

**UNDERSTANDINGS OF DIACONAL MINISTRY:  
From the Member Organizations of DOTAC  
By Pam Nesbit, October 2019**

You may not know that AED is part of an organization called Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC), which is part of the world-wide federation of organizations of Protestant diaconal ministers called World Diakonia. DOTAC includes the 11 diaconal organizations in the Western Hemisphere from Brazil to Canada. DOTAC held its quadrennial assembly in August at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. President Douglas Argue and Past President Maureen Hagen were able to attend, as was I, and they will be reporting about their experience of the conference.

I have been the AED representative to DOTAC for eight years, and in this time of working and sharing with diaconal ministers of other denominations, I have learned from the similarities and the differences between our communities' understandings of diaconal ministry. One of DOTAC's purposes is to encourage connection and conversation between diaconal ministers of different denominations, so I am offering examples of diaconal statements from each of the member organizations of DOTAC. These statements were gathered together by Ted Dodd, a diaconal minister in the United Church of Canada and president of DOTAC. These are not definitive statements of each denominations' complete understanding of diaconal ministry. They were excerpted from statements offered by the communities in a variety of contexts. They are offered to stimulate curiosity and understanding among our differing diaconal communities. The joys and challenges of diaconal ministry are shared among us as Episcopal Deacons and among our brother and sister diaconal ministers in other communities. And, at the same time, there are profound differences among us. I believe these shared concerns and joys as well as our diversity can lead to deepening and strengthening all our ministries and our mutual support.

I invite you to read these excerpts, to notice what makes sense to you and what does not in light of your own understanding of diakonia. Use this in conversations with other deacons or deacons-in-formation. I would be happy to follow up with anyone to continue this conversation. In each listing, I have offered the name of the diaconal community, the statement, the name of the DOTAC representative from that community and from where the statement was taken:

**Association of Anglican Deacons of Canada/Association Anglicane des Diacres au Canada (AADC)**

*Deacon Jacquie Bouthéon*

“Our diaconal ministry is to serve, to proclaim the gospel by our words and in our lives, to seek a preferential standpoint with those who are poor or vulnerable. Some are called, equipped, and ordained to embody diakonia as deacons, to exemplify to the faithful what it is ‘to serve all people, especially the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.’”

*Iona Report: The Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada, pages 17-18*

**Association for Episcopal Deacons (AED)**

*Deacon Pam Nesbit*

“Diakonia is not optional in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; rather it is an essential part of discipleship. Diakonia reaches out to all persons created in God’s image, and all of God’s

creation. While diakonia begins in unconditional service to neighbor in need, it leads inevitably through advocacy and prophetic proclamation to bear witness in word and deed to God's presence in the midst of our lives.”

*On Engaging the Diakonia of all Believers*

### **The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Deaconess ELCA)**

*Sister Noreen Stevens*

Our Vision (Who we are and want to be): Compelled by the love of Christ and sustained by community the Deaconess Community of the ELCA works for justice and flourishing for all of God's creation.

Our Mission (What we do and how): For the sake of the Gospel and all of God's creation, the Deaconess Community of the ELCA fosters intentional community, diaconal leadership development, and dynamic partnerships within the church and the world.

Our Guiding Principles (How will we behave during the process of becoming): We are rooted in the living Word and love of God. We are emboldened by our history. We are accountable to intentional community. We practice courageous leadership. We practice radical welcome. We practice cultivating partnerships.

*Adopted by the Deaconess Community of the ELCA Assembly, September 27, 2019*

### **Diakonia of The United Church of Canada (DUCC)**

*Deacon Ted Dodd*

“Through education, service, social justice, and pastoral care, diaconal ministry in The United Church of Canada, encourages a growing faith, speaks truth to power, seeks mutual empowerment, proclaims prophetic hope, nurtures life-giving community, fosters peaceful, right relationship, within the church and the whole of creation wherever the Spirit may lead.”

*DUCC Statement of Vision, adopted 2009*

### **ELCA Deacons Ecumenical Engagement Affinity Group (ELCA Deacons)**

*Deacon Jan Cherry*

“...wherever one works to announce God's forgiveness, to heal, to bring peace, to establish justice, to harbor hope and proclaim promise, there one serves Christ himself and there the servant makes visible to the served the God who insistently and selflessly is with us. Such is service to “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40). All of this mandate is diaconal.”

*Word and Service Task Force: Frequently Asked Questions*

### **Lutheran Diaconal Association/Lutheran Deaconess Conference/Community of Lutheran Deacons (LDA)**

*Deaconess Lisa Polito*

“Diaconal service, or “service ministry,” is not something that we ‘do.’ It is what happens when someone's deep desire to serve Christ comes to life. The LDA believes that servant ministry can happen anywhere, in any setting. Our Deaconesses and Deacons serve in hundreds of different settings. —hospitals, schools, dance studios, and courtrooms; but servant ministry —also called diakonia— does not focus on what we do with our days, but how we serve others as we live them.”

*<https://thelda.org/serve/>*

### **Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil (IECLB)**

*Diaconisa Arlete A. Prochnow*

“Diakonia is not a mere tradition, but a new challenge in every time, because it represents the entire being of the Church. Jesus was the true deacon, the one who served and taught to serve. Church of Jesus Christ serves. Church that does not serve is not of Jesus Christ. Thus, diakonia is the task of the Church. Once someone told me, ‘But the mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel.’ Yes, but the Gospel is word in action.”

Diac. Nádia Mara Dal Castel de Oliveira, *Dia Nacional de Diaconia, 15 de abril de 2018*

### **Diaconal Ministers –Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (DM - ELCIC)**

*Deaconess Judy Whaley*

“Diaconal ministers are grounded and formed in community with other diaconal ministers, committed to a common calling. This diaconal community can serve as a reminder and model for building community in all ministry settings. Collaboration and community partnerships are a part of their identity.”

### **The Office of Deaconess, Home Missioners and Home Missionaries-The United Methodist Church (ODHM - UMC)**

*Scott James-Vickery, Home Missioner*

“Deaconesses and Home Missioners are laywomen and laymen who are called by God to be in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church for engagement with a full-time vocation in ministries of love, justice, and service. Together we form a covenant community that is rooted in Scripture, informed by history, driven by mission, ecumenical in scope, and global in outreach.”

<http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/dhm>

### **Wesley Diaconal Community -- Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (WDC - MCCA)**

*Rev. Janice Soyer-Delaney*

“Aim of Wesley Diaconal Community – MCCA: to empower and inspire deacons of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas to a life of service through mutual support in prayer, counsel, communication and commitment to the evangelistic and social mission of the Church, and the promotion of human wholeness by presenting the liberating Christ through an evangelistic and social witness placing special emphasis on children and young people.”

<http://dwfmembers.org/caribbean/jamaica-wesley-diaconal-community-of-the-methodist-church-in-caribbean-and-the-americas/>

### **Presbyterian Church in Canada – Order of Diaconal Ministry (PCC - ODM)**

*Rev. Ann Blane*

Diaconal Ministers are called to be servants of Jesus Christ. We believe in a ministry that is spiritual, dynamic, creative and a practical enactment of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We work collegially in leadership, open to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to equip and enrich others for Christian life and service. We envision a ministry rooted in the life and worship of the whole people of God which emphasizes Christian Education, Pastoral Care and Social Services.

*Statement of Diaconal Ministries, (adopted by the 124th General Assembly, 1998)*