What is a deaconess?

Women employed in the deaconess vocation have been trained, called and commissioned by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to serve Christ and His church through **works of mercy, spiritual care** and **teaching the faith.**

In Romans 16:1, St. Paul wrote, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea."

The modern use of deaconesses emerged in the German Lutheran Church in the 1830s and was embraced by North American Lutherans during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Since 1922, LCMS congregations, missions, institutions and Recognized Service Organizations have engaged deaconesses in a diversity of diaconal ministries. In whatever capacity she serves, the LCMS deaconess brings her theological training to bear, endeavoring to spread Christ's love and mercy for both body and soul.

Is this for me?

Serving in a congregation, institution, RSO or mission field of the church is both challenging and satisfying. If you are a Christian woman, eager to learn more about God's Word, and wondering how you might best use your life in service to the Lord and his church…

… Consider the gifts, talents, and skills that God has given you

… Talk to your family and pastor about the deaconess vocation

… Pray for God's guidance as you consider your options

… Feel free to contact any of the following directors of LCMS deaconess-training programs for more information:

Rev. Dr. Erik Hermann
Concordia Seminary
herrmanne@csl.edu

Rev. Dr. James G. Bushur
Concordia Theological Seminary
james.bushur@ctsfw.edu

Rev. Timothy Eckert
Deaf Institute of Theology
deaflutheran@q.com

Rev. John Loum
Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology
loumj@csl.edu

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo Sanchez
Center for Hispanic Studies
sanchezl@csl.edu

Complimentary fact sheets and brochures about deaconess service can be downloaded from the LCMS website at *www.lcms.org/deaconess*. You may also contact Deaconess Grace Rao, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, at grace.rao@lcms.org.

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World Relief and Human Care,
under the Office of International Mission, 2011

Considering Deaconess Service

Living the Compassion of Christ

LCMS World Relief and Human Care

Mercy forever.

The Church shares Jesus' heart for mercy

Christ, our Lord, is the physical embodiment of mercy, and His church always strives to share His love with the world. Jesus, who gives new and eternal life, also cares for the bodily needs of the poor, hungry and sick. The church, therefore, brings Christ's Word and Sacraments into the world, and wherever possible, serves those with bodily need.

Deaconesses serve through acts of mercy, spiritual care and teaching the faith, primarily to women and children. This diaconal ministry of mercy supports and compliments the Pastoral office ministry of Word and Sacraments. Every LCMS deaconess is taught to point continually to Christ and the church, where our eternal needs are met through God's Word and Sacraments.

Preparing for a ministry of mercy

Deaconesses are church workers who wish to serve their Lord through caring for the spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual needs of others. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provides several avenues of preparation for this vocation.

In 1980, the LCMS established its own synodical deaconess-training program at Concordia University Chicago. Additional deaconess education programs were added at Concordia Seminary in 2002 and Concordia Theological Seminary in 2003. The Synod's Deaf Institute of Theology, Center for Hispanic Studies and Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology also offer specialized courses for deaconess certification under the auspices of Concordia Seminary.

LCMS deaconess-training programs

Concordia University Chicago

- Undergraduate Degree program (major in Theology)
- Deaconess Certification program (without degree)
- Master of Arts in Religion with Deaconess Certification
- Online Master of Arts in Religion with Deaconess Certification
- LCMS Deaconess Colloquy program

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

- Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies
- Master of Arts with Deaconess Certification
- Duel degree: Master of Arts in Social Work – Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies
- Deaf Institute of Theology specialized deaconess course
- Center for Hispanic Studies specialized deaconess course
- Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology specialized deaconess course

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

- Master of Arts leading to Deaconess Certification
- Distance/Online Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies

Deaconesses often work in three settings

Congregations

- Visiting the sick or immobile
- Grief support and assistance
- Older adult ministry
- Family life ministry
- Children, youth or women's ministry
- Bilingual and immigration ministry
- Music ministry
- Volunteer coordination
- Volunteer coordination

Institutions or Recognized Service Organizations

- Teaching or assisting in parochial schools, childcare centers, eldercare or other community educational programs
- Chaplaincy care in prisons, hospitals, convalescent homes or hospice
- Meal assistance, food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters or safe houses
- Service in homes or institutions for people with physical or mental needs
- Service in pregnancy centers, maternity or family assistance centers
- Service in other charitable institutions, projects, and programs designed for specific groups (e.g., homeless, grieving, terminally ill, recovering addicts, mentally ill)

Domestic or foreign missions

- Bilingual outreach
- Mercy outreach
- Children or women's ministry