



# Study Guide for the Deaconess Examination

Prepared by the Reformed Episcopal Church Board of Examining Chaplains

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 *Areas of Study*

The Deaconess examination, which consists of written responses to a series of questions and an oral defense, will focus on the main areas of study identified in the *Handbook for the Office of Deaconesses*, specifically the following:

1. **Holy Scripture:** The Bible in English; introduction to and contents of the various books; special knowledge of at least one Gospel and one Epistle.
2. **Church History:** A general outline, including the History of the Church in the United States, and special knowledge of the first five centuries, and to include the history of Deaconesses both ancient and modern.
3. **Christian Missions:** History; present extent and methods; at least one missionary biography .
4. **Doctrine:** Contents and teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, including preparation for the Sacraments.
5. **Christian Ethics and Moral Theology:** Particular emphasis on matters pertaining to the counseling of women and children.
6. **Ministration:** The office and work of a Deaconess; Parish Work and Organization.

### 1.2 *Purpose and Rationale*

The two-fold purpose of this study guide is 1) to provide reliable resources on the topics covered in the Deaconess exam and 2) to assist the Deaconess candidate in recognizing the areas of focus within those topics that are relevant to her calling. Neither the exam nor the study guide can be comprehensive on any one of these topics; for example, Scripture, the first topic, would in itself require a lifetime of study only to scratch the surface. Therefore, the study guide covers a basic body of knowledge about Holy Scripture that is expected of a woman who is preparing to be set apart.

Diligent study in the matters covered by this guide, and subsequently by the examination, will prepare the Deaconess candidate to begin her pursuit of the work she is assigned; continued study will enrich the life of the Deaconess and enhance her ministry to an even greater extent. In particular, the Deaconess should develop a thorough knowledge of matters concerning the Church's ministry to women and children, for that is the specific area in which she is called to assist her spiritual fathers in carrying out the Great Commission mandate to spread the Gospel and to disciple the people of God.

In that regard, an additional advantage of the study guide and examination is that they equip the Candidate to educate others on the benefits of the Office of Diaconess to the life of the Church. Further, an awareness of the Scriptural basis and historical background of the Office is necessary to the development of a clear stance on the issue of women's ordination. A Diaconess should be able to defend the Office against charges on the one hand that it is irrelevant and on the other hand that it leads inevitably to women's ordination. The Office of Diaconess is neither an empty honor nor a stepping stone, and it is certainly not a slippery slope. It is a high calling that rests upon the firm foundation of Scripture and tradition. Diaconesses serve an important function in the ongoing life of the Anglican Church.

*Notes on completing this study:*

1. Wherever the Book of Common Prayer or BCP is mentioned, the intended reference is *The Reformed Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer*, available in hard-cover format from Reformed Episcopal Publication Society or online in PDF format (see Appendix).
2. Many of the other recommended resources are also available free online in PDF or HTML format. An online resource will be maintained at [fwepiscopal.org/deaconess.html](http://fwepiscopal.org/deaconess.html) with links to available resources.
3. Within the lists of recommended resources for each topic, resources that cover similar topics are marked with an asterisk.
4. The Candidate may expect the examining chaplain who assists with her preparation to suggest additional resources, especially books or other materials that will assist her in the study of her chosen epistle and Gospel.

## 2 Holy Scripture

The section of the exam covering Holy Scripture has two main areas of focus. The first area comprises the scholarship surrounding the very idea of scripture itself-its divine Author and the contribution of human authors, its historical and cultural context, and what sets it apart from other writings. The second area is the actual content of the Bible, its overall message of redemption and the major themes of the individual books of the canon.

### 2.1 Recommended Resources

1. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. K. Harrison
2. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Donald Guthrie
3. *That You May Prosper*, Ray Sutton
4. *Revelation and the Bible*, Carl F. H. Henry \*
5. *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, Gerald Bray \*
6. *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of New Testament Canon*, Craig D. Allert \*
7. *God Has Spoken: Revelation and the Bible*, J.I. Packer\*
8. *Four Gospels, One Jesus: A Symbolic Reading*, Richard A. Burridge
9. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F.F. Bruce
10. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Scripture and Hermeneutics*
  - b. *Old Testament Introduction*

- c. *New Testament Introduction*
- d. *Bible Studies Method*
- e. *English Bible Survey*
- f. Content courses in the Old Testament and New Testament

## ***2.2 Concepts to Study***

1. The inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, including the difference between the two concepts and the implications of each
2. What it means for the Scriptures to be inspired, including the nature of the contribution of human authors in the writing process
3. The relationship between the written Word and the Living Word, Jesus Christ, and why this is important
4. The development of the Gospel message from Genesis 3:15 throughout the Scriptures, including the major types of Christ in the Old Testament
5. The major theme(s) and characters in the following books:
  - a. Genesis
  - b. Exodus (be sure to include the role of Miriam both as a child and as an adult serving under the authority of Aaron and Moses)
6. The Old Testament sacrificial system
  - a. How it relates to the covenant
  - b. How the intent of each sacrifice is related to the life, work and ministry of Jesus Christ
  - c. How the forms of Old Testament worship relate to the Anglican liturgy
7. The main message of each of the Major and Minor Prophets
  - a. The Christological implications of their message
  - b. The prophecies of Isaiah that are referenced in the New Testament
8. The Gospels
  - a. An overview of each Gospel
  - b. An in-depth look at the Life of Christ in one Gospel of your choice
  - c. Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament Covenant
9. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans
  - a. His theme
  - b. Outline of the letter
10. What the epistles teach about the role of women in God's authority structure
  - a. Boundaries
  - b. Responsibilities
  - c. The Biblical foundations for the office of Deaconess
11. The significance of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2)
  - a. The relationship of this event to Joel 2:27-29
  - b. A critique of the modern interpretation of this event as opening the door to acceptance of women's ordination
12. The Anglican view of spiritual gifts, particularly those that a Deaconess might be expected to exercise

### 3 Doctrine

Doctrine, from a Greek word that means "teaching," consists of the theological principles derived from a systematic analysis of the content of Scripture. The Book of Common Prayer serves both as a concise statement and a demonstration of Anglican doctrine, and is therefore emphasized in this portion of the exam. The lectionary presents the historical narrative, law, proverbs, prophecy, poetry, and epistles thematically, combining them with collects appropriate for the Church Year. In addition, the structure and progression of the various liturgies (most especially the Order for Holy Communion) teach us about the Triune God, about our relationship to Him, and about the mission of the Church, His Kingdom.

#### 3.1 *Recommended Resources*

1. *An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*, Edward H. Browne
2. *Theology of the English Reformers*, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes
3. *The Principles of Theology*, W.H. Griffith Thomas
4. *Against the Protestant Gnostics*, Philip Lee
5. *The Holy Trinity: In History, Theology, and Worship*, Robert Letham
6. "On the Holy Spirit," St. Basil
7. *The Doctrine of God*, Gerald Bray
8. *The Person of Christ*, Donald Macleod
9. *The Cross of Christ*, John R.W. Stott
10. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Doctrine: God and Christ*
  - b. *Doctrine: Man, Sin, and Salvation*
  - c. *Doctrine: Church, Sacraments, and Eschatology*
  - d. *The Thirty-Nine Articles*

#### 3.2 *Concepts to Study*

1. How the 39 Articles of Religion address the following issues, either implicitly or explicitly, and how the teachings in the Articles are reflected in the Scriptures and the BCP
  - a. The doctrine of creation
  - b. Original sin
  - c. The authority of Scripture
  - d. The proper view of the Sacraments
  - e. Regeneration and Justification
  - f. Invoking the prayers of departed saints
  - g. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
  - h. Purgatory
  - i. The authority of the Church
  - j. Eschatology
2. How the 39 Articles compare with other major confessions or statements of faith on the matters listed in item 1
3. The Reformed Episcopal Declaration of Principles and how they relate to the 39 Articles
4. The theology of the Holy Trinity
  - a. What is taught by the creeds

- b. Three ancient heresies against the Trinity and their connection with any modern day movements

## 4 Christian Ethics and Moral Theology

The area of Christian Ethics and Moral Theology derives from St. James' exhortation to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only." To assist the Deaconess with obeying this command and to prepare her to counsel others in this area, she should be familiar with tenets of practical theology, particularly as they apply to the lives of women and children.

### 4.1 Recommended Resources

1. *Approaching Moral Decisions*, Arthur F. Holmes
2. *Great Traditions In Ethics*, Theodore Denise, Nicholas White, Sheldon P. Peterfreund
3. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, David Atkison et al. (Eds.)
4. *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*, Kenneth C. Haugk
5. *Speaking the Truth in Love*, Ruth N. Koch and Kenneth C. Haugk
6. *Quick Reference Guide to Counseling Women*, Diane Langberg
7. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Introduction to Moral Theology*
  - b. *Marriage and Family*
  - c. *Spirituality*

### 4.2 Concepts to Study

1. The Scriptural principles on which the counseling of women and children should be based
2. The relationship between the Rector and a Deaconess with regard to pastoring the women and children in a parish setting
3. The REC position on
  - a. The sanctity of life
  - b. Divorce, including remarriage of divorced persons
4. Principles of Christian education and the responsibility of the Church in the spiritual formation of children and youth
5. Guidelines for parish outreach
  - a. Establishing parish-based ministries, including criteria for evaluating the viability of a proposed ministry
  - b. Supporting other organizations (through monetary gifts or parishioner time and talents), including criteria for determining which groups should/should not be supported

## 5 Church History

It is vital for anyone in a Church leadership position to have a basic understanding of the history and progression of the Church's mission through the ages and throughout the world. A study of evangelism methods in light of biblical principles, as well as a general knowledge of the work of missionaries, will equip the Deaconess candidate to assess the needs of her own community and assist her Rector in planning biblically based efforts to build God's Kingdom.

### 5.1 Recommended Resources

1. *A New Eusebius*, J. Stevenson, Ed.
2. *The Story of Christianity*, Justo L. Gonzalez \*
3. *History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff (reference work- 8 volumes)\*
4. *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, Aime G. Martimort
5. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Patristic Church History*
  - b. *Anglicanism*
  - c. *Medieval Church History*
  - d. *Reformation and Modern Church History*
  - e. *Evangelism and Missions*

## **5.2 Concepts to Study**

1. The major events in Church History, with a focus on the Church in the United States.
2. The dates and major focus of each Ecumenical Council of the undivided Church, including any pronouncements on the office of Deaconess
3. The history of the Office of Deaconess
  - a. In the Eastern Church
  - b. In the Western Church
4. The history of missions, with emphasis on the contribution and involvement of Anglicans, both as senders and as missionaries.
5. Three missionaries who profoundly affected the direction of Christian Missions
6. Evaluation of modern missions, including the Church Growth movement and its relationship to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)

## **6 Church Government and Parish Administration**

One area in which the Deaconess must be well versed is that of the authority structure of the Church, both the historical development of ecclesiastical order and the specific principles governing the Reformed Episcopal Church.

### **6.1 Recommended Resources**

1. *Captains and Courts: A Biblical Defense of Episcopal Government*, by Ray Sutton
2. The Reformed Episcopal Church Constitutions and Canons (available at [www.recus.org](http://www.recus.org))
3. *Handbook for the Office of Deaconesses* (available at [www.recdss.org](http://www.recdss.org))

4. *A Working Manual for Altar Guilds*, Dorothy Diggs (either the 1957 or 1968 editions)
5. *Serving Basics*, The International Order of St. Vincent
6. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Canon Law and Pastoral Administration*
  - b. *Biblical Womanhood*
  - c. *The Office and Work of the Deaconess*

## 6.2 Concepts to Study

1. The nature of the Episcopate, according to the Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Articles of Religion
2. The structure of Anglican church government
  - a. As compared with the Roman view
  - b. As compared with the Protestant view
  - c. The meaning of the following terms, and the structure, function, responsibilities, and authority limits of each:
    - i. Diocese
    - ii. Vestry
    - iii. Wardens (Senior/Junior)
  - d. The scriptural foundations
3. The role and functions of the Deaconess in the life of a diocese and/or parish, being sure to cover the following points
  - a. Possible venues of service (i.e., parish, school, diocesan committees)
  - b. Her responsibility to the Bishop Ordinary and to the Rector of her parish
  - c. Description of the setup for Holy Communion (citing Scripture and the BCP wherever applicable)
    - i. What is required vs what is optional
    - ii. Names and functions of altar vessels, linens, and other appointments
    - iii. The administration of Holy Communion and Unction to home-bound or sick parishioners
  - d. As compared with the role and functions of a Deacon

## 7 Liturgics

The topic of Liturgics, which combines Doctrine and Ministration, has been given a separate section in the study guide to indicate that it will be given special emphasis in the exam. Recent trends in the Church have led to errors regarding the nature of both Holy Orders and holy order, resulting in such innovations as women's ordination and laxity in the conduct of public worship. Therefore, knowledge of liturgics is deemed vital for the Deaconess Candidate, especially those who will be responsible for training others in the preparation of sacred space.

### 7.1 Recommended Resources

1. *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, Allen P. Ross
2. *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Massey H. Shepherd

3. *Sanctifying Life, Time and Space: An Introduction to Liturgical Study*, Marion Hatchett
4. *Anglican Public Worship*, Colin Dunlop
5. Applicable Cranmer Theological House courses, particularly the following:
  - a. *Liturgics*
  - b. *Leviticus and Hebrews*

## 7.2 *Concepts to Study*

1. The meaning of the term "liturgy" and the function and significance of liturgy in the life of the Church
2. The origin, intent, and uses of the following
  - a. Daily Office
  - b. The lectionary
  - c. The litany
  - d. Family prayer
3. The Sacrament of Holy Communion
  - a. Its purpose
  - b. The structure of the Eucharistic liturgy in the BCP
  - c. The necessary elements and preparation
  - d. The requirements for valid consecration
4. The Sacrament of Baptism
  - a. Its purpose
  - b. The structure of the baptismal liturgy in the BCP
  - c. The necessary elements and preparation
5. The rite of Confirmation
  - a. Scriptural basis
  - b. Historic development
  - c. Liturgical practices
  - d. Preparation of Confirmands, and how a Deaconess may function in this process
6. The marriage office
  - a. Scriptural teaching on marriage
  - b. Why it is viewed by some as a sacrament
7. Vestments
  - a. The Biblical explanation for their use
  - b. The types of vestments worn by the following
    - i. Bishop
    - ii. Priest
    - iii. Deacon
    - iv. Deaconess
  - c. The occasions upon which various vestments are worn
  - d. A comparison/contrast between the low church and high church Anglican view of vestments
8. The boundaries of liturgical responsibility
  - a. For a Priest
  - b. For a Deacon
  - c. For a Deaconess
9. The qualifications for ordination to Holy Offices



- a. Arguments for and against the ordination of women, and the historical view of this practice
  - b. Arguments for and against the ordination of homosexuals, and the historical view of this practice
10. The historic (catholic) view of the second commandment
- a. Anglican view
  - b. Puritan view
  - c. Implications in preparing sacred space
  - d. Implications in the posture and behavior of worshippers

## **8 Appendix**

1. The list of resources for Deaconess candidates will be maintained online at [www.recdss.org/dssresources.html](http://www.recdss.org/dssresources.html)
2. Sources for purchasing used and out-of-print books:
  - a. <http://www.abebooks.com>
  - b. <http://www.biblio.com>
  - c. <http://www.alibris.com>
3. Collections of online resources (digital libraries)
  - a. Christian Classics Ethereal Library: [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)
  - b. Project Canterbury: <http://anglicanhistory.org>
  - c. <https://archive.org>