

# 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 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.
- **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.
- **Diaconal Formation Grants** - Help postulants and candidates in deacon formation programs, to cover costs for tuition, books, fees, workshops etc.

### HALLENBECK FELLOWSHIPS

Fellowships are for deacons who demonstrate financial need, to make it possible for them to attend conferences or other educational events whose content is related to the diaconate and/or The Episcopal Church.

Examples include: The Association for Episcopal Deacons' Archdeacon & Deacon Directors' Conference; General Convention; Episcopal Preaching Foundation; and more.

### PLANNED GIVING

You can make a meaningful gift to deacons and those in diaconal formation who are facing financial difficulty.

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



*"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.

*History of The Fund & Deaconesses >>>*

Visit [www.fundfordiaconate.org](http://www.fundfordiaconate.org) for details and applications.

# 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 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 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 Fund 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 Fund's mission and focus.

## Present Day

Today, the officers and directors of The Fund consist of a president and a treasurer, and nine directors. Each August, an election is held and the members elect three directors for three year terms. Members of The Fund are deacons in The Episcopal Church who are in good standing and not further ordained (i.e., priests or bishops). At the Annual Meeting in October (held online), the results are announced, along with the reading of the necrology of all deacons who have died in the past year, officers, and a recap of the past year's activities.

Board meetings are held in January (reorganization meeting, online), May and October (both in person, usually in New York City). Additional meetings are called as needed, usually virtually.

In 2014, the Board created its first strategic plan ("The Road Map") to explore how we might broaden our ability to assist deacons. This has led to expanded grant opportunities for deacons in need and those in formation, plus opportunities to leave a legacy with planned giving. The Road Map was updated in 2021, with plans for the next review due in 2025.

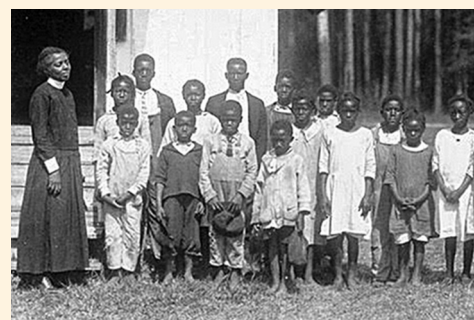


## THE DEACONESSES

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.



*Top: Harriet Bedell, Emma Drant.  
Above: Anna Ellison Butler Alexander.*

**For more information about The Fund's work and deaconesses, visit [www.fundfordiaconate.org](http://www.fundfordiaconate.org).**

