

▶ 1942

CONTINUED

No guarantees of work for deaconesses, working conditions hard to regulate, appointments still made year-to-year

Deaconesses allowed to attend Presbytery, needed permission to speak, no vote unless made lay delegate

▶ 1948

Commission on Ministries of Women, recommended establishing diaconate as part of Order of Ministry, for men and women; defeated by GC but they allowed if more lay people than ministers, deaconesses could be member of Presbytery

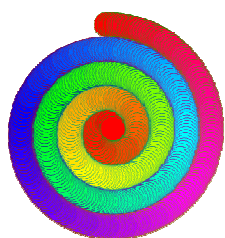
▶ 1952

Deaconesses were no longer required to work one year after graduation before being admitted to the Order  
  
uniform no longer required

▶ 1953

Commission on Women's Work in the Church formed to study all work of women, heavily influenced by world wide discussion of roles of women in church and society

CONTINUED page 7 ↗



## DIACONAL ~ ORDAINED IDENTITY

By Robin Osborne

**Where I see no way to go  
you'll be telling me the way, I know.**

What led me to decide to become ordained, after being a diaconal minister? Now in my fifth year after ordination, I minister with a lively Affirming congregation, St. James of Regina, in a team ministry.

If I think of a time when I felt the purest joy and the greatest elation, but up against the pain of growing, it has to be the time I spent from 1984 to 1987 at the Centre for Christian Studies. The very challenges around patriarchy that alternately enthralled and frightened this new enthusiast

rooted the analysis that drove an increasing wedge into my faltering marriage. While unsure of myself, I increasingly accepted the invitation to become a hungry and curious learner. I was an emerging spirit! My set beliefs about myself were rattled. My chosen path of marriage and the assumption of heterosexuality that had long shaped my choices, were called into question. Permission to become is a frightening thing- and yet I drank it in, even as the changes in me raised increasing tensions.

To my core I was convinced of my diaconal heart. Twenty years later, in spite of being and functioning as an

ordained minister, I know I have a diaconal heart. I continue to believe in and employ the basic principles I absorbed through those tumultuous years. But, why on earth would I choose to become ordained when I had always suspected that the training at Emmanuel would deaden my right-brained soul? Ultimately, it offered a ballast of knowledge, and a sorely needed furthering of my theological skills.

The story of why is long, painful. My settlement charge in Guelph—a wonderful one, came to me in 1987. I had been one year on the job, green

**I was convinced of  
my diaconal heart  
... in spite of  
being ordained**

and insecure, holding together a marriage with transparent tape, when 1988 hit. In view of the courageous decision made at General Council, my ministry team felt challenged in integrity, theology and many other ways. My insecurities sky-rocketed. The sexual orientation question I had been assiduously ignoring to my peril, felt as if it were paraded. My colleague and I attempted honesty in the “educational sessions” while the most conservative people lusted for blood. Lonely and stressed, I responded disastrously to a young woman’s offer of friendship and interest.

At CCS, I had been carefully taught. I had been warned of rapacious sexual predators—males, but not warned- in my memory-- of the ease of women blurring boundaries at times of vulnerability or when one’s orientation hadn’t been faced. I broke boundaries with this woman and appropriately experienced the consequences; informal hearing, public confession, eventually a civil suit that entailed an extended professional suspension. I attained five units of Clinical pastoral training after leaving the church but the suspension wasn’t lifted. ↗

## JOURNEY TO ORDINATION

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The ramifications of my poor judgment at a time of stress were huge. Our national church was newly committed to a conscientious tackling and condemnation of pastoral misconduct. The facing of the degree of my sin produced a time for me in the depths of shame and despair. The work of repentance and understanding the roots of my error was extensive, necessary and took time. By 1996, still suspended, having had to work at jobs I could find, home care, a group home, I realized I would die in my soul if I didn't answer the question of ministry. Could I return? Should I return? Could I ever again with confidence claim to be a United Church minister?

Broken, grief-filled, a year of living with my mother became grace-filled. I explored a return to nursing. But doors didn't open. Vocational counseling identified ministry, not nursing. I struggled inside myself –because I believe that in ministry you cannot really hide behind a mask. Integrity is the bottom line.

Through a profoundly healing experience at First United in Ottawa, where Sharon Moon was ministering, I received what I experienced as a lifting of the tremendous grief and shame I carried. I felt loved and accompanied by the Spirit deep in my bones. Confirmation in my vocation as minister came to me over the year.

I developed a dream for a fresh start. The passing years had toughened me around practical concerns, including financial. I looked at the diminishing number of team

ministries (my favourite way to work) and I acknowledged my need for stronger liturgical skills than I had if I were to become a confident minister on my own in any pastoral charge. So I applied for “the shorter course” for ordination before being assured of reinstatement. I wrote lengthy applications to review what had brought me to this request, and found people who loved, sustained and knew me to speak on my behalf. I was accepted.

To go to Emmanuel, the requirements were specific, thankfully my experience in Guelph, and training at CCS were recognized. In the first year while I took basic arts subjects, I successfully pleaded my case for reinstatement. Three years later I stood before Toronto Conference in wonder at my journey. My authenticity in sexuality and in a return to ministry was hard-won. And here I was standing on a new frontier ready to begin my flight.

*Robin lives and ministers in Regina, SK.*



### ORDAINED AND DIACONAL

For Teresa Jones ordination marked a new call, added to her diaconal call. She made this proclamation in the 2002 Service of Celebration at Manitou Conference.

President: You have heard your name called. Are you ready to answer the call to ordained ministry within Christ's church?

Candidate: By God's grace, I reaffirm my calling to diaconal ministry and I am ready and willing to accept the call to ordained ministry.



A persistent call and practical assessment brought Robin to ordination.

▶ 1955

Deaconess Association proposes to Commission diaconate as part of Order of Ministry, open to men and women in attempt to gain status for deaconess work

▶ 1958

Commission presented deaconess' proposal, with option of designation or ordination, GC defeated

▶ 1960

deaconesses corresponding members of presbytery (voice no vote), disjoining upon marriage lifted, but still disjoined when stopped working for church

▶ 1962

WMS, WA, Deaconess Order and other women workers now under Board of Women

Committee on the Deaconess Order and Women Workers, and the full time staff, phased out

▶ 1963

"Certified Employed Churchmen" created for men

CONTINUED page 12 ↗

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY DESIGNATION

### By Ted Dodd

In 1980 I was ordained to a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care. As an overly confident staff associate, as a culture-shocked ordinand, as an energetic Conference staff minister, as an overwhelmed minister in a new church development congregation, as an awe-struck facilitator of theological education; I have been blessed and blessed again.

The church has at times, exasperated me, but it has accepted me, developed my gifts and affirmed me as a valued and worthwhile human being; and given me opportunity and space to share my gifts. I have not regretted my life in ordained ministry. But as the old century came to a close and after over twenty years in paid accountable minis-

try, I began the process to have my order of ministry designation switched from ordained to diaconal. I was commissioned in 2003.

I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of function. With two years as a congregational staff associate responsible for out-

reach and education, eleven years as a Conference staff person in the areas of education and justice, and eleven years as a theological educator; my ministry has focused on diaconal functions. I endeavor to integrate pastoral care, education and social justice throughout ministry. In my conversations about my desire



Ted Dodd is the only person in the United Church to switch from ordained to diaconal ministry.

to switch my ministry designation from ordained to diaconal, I have often begun my explanation with reference to function. This has been a helpful place to start in the attempt to explain this unprecedented move. In many ways I see the value in this functional approach. But I would not want to reduce diaconal ministry to a job description. I do not want to unduly place value on performance and productivity in ministry over presence and reflection. A breadth of

relationships, theology, spirituality, history and commitments make up the vocation of diaconal ministry.

I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of style. Enabling and empowering nurture, growth-oriented and prophetic ↗



## ORDAINED TO DIACONAL

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questioning, non-hierarchical inclusivity, consultative collegiality, mutuality in accompaniment are articulated faith values of the diaconal community. These attributes are not, of course, unique to the diaconal community. But the diaconal community offers accountability to these values and I long to officially be a part of this kind of ongoing, intentional feedback and responsible discerning.

**the diaconal community offers accountability to these values** I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of perspective. The diaconal identity is shaped by a long and rich history. The diaconal community tends to operate from a strong calling to what has traditionally been understood as servanthood and has been prophetically understood as justice orientation. In many ways it is a marginalized, non-normative ministry. This experience affects the diaconal viewpoint and understanding.

I ache at the injustice and unfairness of the way those in the diaconate are discounted and discredited. But I delight in the stories of courage and defiance and the dedication to integration. I am moved by the stories shared about faithful mentors

and characters. I feel a sense of belonging to the diaconal community and lives of faithful commitment, responsibility and hope.

*Ted is a diaconal minister on the Program Staff at the Centre for Christian Studies.*

*This article is reprinted from the DUCC website.*

## REVIVING FEMALE DIACONATE

“Master and Lord, You do not reject women who offer themselves, and by divine counsel, to minister as is fitting to your holy houses, but you accept them in the order of ministers. Give the grace of your Holy Spirit to this servant of Yours also, who wishes to offer herself to you, and to accomplish the grace of the diaconate, as You gave the grace of Your diaconate to Phoebe, whom you called to the work of the ministry...”

These are the beginning words of the second prayer of ordination of the female deacon in the Byzantine rite. The female diaconate is a part of the Orthodox Church’s history. For over one thousand years, the Orthodox Church ordained women to serve as deaconesses. But not now.

Orthodox scholar Teva Regule answers the questions, “Is a permanent diaconate, especially a female diaconate, needed in the Church today?”, and “What could this ministry look like in the 21st century?” in an article on the Orthodox Peace Fellowship site: [in-communion.org/](http://in-communion.org/)

### What is the Fund for?

The Kaufman Fund is to help with the cost of retreat, reflection, renewal and rest experiences and to make possible a grant or loan to persons who find themselves in a financial emergency. Any event or opportunity which meets these purposes will be considered.



### The Kaufman Renewal and Emergency Fund

### Am I eligible?

The Fund is available to all United Church diaconal ministers and all CCS graduates.

### How do I apply?

You can request a grant by writing a letter. For more information visit [ducc.ca](http://ducc.ca) and look under Resources, or contact Judith Astley (519)884-8082 [Jast574@rogers.com](mailto:Jast574@rogers.com)



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## JOURNEY TO RECLAIM FULL DIACONATE

By Jimmy Carr

I answered God's call to be in specialized ministry and was consecrated as a Christian Educator in The United Methodist Church (UMC) in 1967. My practice as a Christian Educator moved me from serving congregational members in their personal daily walk with Christ to an enriched theological understanding of teaching, enabling, and leading persons to be servants where they lived and worked in the world. Little did I know that making this life commitment would thrust me into the world-wide struggle to reclaim the diaconate.

UMC joined that struggle in 1972. The vision was to reclaim the biblical and historical deacon as a separate and distinct order. The decision in 1976, was to continue our Office of Deaconess, a gender specific office, and the diaconate that was a step to Elder, but to add a new *lay* office of Diaconal Minister that was open to women and men. I was consecrated a Diaconal Minister in 1977, and my life and ministry would never be the same!

The Office of Diaconal Ministry consisted predominantly of Christian Educators and musicians with a smaller number in community ministries, medical ministries, and administrators. From 1976 to 1996 we grew to over 800 Diaconal Ministers. A Division of Diaconal Ministry was established that guided Diaconal Ministers and the UMC in study and understanding of the work and ministry of the diaconate. It also led to conversation and membership in World DIAKONIA and Regional DOTAC.

The office grew and the theological understanding of the diaconate among Diaconal Ministers grew immensely. Even though Diaconal Minis-

ters were located predominantly in local churches, there were ways that they were serving the needs of God's children in their communities and, indeed, around the world. But then Diaconal Ministers began to hold important offices across our church giving us visibility, opportunities, influence and leadership. A shift took place theologically and politically which led to Diaconal Ministers serving in over 50 areas of ministry beyond the local church.

The UMC continued, however to be challenged about the two step ordination process of Deacon and Elder by those wanting a permanent ordained Order of Deacons. A second study commission was established in 1980, and one every four years thereafter – 1984, 1988 and 1992.

In 1996, UMC established The Order of Deacon in Full Connection. It is equal to The Order of Elder and the two-step ordination of the Elder was abolished. There were Diaconal ↗

American Jimmy Carr played a leadership role in transforming the United Methodist diaconate.

