 1000 deacons in the Episcopal Church
- 1988 General Convention in Detroit: Canon 9 allows local formation for local service (possibly 1969 Canon 8)
- 1988 Lambeth Conference discusses diaconate
- 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.
- John Collins’ *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* is published
- 1990 Members of The Retiring Fund for Women vote to allow male deacons to become members
- by 1995 NAAD calls for general guidelines for deacon formation programs
- 1997 First gathering of deacon formation directors
- 1998 “The Retiring Fund for Women in the Diaconate in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” 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 of The Fund for the Diaconate, retires.
- 1999 Ormonde Plater creates Anglodeacons, a listserv for deacons to connect online
- 201x NAAD becomes the Association for Episcopal Deacons
- 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.
- Susanne Watson Epting's *Unexpected Consequences: The Diaconate Renewed* is published
- 2018 Name changed to "The Fund for the Diaconate of The Episcopal Church", to recognize the diaconate in overseas dioceses.
- 2018 The Fund and AED begin to work together
- 2019 The Fund and AED begin collaborative work 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.
- 2021 The Fund and AED launch Advancing the Diaconate, a collaborative campaign
- 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 on September 11, 2022 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.
- Criteria for Medical Grants is expanded beyond Covid, to provide help for deacons impacted financially by any Federal-, State-, or Local-declared emergency.
- Medical Grants established, to provide assistance for direct medical expenses such as hearing aids, dental procedures and medical equipment.