Providing mercy under the cross

Mercy can be as tangible as a loaf of bread pressed into hands of the hungry. Yet the church strives to accompany that bread with a loving and ongoing relationship rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A deaconess is a church worker who strives to meet the needs of those around her, while pointing them to the church and Christ, who offers forgiveness, hope and healing. She differs from other institution or organization workers in that she has received a formal LCMS education in Theology—particularly in the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions—and training in specialized strategies and skills for reaching out to others.

Enriched by God's Word, deaconesses assist in bringing a physical presence from the church, through institutions and RSOs, to individuals who need the love of Christ in their lives.

Deaconesses address specific needs within an organization and its community, emphasizing that the Triune God works through good times and bad, in both Christians and non-Christians. Through physical aid, teaching, encouragement and other acts of kindness, deaconesses seek to bring the comfort of Christ and the assistance of His church to those in need.

To employ a deaconess in your institution or RSO

Seasoned deaconesses already serving in the field are called and move to new positions through the same calling process used for other LCMS church workers. Those interested in engaging experienced deaconesses may consult with LCMS district presidents for possible names.

Each LCMS deaconess-training program places its own certified deaconess candidates, matching women in placements where they may be most beneficial. Institutions or RSOs wishing to explore the idea of calling a deaconess candidate may receive more information by contacting the directors of the various training programs:

Deaconess Jennie J. Asher
Concordia University Chicago
jennie.asher@cuchicago.edu

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

You may also contact Deaconess Grace Rao, LCMS World Relief and Human Care under the Office of International Mission, at grace.rao@lcms.org or visit *www.lcms.org/deaconess*.

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

Deaconesses Serving LCMS Institutions or Recognized Service Organizations

LCMS World Relief and Human Care

Mercy forever.

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World Relief and Human Care, 2009

Serving the poor and suffering

As Lutherans, we find great comfort in the cross, where Jesus died to pay for the sins of the entire world. In this cross, we see that even though suffering can be severe, God works through suffering to give us new life and new hope in Christ.

On the cross, Jesus joined Himself to our suffering. He made every man and woman a potential brother or sister in the Lord! Yet, many suffer alone, forgotten or neglected by those around them.

Deaconesses share 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. LCMS institutions and Recognized Service Organizations play a large role in providing settings for deaconesses to carry out this ministry of mercy, which supports and compliments the Pastoral office ministry of Word and Sacraments.

Who may need a deaconess?

- Homeless, hungry, poor or immobile
- The imprisoned and their families
- Teen mothers, single parents, troubled families
- Foster children, troubled youth, children in transition
- The sick, those in hospital or hospice
- The shut-in, lonely or neglected
- Those with physical or mental challenges
- The addicted or struggling
- Those affected by abuse or violence
- Those suffering grief or loss
- Immigrants, community newcomers and strangers

Service in institutions and RSOs

Deaconess service is LCMS institutions and RSOs can take many forms, depending upon the specialized needs of the organization. After specified training, some deaconesses receive ecclesiastical endorsement (through LCMS World Relief and Human Care) to provide chaplaincy services at health care or correctional institutions.

Other deaconesses choose to work with special interests close to their heart, in areas where they have extended experience. Some hold degrees in disciplines such as social work, psychology, nonprofit business administration, nonprofit management, sign language, nursing, education, early childhood education, counseling, and Spanish. These qualifications are in addition to the theological training received by every LCMS deaconess.

Sample areas of service:

- Hospital, convalescent home or hospice chaplaincy
- Parochial school, childcare, eldercare or other education programs
- Meal assistance, food pantries, soup kitchens
- Shelters and safe houses
- Homes for people with special needs
- Pregnancy or maternity assistance centers
- Charitable organizations
- Disaster relief
- Administering programs for specific groups (e.g. grieving, pro-life, troubled youth or families, counseling patients, mentally ill, recovering addicts)