

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE DIACONATE

Centre for the Diaconate *Monograph Series*

Formation
of
Ministering Christians

by

Susanne Watson Epting



Monograph Series No. 11
PDF Edition

©1999

North American Association for the Diaconate
271 North Main Street
Providence, RI 02903

Formation of Ministering Christians

by Susanne Watson Epting

Susanne Watson Epting serves as Executive Director of North American Association for the Diaconate. At the time the keynote was first published she was Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Iowa, Convenor of the Coordinators of Living Stones Partnership, and President of the NAAD. Keynote address, given at Living the Covenant consultation, June 12, 1999.

In the last few weeks, I've been doing a lot of thinking about how we got here. I even went back to my Planning Committee notes and worksheets to trace a bit about where we started. I think it's important to share some of that today. I think it's important that we name some of the interests and perspectives that brought us together, and the ground of commonality on which we stand. So let me just share with you a brief excerpt from the minutes of our first meeting on November 28, 1997.

"Porter convened the meeting formally at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, November 28th. The first order of business was an outline of conversations that have preceded this meeting. The first idea for a National Conference on Baptismal Ministry came from [Bishop] Tom Ray at a meeting of the Associated Parishes Council. In March of 1997 an initial planning meeting was held at Wellspring, Boulder City, Nevada to determine possible sources of support and interest. Porter and Harris then worked to select a tentative site and date, which proved to be St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, June 9-13, 1999."¹

As a member of the North American Association for the Diaconate, I'd first heard about this just a few months later when [Bishop] George Harris had suggested to the NAAD Board that we might want to consider working with Associated Parishes as we looked ahead to our conference in 1999. Also as a member of the Living Stones Diocesan Partnership, I had heard something of these conversations, and I was excited. Just a few months before, I had said to a friend, "What if all the organizations that have *ministry* somehow as their focus all came together in one place? What if there were an opportunity for all the ministers of the church to gather and talk about how it is that we're redefining, or perhaps more importantly, how we're reclaiming the meaning of ministry."

Little did I know that I'd have the great privilege of being part of such an initiative, in fact, of such a convergence. Little did I know what an opportunity this would come to be in the ongoing formation of those of us gathered here.

As we continued in that first planning meeting we talked about our hopes, our concerns and our passions for ministry. And it was a dialogue between all the ministers of the church. Two lay persons, three presbyters, two bishops and one deacon later we had the basic design. The first day would be given to discussion about what we mean by ministry, that is, ministry rooted in baptism, understood broadly and inclusively. The second day would have as its theme how the church organizes its communal life. That is, how does the church order its life, discern gifts for ministry, and call persons to fill those positions in accordance with their gifts. Finally, the third day would be given

to how the church “forms” people to move into ministry and orders, particularly through worship, spiritual development, education and training.

Now that’s a lot of history. But I hope you are able to hear at least a little about the convergence that many of us have been able to watch and experience. Different individuals representing different organizations; different sorts of ministers bringing different perspectives; different personalities bringing different eccentricities and gifts; all concerned about what we do with the rest of our lives after rising from the waters of baptism. And I hope it’s helpful as I share my remarks, for you to understand as much as possible about the context in which they’ve been developed.

So how does the church “form” people to move into ministry and orders? As we sat in that room in 1997, some of us came carrying the principles of Roland Allen and New Directions Ministries, and were especially concerned about the renewal and redemption of churches in small communities.²

Some of us, on the other hand, came from situations where we were equally concerned about how it made sense to apply those same principles to any size congregation; about moving away from a consumer-provider approach to being the church, moving away from being communities gathered around a minister to ministering communities. Still others of us had, as a primary focus, ministry development including curriculum development and local training. And some of us were especially concerned about the catechumenal model of experience, reflection and instruction.³

Concurrently, the North American Association for the Diaconate had engaged in a renewed commitment to develop guidelines for deacon formation. After decades of what I would term “local” formation programs, NAAD was responding to at least two things. The first was a commitment to assist those dioceses where deacon formation programs were not in place. The second was to take a hard look at whether, because we’d all been “training” differently, from diocese to diocese, if the order was really becoming a diocesan order, rather than an order for the whole church. And if it was for the whole church, what would we affirm in the training and formation of all deacons?

As we gathered for the first formation directors’ meeting in New Orleans in the winter of 1997, we found ourselves agreeing, fairly quickly, on the “instructional” aspects of training programs. The academic and didactic content were easy. And the discussion about experiential components, such as fieldwork and supervised pastoral care, also came together fairly quickly. But the question that emerged that was paramount for me, had to do with something else. After many of us had been discussing how important it was to build in a spiritual formation component, and that it was important to address, not only training for what deacons do, but also for who a deacon is, and when we began to touch on the more ontological nature of our ministry, someone said, “We know we can come to agreement about academics. We know we can negotiate guidelines for the experiential component of formation, but what is it that forms the soul of a deacon?”

Some of you have heard me tell that story. In fact, some of you were there. But I really do mean it when I say that question was paramount. And as a ministry developer and a spiritual director, and as one who asks the church, over and over, to pay attention

to how God is transforming it, I soon found myself changing that question slightly, and beginning to ask myself, "What forms the soul of a minister?"

I was, myself, deeply touched by that question. You see, if the truth be known, I have lots of questions about what we call "formation," and lots of opinions about what we call "ministry." And that question reached right into the center of some of my own convictions, as well as some of my own turmoil.

That's where I'd like us to shift our focus now, because I hope we can agree, whether we come as ministry developers, as formation directors, as catechists, as seminary professors, as Sunday school teachers, or as EFM mentors, that there is something about that question that can draw us in.

As I proceed to wind along a few different paths in this discussion about the formation of ministering Christians, I invite you to keep that question in mind. If you're the kind to take notes, perhaps you'll write it down. If you're the type who debates with the speaker in your head, perhaps you'll let that question inform your debate. And if you're the kind, like I tend to be, who can never disengage your heart from your head, I invite you to let the question rest in your heart. What forms the soul of a minister?

The answer, I believe, quite simply, is embedded in the knowledge, the understanding, and the taking in at core levels, that we are God's Beloved. And the simplicity of that answer, my friends, lies on the other side of complexity. You see, for too long I think we have gone about "formation" in ways that distance us from Love. By Love, I mean the One who has loved us first. The One who has made us, come to meet us where we are, who has called us into community, invited us into relationship, and given us all we need to make the hope and the promise of that Love come alive where we live.

I suspect we may have been too quick to say that the academic and didactic content of formation programs is easy. But I also suspect that what was becoming clearest, as we engaged in that discussion, was that spiritual formation was a component that had been missing historically. By spiritual formation I mean an intentional and appreciative understanding of life in the Spirit. How are we aware of ourselves as spiritual beings grounded in God? How do we give attention to the nurture and growth of that part of our lives? And how are we aware of the Spirit's active presence in our ongoing conversion, as we seek to live into God more deeply and fully? After reflecting on all that, I've come to believe that we were not only too quick to divorce academics and spiritual formation, but that, more than that, we really can approach the acquisition of knowledge and skill from a spiritual perspective.

Parker Palmer has written about this eloquently in his book entitled *To Know As We Are Known*. He suggests that: "Many of us live one-eyed lives." He writes, "We rely largely on the eye of the mind to inform our image of reality. But today more and more of us are opening the other eye, the eye of the heart, looking for realities to which the mind's eye is blind. Either eye alone is not enough. We need 'wholesight,' a vision of the world in which mind and heart unite . . . Our seeing shapes our being. Only as we see whole can we and our world be whole."⁴

Palmer suggests that with the mind's eye we tend to see a world of fact and reason. I suspect that's what was at the core of our separation of academic and spiritual formation. But Palmer reminds us that we are discovering, particularly since the use of the atom bomb, that our mind-made world has been found flawed and dangerous. So he suggests we open ourselves to using the eye of the heart to see a world transformed by the power of love, to see a vision of community beyond the mind's capacity to see. And then he asks, "How shall we use both eyes to create not a blurry double image, but one world, in all its dimensions, healed and made whole?"⁵

He reminds us that history suggests the primary sources for our knowledge are curiosity and power. "Curiosity," he writes, "is an amoral passion, a need to know that allows no guidance beyond the need itself. Control is simply another word for power, a passion notorious not only for its amorality but for its tendency toward corruption. And then he suggests that "another kind of knowledge is available to us, one that begins in another passion and is drawn toward other ends. This knowledge, he says, can contain as much sound fact and theory as the knowledge we now possess.... This is a knowledge that originates not in curiosity or control, but in compassion, or love – a source not celebrated in our intellectual tradition but in our spiritual heritage Our spiritual tradition, he goes on to say, claims that the origin of knowledge is love. The deepest wellspring of our desire to know is the passion to recreate the organic community in which the world was first created."⁶

"Curiosity and control," he writes, "create a knowledge that distance us from each other and the world, allowing us to use what we know as a plaything and to play the game by our own self-serving rules. But a knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call us to involvement, mutuality, accountability."⁷

Perhaps I can illustrate this from personal experience. A few of you know the short form of my spiritual autobiography – thirty three words. It goes like this. I saw Jesus when I was three. I got feminism when I was thirty-five. The only reason I'm still part of the church is that I saw Jesus when I was three. For those of you who already know the story, I hope you'll bear with me.

I don't know a lot about my Sunday School experiences in the Baptist Church. But I do know that someone taught me to sing "Jesus loves me." It's not a sophisticated tune, nor is it common in our church. But I believe it may well have been that simple tune that prepared me on a sunny Spring day, when I was three years old, to see Jesus. As I rode past the convent where so often we would see the nuns walking in the garden, suddenly he was there one day walking and talking.

After exclaiming to my parents that I'd just seen Jesus, and after being reassured that I'd most likely seen a statue, I knew even at the age of three, that I was not likely to convince those around me what had happened. And as I've gone over that scenario in my mind in the many years since then, I have supposed from time to time, that it's logical enough that someone who looked like what I thought Jesus looked like could have been in the garden at the convent. But I know I saw him. Because when I did, I

knew a love greater than I have known before or since. And even at the age of three I could feel what can only be described as the eternal and mystical quality of that love.

I share that experience, not only because it informs who I am, but because it's one I return to over and over again. It provided a blueprint for the rest of my life. It gives me a way to think about conversion, about metanoia, about turning and returning, about the ongoing nature of conversion and life in the Spirit.

As you might guess from the color of the hair on my head, I grew up in a church with a consumer-provider model of ministry, and a culture with a hierarchical understanding of authority. I was taught much more about "power over" than I was "power within." I grew up in the Cold War Era, living near a government installation. I believed there were real enemies and I found myself plotting, on occasion, what I would do if "the Russians" invaded my home. Teachers and preachers, presidents and doctors were authorities. We did what they said.

Then something happened. Rosa Parks sat down on the bus. The President was assassinated, Martin Luther King, Jr., rose and fell, and my friends were getting shot in a war that made no sense. Suddenly the world view was no longer the same. We sang "We Shall Overcome, and The Truth will make us free." The truth will make us free.

Most days I don't like to claim that I'm a "Boomer." That's primarily because I don't understand how, after experiencing all those things, our generation ended up being caught in success and the prevailing cultural measures of success, the houses, the cars, the best education. Of all the generations in recent history, I would have thought we'd live into the questions we'd been asking about power and privilege. I believed back then that the radical behavior we were about had to do with God's vision for the world.

But I suspect that despite our challenge to authority, despite our call for democracy to work and constitutional principles to be applied equally, that our teaching and learning, our searching and yearning were only beginning to know their grounding in compassion. Love was not the blueprint for those challenges. Or at least the love espoused by the "Flower Children" never really took hold. We landed somewhere between humanism and narcissism, and the Love at the core of our belief systems, even in a call for justice, was still held as a quiet possession. The world around us was changing in dramatic ways, and I thought we were being invited into a remarkable kind of Gospel living. Maybe it was the blueprint, the imprint, the tiny girl vision, the one I returned to over and over; a holy beckoning, an invitation to Love, an identity in Christ emerging through one twist to another.

And then came the women's movement. Busy discovering myself in a return to school and a change in academic program, I let much of it go by. But I didn't escape it. Oh, at first I resisted and, I'm sorry to say that, for a while, I held on to that thought that every time we used the word "mankind" to refer to "humankind," women were really being included. Finally one night, with patience and with purpose, a young feminist explained, in scenario after scenario, the ways in which women had been systematically excluded throughout history, excluded from positions of public trust, authority, excluded from the arts and from religion.

That night equality became a myth and religion became the oppressor. The church had betrayed me, and I had let myself be taken in, for many years, by an institution that had modeled oppressive values much more clearly than the mutuality of the Gospel. I was learning, first hand, the effect of knowledge grounded in control, perhaps even in an attempt to control God, defining God in a way that created distance between God and the world, a knowledge emphasizing domination and control, rather than, as Palmer suggests, wrapping the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility and transforming joy, a knowledge calling us to involvement, mutuality, accountability.

It's the same kind of knowledge that was used to justify our treatment of Native Americans and of African Americans. It was that kind of knowledge that kept us stuck in the part of the Reformation that used theology to suppress and to oppress, so that despite its gains, it divided us in our faith in ways from which we're still trying to recover.

It was too soon to recognize God's presence in my terrible new discovery. And it was too soon to see the face of Christ in the bearer of the news. For months all I could do was turn back to a day when I was three, to a time that I experienced an unexplainable, mystical, overwhelming Love, so overwhelming that, in time, it would transcend the foibles of a human institution. But until I discovered some new ways of knowing, until I was exposed to new theologies that helped reclaim the best of who we are as Christians, until I experienced teaching and learning as an endeavor in mutuality, all I could do was turn, and return, to a defining experience that provided the blueprint, or perhaps, more importantly, the imprint that would keep me hanging on.

And what about those new ways of knowing, those new theologies? I think they were glimpses of the kind of knowledge, rooted in love, that implicates us in the web of life. They included what Diarmuid O'Murchu has described in his book *Quantum Theology* as "a multifaceted new theological agenda informed by four recent developments." Let me share his analysis of those developments.

"The first is liberation theology, which sets out to establish that Christian theology is primarily about liberation in this world rather than salvation in a life to come. Freedom from all forms of oppression, from all that undermines personal and planetary well-being are the central goal.

The second is feminist theology which, in its challenge to patriarchy, androcentrism, and sexism encourages a new way of interpreting reality. It endorses the approach of liberation theology which claims we do theology based on the foundation stones of our experience. But it sharpens the orientation by the choice to forego dualism. Life does not consist of opposites which are primarily man made constructs empowering us to conquer and subdue. Life is one. Even the polarization of good and evil are rejected because...it allows us to disown the shadow without examining its causes.

The third is creation theology which advocates a profound respect for the earth. The major shift of emphasis is on the notion of the world. Rather than traditional Christian theology's view which considers the world to be transitory and not worthy, creation theology has widened our understanding, encouraging us to wonder and marvel at the

whole universe, as well as the potential of our own planet. Creation theology calls us to embrace the world as mysterious and sacred, rather than as something to be mastered and controlled.

The fourth is a theology of multifaith dialogue. O'Murchu suggests that even though ecumenism remains primarily an intellectual occupation for scholars, a new ecumenical spirit is beginning to emerge. Christian denominations, as well as the major world religions are exploring common ground. This, he says, is not likely to lead to a new world religion, but a deeper appreciation of the common elements shared by all the religions."⁸

Knowledge grounded in love and compassion that implicates us in the web of life. Knowledge whose source is Love, inviting us into relationship, calling us even in our teaching methods to draw forth the best of both teachers and students. It is that kind of knowledge that is consistent with what we are about here. It is consistent with the action, experience, reflection model of a catechumenal approach and the formation in local community advocated by those of us who are ministry developers.

I am reminded, once again of Parker Palmer's work. "Christian faith in its original version," he writes, "is centered on a person who said, 'I am . . . the truth.' Jesus did not say, 'I will speak true words to you or I will tell you about the truth,' he claimed to embody truth in his person. . . . In him, truth once understood as abstract, suddenly takes on a human face. In Jesus, the . . . 'word' takes flesh and walks among us [and he] calls us to truth, not in the form of creeds or theologies or world views. His call to truth is a call to community – with him, with each other, with creation and its Creator.

When Jesus said, 'I am the truth,' . . . he was announcing and incarnating a new understanding of reality and our relation to it. Truth – wherever it may be found . . . is personal, to be known in personal relationships. The search for the word of truth becomes the quest for community with each other and all creation."⁹ I surely could not say it more eloquently.

The knowledge I discovered was a gift. . . . as was seeing Jesus at the age of three. For as a friend describes it, that experience "set in motion a process of conversion which, like a time delay capsule or bulbs planted randomly in the yard, releases its life here and there, apparently randomly, but looking back on it, is a common thread holding life and ministry together. A place to return, again and again."¹⁰

As Christians, my sisters and brothers, we do have a place to turn, and a place to return, again and again. We are imprinted. In Baptism we are sealed as Christ's own forever.

When I began, I asked that we hold the question, "What forms the soul of a minister?" Surely knowledge has its place, especially knowledge that engages both our minds and our hearts. But just as we might hope our knowledge draws us to greater connection with God and each other and the world around us, so must the rest of our formation as ministering Christians.

The fact of the matter is that this speech was very nearly entitled, "Returning to Christ in Ministry" . . . for two reasons. First of all, while "formation" was an important word when it entered our church vocabulary to replace the word "education," and to denote a more dynamic process than simply acquiring information, I'm afraid that our understanding of "formation," has slipped into its own stagnant space...standing water, if you will. As one of my friends has suggested, "The idea that I be formed for ministry suggests that the reason to go through this 'formation thing' is so I can minister . . . whereas, I believe the reason for any of this is to find ourselves in Christ and participate more deeply in his life. I don't need programs to form me as much as I need to understand and be present to the ways the Spirit is forming me as I live and do and be. I want to know first how I am growing into the form given me at birth and signified in Baptism."¹¹

Secondly, for those of us who are passionate about ministry rooted in Baptism, an all-fired emphasis on what my ministry is, runs a risk of being thought of in very individualistic terms. Thanks to others who have been willing to dialogue with me through the preparation of this talk, it's also become clear that "much of ministering has been thought of in individualistic terms – my ministry or – what is your ministry? That understanding should be owned by the community, not just the individual. The ministering community is in Christ. The ministering community has, at its core, Baptism in the name of a Triune God, a God who lives in community.

Rather than talking about a static formation and ministry as if it consists of primarily one thing, I think what we're really talking about here is conversion. And "what most of us experience is more wholistic, with conversion permeating all we are and do for the lifetime. So as we give ourselves to the busy-ness of ministry, we yearn for a return to connection to what God is doing within and among and through us (not just a better strategy for how we will 'do ministry,' but rather a better way of being and moving through our lives, which others can certainly look at in us and call 'ministry.'"¹²

Conversion. Metanoia. Turning. Returning. Dynamic. Imprinted. Baptized. Returning...again and again to Christ, to Living Water.

And how might we do that? By claiming where it is we find our truest identity. By tending to our life in the Spirit. By wasting time in the presence of God.

By resting in that place of wonder and awe and mystery, that place where we find the Spirit of Truth, the Living God, the Word made flesh. By entering and claiming, again and again, the Living Water of our Baptism.

My sisters and brothers, we do not live in a world that teaches much about stopping to listen or rest or journey inward. We allow ourselves to be caught up in the predictable, the problems, the tasks, and we forget that we are so much more than that. Let me share a story from a book entitled Gospel Light, by John Shea.¹³

"There was a teacher once who told this story.

Every Christmas most of my students would give me a gift. After a while I didn't have to be a fortune teller to guess what the gifts would be. Especially if it came in a

long flat box. It was a handkerchief. So it got to the point that I didn't open all those flat boxes. I just stacked them in my closet. Whenever I needed a handkerchief, I opened one up. One day I opened a box and inside was an antique pocket watch. All this time I had an antique pocket watch, and I didn't know it."

We forget the treasure. We don't even expect it.

We over-simplify by defining ourselves as "Marys" or "Marthas", or as either "doers" or "be-ers." But I suspect some of you would find me a maddening "be-er." I suspect I may have stayed at the tomb for a while even after the angel said, "He is not here." I suspect that I might well have stayed, looking up, after Jesus ascended into heaven. I suspect that even after I began to comprehend something about the mystery, I would have returned to those holy spaces. I suspect that Peter and James and Joanna and the Magdalene would have been pushing me along to action on some days. But I suspect that on many others, I would have been renewed by the Presence, ready for action, being in action.

If, my friends, we are to engage in ministry in response to the One who has loved us first, if we are to respond out of love, we must have time to be with Love. Perhaps like Mary, we can find opportunities to be alone with Jesus and, in our hearts, sit patiently with him. This quiet and loving relationship is what opens us and strengthens us to see and to be with the Christ in others.

The soul's nurture is Scripture, and prayer. It is story, the story of our lives and actions shared with others for reflection, affirmation, blessing. The soul's nurture is in silence and service.

In just a little while you'll have a chance to reflect on this too. We'll "huddle" and we'll "workshop." We'll learn about formation programs. And I hope we'll discover many helpful resources. You can hear about ways of teaching theological reflection. You can find resources from the Diocese of Eastern Oregon and the Diocese of Nebraska on the Living Stones table. Perhaps you'll discover our national church's publication, "Ministry in Daily Life." I mention these resources because they all set forth the deep and rich meaning of ministry rooted in Baptism. They are both active and reflective. But they are just a few of many, and I'll hope you'll share others.

In this consultation format you continue to be part of solutions and ideas and new thoughts and dreams. I have only attempted to provide a framework. But please, waste some time in the presence of God. As we find our center there we can, more effectively, claim the tools of our faith.

We can embrace a spiritual vocabulary that includes "discerning" gifts for ministry, affirming "call and vocation," discovering that "liturgical" worship may well be the most powerful teacher of the gathered church, "reflecting theologically" on the stuff that life is made of.

For some of you, new ways of developing curriculum and combining content with spirit may be most important. For others of you, EFM may be important. For still others, a fuller embodiment of who we are may be important, an embodiment that means using

more oil or more light or more water. But let us also waste time in the presence of God and listen to God's yearning. Because it is not only in the context of our individual lives that we are asked to be intentional about our life in the Spirit. It is as the whole people of God. Not just as individual baptized members of the church, but as the baptizing community. And from that space I believe we can come to embrace, in the words of the hymn, that the Spirit does shake the church of God. That this church will truly be "a new creation that comes to life and grows as Christ's new body takes on flesh and blood. And then, my brothers and sisters, the universe restored and whole will sing: Alleluia."

My friends, please join me in singing Hymn 296.¹⁴

We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.
Embraced by death he broke its fearful hold;
And our despair he turned to blazing joy.
Alleluia!

The Father's splendor clothes the Son with life.
The Spirit's power shakes the Church of God.
Baptized we live with God the Three in One.
Alleluia!

We share by water in his saving death.
Reborn we share with him an Easter life
As living members of a living Christ.
Alleluia!

A new creation comes to life and grows
As Christ's new body takes on flesh and blood.
The universe restored and whole will sing:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

¹ Minutes of Meeting of 1999 Conference Committee, November 28-30, 1997, Burnsville, Minnesota, Recorded by (The Rt. Rev.) George C. Harris.

² Those principles state: 1) "The Church is the Body of Christ. The emphasis on Christ as the head of the church, drawn from Pauline theology, provides the models for mission and ministry that are essential for the renewal and redemption of churches in small communities; 2) Holy Baptism is the primary sacrament of ministry in the mission of proclamation and servanthood in the world; 3) As each congregation is encouraged to recognize its own potential for self-sufficiency in ministry and mission, the importance of connectedness in an Episcopal system is enhanced. It invites congregations to move from dependence to independence to interdependence." From the *New Directions Ministries* brochure on *Leadership Training for Ministry in the Small Church*.

³ That is, "experiencing Christian faith and life, reflecting on that experience in the light of Christian faith and life, and receiving instruction or acquiring knowledge and skills." From The Catechumenal Process, published by the office of Evangelism Ministries, The Episcopal Church, 1990, p. 107.

⁴ Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, San Francisco: Harper, 1993, p. xxiii.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

⁸ Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology*, Crossroads Publishing Co., New York, 1998, pp. 15-18.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 47ff.

¹⁰ From e-mail dialogue with (The Rev.) Steve Kelsey who has, in many ways, been a quiet collaborator in this presentation.

¹¹ Again with thanks to (The Rev.) Steve Kelsey for his ongoing support and dialogue as these remarks have taken shape.

¹² Taken from an "e-mail" dialogue with Steve Kelsey.

¹³ John Shea, *Gospel Light*, Crossroad Publishing Co., New York, 1998, p.21.

¹⁴ Hymnal 1982, *Church Publishing Co.* ©John Brownlow Geyer, reprinted by permission.

© Susanne Watson Epting, 1999

North American Association for the Diaconate

Monograph Series

Edwin F. Hallenbeck, Editor

- No. 1. Grein, Richard F. *Baptism and the Ministry of Deacons*, 1987.
- No. 2. Lassen-Willems, James *Are Deacons the Enemy?* 1989.
- No. 3. Grein, Richard F. *The Renewal of the Diaconate and the Ministry of the Laos*, 1991.
- No. 4. The 1986 Sindicators Meeting, *Laos and the Diaconate*, 1991.
- No. 5. Plater, Ormonde, *Calendar of Deacon Saints*, 1991.
- No. 6. Lee, Jeffrey D. *A View from the Omnivorous Presbyterate*, 1991.
- No. 7. Plater, Ormonde, *Historic Documents on the Diaconate*, 1991.
- No. 8. Plater, Ormonde, *Music and Deacons*, 1995.
- No. 9. W. Keith McCoy, *The Deacon as Para-Cleric*, 1998.
- No. 10. Louise Williams, *Growing in Ministry: Formation for Diaconal Service*, 1999.
- No. 11. Susanne Watson Epting, *Formation of Ministering Christians*, 1999.
- No. 12. Thomas Ferguson, *Lifting Up the Servants of God: The Deacon, Servant Ministry, and the Future of the Church*, 2001.
- No. 13. Richard L. Jeske, *The Role of the Diaconate and the Unity of the Church*, 2002.
- No. 14. Osvaldo D. Vena, *Gospel Images of Jesus as Deacon: Upsetting the Hierarchies of His Culture*, 2003.
- No. 15. Charles Hefling, *What Do We Bless and Why?*, 2003.
- No. 16. Benjamin L. Hartley, *An Empirical Look at the Diaconate in the United States*, 2003.
- No. 17. John W. Willets, *Deacon as Learner and Mentor for Today's Church*, 2005.
- No. 18. Susan Wilds McArver, *What Was Happening in Nineteenth Century Germany That Ignited Diaconia?* 2007.