

General Convention 2022 passed [Resolution A008](#), authorizing this commemoration for trial use for the triennium 2021-2024; in Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2018.

## **September 22: Episcopal Deaconesses**

The Episcopal deaconess movement describes a ministry of women who were set apart for service by their bishops, beginning in 1857 and ending with the ordination of women as deacons, authorized by General Convention in 1970.

Episcopal deaconesses joined a wider, multi-denominational movement that began in Europe in the 19th century. Deaconesses ministered as nurses, teachers, chaplains, caregivers, administrators, fundraisers and missionaries; both within the U.S. and around the world. Episcopal deaconesses ministered both as individuals and as communities. They often served under difficult conditions, with little compensation, and always under gendered definitions. They ministered in times of peace and in times of war.

The bishop of Maryland set apart the first six deaconesses in the Episcopal Church on September 21, 1857. Four of their names are known: Adeline Blanchard Tyler, Evaline Black, Carrie Guild, and Catherine Minard. Other bishops soon followed suit. Thirty-two years later, the General Convention recognized the ministry of deaconesses canonically thanks to the efforts of Mary Abbot Emery Twing and William Reed Huntington.

Notable deaconesses over the 113-year timespan include Rebecca Hewitt, a caregiver, administrator and leader of deaconesses in Alabama during the Civil War; Jessie Carryl Smith, a World War I nurse in France and later missionary in Alaska; Jane Harris Hall, advocate for women in the New York theater industry in the early 20th century; Susan Trevor Knapp, dean of the New York Training School for Deaconesses and missionary in pre-World War II Japan; the original staff of the Appleton Church Home in Georgia, Margaret Jennings and Sophjenlife Petterson, each a caregiver, formation leader, and head deaconess of the Appleton Church Home; and Mary Frances Gould, teacher, leader and facilitator of mission work throughout the Diocese of Georgia. (See also the individual commemorations for deaconesses Harriet Bedell on January 8, and Anna Alexander on September 24.)

With the establishment of formation programs in several states, and communities for their life and work, the number of deaconesses in the Episcopal Church grew, peaking in 1922 with 226 living deaconesses. When in 1970 women were admitted to ordination as deacons, the Church's deaconesses, perpetual deacons and transitional deacons were joined in a single order of deacons; and women were thus counted among clergy

for the first time. As of September 2020, Priscilla Jean Wright is the last woman deacon living who was originally made a deaconess. She was set apart as a deaconess on June 18, 1964 in the Diocese of Los Angeles.

Some 500 Episcopal deaconesses blessed the Church and the world with their diverse ministries, and provided an example of courageous faithfulness that challenged later generations to recognize God's call to women.

### Collects

I: O God of love, we bless thee for calling and equipping the deaconesses of the Episcopal Church, who served thy people at risk or in need, at home and throughout the world. With grateful hearts we honor their hard work, perseverance, and leadership in following Jesus into places of suffering or hardship, injustice or un-championed hope. May we, like them, bear the light of Christ to all people with humility and grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

II: O God of love, we bless you for calling and equipping the deaconesses of the Episcopal Church, who served your people at risk or in need, at home and throughout the world. With grateful hearts we honor their hard work, perseverance, and leadership in following Jesus into places of suffering or hardship, injustice or un-championed hope. May we, like them, bear the light of Christ to all people with humility and grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### Lessons and Psalm

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

Psalm 34:1-8

Mark 9:33-41

Preface of a Saint (1)