



# **EDUCATED MINISTRY: Diaconal Ministry**

A Report  
for consideration by the  
Division of Ministry Personnel & Education  
Annual General Meeting  
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This MPE Paper was commissioned by the Executive of the Division of Ministry Personnel & Education and prepared by the Educated Ministry/Diaconal Ministry Task Group staffed by K. Virginia Coleman. Research was carried out by Mary-Anne MacFarlane.

MPE Paper #12 complements the work of MPE Paper #6 Educated Ministry in the UCC, Phase I: Ordained Ministry. In the context of the United Church's commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God reaffirmed by the 1986 General Council's acceptance of the Learning on the Way report (MPE Paper #11), the findings of the two reports on Educated Ministry are being woven together into a single report on education for (professional) ministry in the United Church of Canada. This synthesizing task is being carried out by a work group representative of the Division's Diaconal Ministry Committee and the Committee on Theological Education for Ministry. The workgroup expects to report to the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Division.

You are invited to send your reactions to MPE Paper #12 to the Division.

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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
 DIVISION OF MINISTRY PERSONNEL AND EDUCATION  
 TASK GROUP ON EDUCATED MINISTRY: DIACONAL MINISTRY IN  
 THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

1. INTRODUCTION

A.) The Task Group's Mandate and Context:

In 1984, the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education asked that a committee continue the discussion of Educated Ministry in the United Church of Canada by looking specifically at Diaconal Ministry. The committee was instructed to produce a report which, along with the previous task group's work on Ordained Ministry, and the soon-to-be produced report on Lay Ministry, could be used to facilitate the Church's ongoing discussion of "learned/educated" ministry in the United Church, and its significance for today.

The Committee on Theological Education for Ministry (CTEM) and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry jointly named a committee which had representation from both of the committees, along with an experienced diaconal minister and staff assistance from the Division office.

As it began its work, the Task Group appreciated the very significant work which had already been done on ministry and on educated ministry in the Project: Ministry Report and the Educated Ministry: Ordained Ministry document. The Task Group shares with the authors of these documents the emphasis on ministry as the active response of the community to God's continuing revelation. Ministry exists as God's gift to the Church and the world, and has no meaning apart from the community of faith. God, through the Holy Spirit, enables the Church to provide for its people an ordered ministry. As Educated Ministry: Ordained Ministry clearly points out, such ministry happens only when there is a continuous, carefully-planned, accountable way of preparing and maintaining individuals in the ministry and mission of the Church. Such preparation, or education for ministry, involves a process of appreciative, critical thinking and acting, informed by the Christian community's heritage of scripture, tradition, and self-understanding.

While recognizing that its task was to look specifically at the evolution of education for diaconal ministry in the United Church, and its characteristics today, the Task Group was also aware of many other developments concerning Diaconal Ministry, including the following:

1. The 1983 National Consultation on Diaconal Ministry Educational Preparation
2. The joint work of the Centre for Christian Studies and Emmanuel College to identify essentials for Diaconal Ministry educational preparation.

3. The continuing evidence of the need for access to Diaconal Ministry educational preparation in cities such as Winnipeg, Halifax, Edmonton and Regina.
4. The completion of the Diaconal Ministry History Project and the production of "Called to Serve: a story of Diaconal Ministry in the United Church of Canada".
5. The work of the Diaconal Ministry Committee and CTEM on alternate models and sites for Diaconal Ministry Educational Preparation and on the Manual changes required to facilitate this.

The Task Group was also aware of the ongoing discussion and activity within all theological colleges concerning curriculum revision, focusing particularly on the necessity of integrating field placement and academic studies. All members of the Task Group approached their work with a belief, supported by considerable evidence, that Diaconal Ministry continues to be a part of the order of ministry which is either invisible or considered secondary by many parts of the Church. Because there are so few Diaconal Ministers, and because their style of ministry is usually radically different from the ordained, they are perceived as "other", as a curiosity, as second-best. Thus, it is a quite common, yet frustrating, experience for Diaconal Ministers to be asked when they are going to "go on and be ordained" or why they are not "real ministers", or to be defined by what they are not, rather than by what they are. Diaconal Ministers are constantly in the position of not only having to explain who they are, but, also of having to justify their ministry and to prove its benefit to the Church.

Because of this, the Task Group believes that an important part of its work was the lifting up and explaining of the unique history, the Biblical roots, the educational preparation and the understanding of Church and ministry which Diaconal Ministers bring to their life and work. Diaconal Ministry challenges all of us to re-examine our understanding of ministry, and our understanding of what it means to be the Church in the world.

#### B.) The Task Group's Method of Working:

To help with its work, the Task Group hired a researcher and writer and identified several areas for research. These were as follows:

1. an historical survey of educational preparation for diaconal ministry throughout the centuries.
2. a survey of the attitudes and perceptions of Diaconal Ministers, both working and retired, and of former Diaconal Ministers who have since been ordained or who have resigned from the Order of Ministry.

A questionnaire was prepared and mailed to one hundred and ninety-seven individuals. The respondents included graduates of the Methodist Deaconess Home and Training School and the Ewart Missionary and Deaconess Training Home, (the two educational schools which existed for deaconesses prior to church union), the United Church Training School, Covenant College, the Centre for Christian Studies and Emmanuel College. Also included were several

individuals with alternate training who had been accepted into Diaconal Ministry through the years. The questions (see Appendix II) were designed to gather five types of information:

1. a summary of the previous educational and life experiences of Diaconal Ministers before theological education.
2. an assessment by Diaconal Ministers themselves of the least and most helpful aspects of their educational preparation;
3. an indication of Diaconal Ministers' own understanding of what are unique or essential characteristics of their ministry;
4. an outline of the perceived changes, if any, in Diaconal Ministry over the last ten years;
5. a list of the difficulties and problems Diaconal Ministers face in the way their ministry is perceived and responded to by individuals and groups within the church.

Though only part of the information gathered through the historical research and the questionnaires is reprinted here, it all proved extremely valuable for the work of the Task Group. Through reading and thinking about the responses to the questionnaire, the Task Group became aware of both the excitement and the pain of Diaconal Ministers, of the vision, and of the questions that this expression of ministry brings to the Church as a whole. After reviewing all of the material which was available to it, the Task Group decided to let the Diaconal Ministers' own responses form the basis for the sections of this report on "The Essence of Diaconal Ministry" and "Educational Essentials for Diaconal Ministry". Thus, through the report, Diaconal Ministers speak for themselves, and their own words are used whenever possible.

A first draft of this document was shared with the Committee on Diaconal Ministry and with CTEM early in 1986. Many valuable comments were received from both groups, and they have been incorporated into this report.

### C.) The Church as the People of God:

After studying the historical documents of the United Church, particularly those concerning ministry, and reflecting on its own experience, the Task Group became convinced that the Church is in the midst of a paradigm shift in its self-understanding. Since the fourth century, ecclesiastical self-awareness and practice has been dominated by Paul's model of the Church as the Body of Christ. Concepts of authority and of appropriate clergy roles, parameters of lay participation and definitions of the church's purpose have all been shaped and authenticated in terms of this basic model. Though the original intent of the Body of Christ image was to emphasize unity and variety of gifts within the Christian community, when pushed to its extreme, it has led to an overemphasis on external authority, on conformity at the expense of uniqueness, and on passivity rather than active participation on the part of laity. It has often resulted in the church being equated with "the Order of Ministry", and has forced the laity to remain as outsiders, as mere observers, or at best, consumers of ministry.

Though there have been attempts throughout history to challenge this model, the ecclesiastical image of the Body of Christ has, until recently, remained in place, virtually unchanged. But now there is evidence that a radical paradigm shift is occurring and the Christian Church is moving towards an understanding of itself not only as the Body of Christ, but also as the "people of God", a pilgrim group which, in its being and journeying together, lives out the covenant oath of God to the people of Israel: "I shall be your God and you shall be my people".

The shift from the image of the Church as the Body of Christ to the People of God changes many things, including the level and types of participation which are encouraged within the community of faith, the kinds of structures which are used to facilitate the growth of the people, and the understanding of the tasks and purpose of ministry. In the People of God image of the Church, the emphasis is on movement and on variety. The uniqueness and freedom of individuals are highlighted, and the participation of all the people in the shaping of the journey of faith is essential. Unity emerges from the sharing of a vision, and is enacted through the commitment to live out the Gospel both as a gathered community and as individuals in vocations in the world. Commitment is nurtured through learning, worshipping, and witnessing together in an atmosphere of mutual support. All of the people are invited to participate in the shaping of the community's life, and to move into and out of "leadership" roles. The work of the People of God is hindered, not helped, by hierarchical structures and practices which emphasize "power over" and which encourage passivity rather than responsible action.

The most radical shift which such a model of the Church brings about is in the understanding of ministry. When the church is seen as the "People of God", all people become ministers through their participation in the journey of faith. They express this ministry as they help others to see the Gospel at work and to claim it for their lives. Ministry is no longer confined to a few people who are professionally trained and who do things to and on behalf of others. Instead, it becomes that in which the whole community, all the people of God, participate during their time together and their time apart. Ministry comes to be seen as the sharing of the Gospel in all parts of the world. As the document Project: Ministry suggests:

"God has a ministry in the world, the ministry of Jesus Christ, into the service of which God calls the whole church. Every Christian is called to participate in this ministry. Ministry is expressed in personal being, occupation, involvement in the total community, and service in, through, and to the church."

The times of gathering of the people for worship, education and fellowship become the times when empowerment for ministry in the world must occur. The Christian community becomes strengthened through hearing the word and through discerning its ministry in the world. This ministry is carried out by ordained, diaconal and lay. These three expressions of ministry have had and continue to have a vital place in the church. Again as Project: Ministry clearly states, congregational life becomes "the launching pad from which Christians are sent out to do ministry, rather than congregational life becoming the alpha and omega of our Christian responsibility". Thus, for the People of God there is always a sense of movement and growth, a pattern of

coming together and then walking separately for a time. Professional or paid ministers function primarily as companions on the journey who have special skills to equip people for their own particular challenges in the world. Such an expression of professional ministry is constantly in dialogue with the laity. It both shapes and is shaped by the questions, needs and actions of all of the people. There is no such thing as a solo ministry; everything is both received and shared in the context of the whole People of God. Hierarchical rankings of gifts and efforts by some to control or ensure the conformity of others have no place and can actually stunt the growth of the community. It is only in the journeying together, in the practising of equality and mutual respect that people are helped to discover the power and excitement of the Gospel and are empowered to participate in its unfolding in the world. Such an understanding of the Church as the People of God facilitates growth, covenantal and shared ministry in the world.

## II. THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION FOR DIACONAL MINISTRY

The history of Diaconal Ministry, rooted in Jesus' own life and ministry, is an exciting one. It reflects dimensions of the "self-emptying" of traditional concepts of power, the empowerment of others, responsiveness, flexibility, practicality and a sharing of Jesus' vision of community. Preparation for this expression of ministry has never been overly concerned with questions of role or status. Instead, the educational program has consistently emphasized the development of practical skills and knowledge which could be used to meet the immediate needs of a changing world and the Church. People in Diaconal Ministry have been called to teach, to enable the growth and leadership of others, to respond to particular needs in the Church, to nurture the community of believers, and to participate in liturgical leadership through preaching, blessing, and serving the communal meal. Education for Diaconal Ministry has constantly evolved. Its content and expression have always been informed by the needs of the Church and the specific tasks being performed by each generation of Diaconal Ministers.

### A.) In the Early Christian Movement

In the gospels the vision of ministry personified by Jesus was **diakonia**, a ministry of service. Central to it was the transforming of power so that it changed from power over others to the empowerment of others. This emphasis on the empowerment of others enabled the early Christians to begin to live out a vision of community in which the gifts of all people were recognized and celebrated, and in which previous divisions based on nationality, sex or wealth were broken down. Thus, when the early Christian converts gathered for worship in house churches they were led by both women and men. Research by scholars such as Fiorenza shows that, in principle, all members of the early community had access to communal leadership roles.

Later, there emerged a three-fold ministry, involving offices of deacon, presbyter and bishop. The duties of these were both loosely defined and often interchangeable. References to the role of deacon made in Acts 6 suggest that the functions of the first deacons included responsibilities later ascribed to



presbyters and bishops. The Romans passage which names Phoebe as a deacon makes clear that women as well as men were acting as deacons in the early church.

The choice of names for people who functioned as co-workers in ministry reflected the intended humbleness of the role. **Diakonos**, from which the word deacon is derived usually referred to the table servant, though it also applied to menial workers and slaves. **Episcopos**, from which bishop is derived, generally referred to minor employees such as overseers in the building trade, or in government service. (The Common Catechism, Feiner and Vischer). When Phoebe was given the title **diakonos**, it was the same word used by Paul to describe himself and other male leaders in the church. It was used to refer to itinerant missionaries, to leaders in local congregations, and to those who served in a recognized official capacity as teachers and preachers in the Christian community. Phoebe is also named by Paul as **prostatis** and **synergos**. Though, when referring to Phoebe, **prostatis** is often translated by scholars as 'helper' or 'patroness', it also means 'leading officer, president, governor or superintendent.' **Synergos** means 'co-worker', and was used by Paul to refer to all those who had devoted themselves to service in the Christian community. Thus, 'diakonos', when referring to Phoebe, includes her vital roles as teacher, preacher, leader of the Christian community, and associate of Paul.

#### B.) In the early church:

By the end of the first century definite changes occurred in the roles of deacon, presbyter and bishop. They were no longer interchangeable, but became hierarchical. Also, as the Christian community expanded rapidly, moving into new cultures and geographical areas, prevailing customs, including restrictions on women's roles, took over. Thus, at the time the pastoral epistles were written, women presbyters were prohibited from teaching and having authority over men and were therefore denied eligibility for the office of bishop. (e.g. 1Tim 5:1) These restrictions allowed them to teach other women, prepare women for baptism, visit the sick, poor, imprisoned, widows and orphans, and serve communal meals to the women. They were consecrated by the bishop and functioned as the vital connecting link between the bishop and the women of the congregation.

By the fourth century, Constantinople had become the centre of diaconal work. It is recorded that John Chrysostom, bishop of that city (then the eastern capitol of the Roman Empire) had forty deaconesses in his church. A most famous deaconess of that period was Olympias, a wealthy widow, who was known throughout Constantinople for her bravery and genius.

Some time around 600 A.D., the early diaconate with its emphasis on service in the church and the world began to disappear. It was never formally abolished, but simply fell into disuse during the period when monastic life became popular for women. Some historians suggest that the emphasis on the withdrawal of contact with the world in monastic life, made the diaconate seem less relevant as a form of Christian service. Others suggest that women who were interested in service were attracted to cloistered life because of its opportunities for learning and serious scholarship. Whatever the reasons, the diaconate began to disappear. By 700 A.D. it had entirely dropped out of the

Western World. In Constantinople, the office still formally existed in 1200 A.D. but it was available nowhere else in the Orient.

C.) Europe in the 1800's:

As the centuries passed, there were some serious attempts made to revive the diaconate in Belgium, Holland and France, but information on this stage in the history of the diaconate is scarce. It wasn't until the 1800's that there is documented evidence that attempts to reinstate the office of the deaconess were successful. The revival appears to have been a response to two very specific needs: the need for humanitarian service to people who had suffered the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, and the desire of an increasing number of young women to play a significant part in the activities of the Church. In 1836 in Kaiserswerth, Germany, a young Lutheran pastor, Theodor Fliedner and his wife, Friederike Munster, bought an old castle and started a training school and educational centre for deaconesses. In May, 1836, Fliedner and a few friends signed the Statutes of the Rhenish-Westphalian Deaconess Society, and sent out a call for young women who wanted to serve God through a ministry of nursing, teaching and social work. Fraulein Gertrude Reichardt became the first superintendent of both the training school and the hospital it served, and was the first deaconess at Kaiserswerth with the title of "Sister".

The education of such deaconesses was very specific, and was designed to equip them for clearly-defined work in hospitals and humanitarian agencies. They received instruction in theology, Bible and religious education, participated in the community life of worship and daily Bible Study, and were trained to be nurses through supervised work in the community's hospital. Women were attracted to the Deaconess Order because of its unique combination of practical training and meaningful service. Within three years after its purchase, an orphanage and a shelter for people who were then referred to as "feeble-minded epileptics" had been added to Kaiserswerth. By the late nineteenth century, Kaiserswerth supported a wide range of social services including many specialized hospitals, social service programmes and schools. Based on the Roman Catholic model of a nursing sisterhood, the education and working conditions of the deaconesses were totally under the direction of the Mother House. Kaiserswerth determined and distributed the amount of stipend, set the conditions for all appointments, and decreed that deaconess work would concentrate on nursing and the care of children.

Later in the 1800's, the diaconate was also revived in Great Britain. In 1861 Elizabeth Catherine Ferard, who had been trained at Kaiserswerth, became the first deaconess in the Anglican Church. In that day, the definition of a deaconess was "a bit of a minister, with a dash of teacher and a dash of social worker". In 1902 the Wesleyan Church in England formally adopted the Wesleyan Deaconess Order as a part of its own work, and established a training school. The period of study was two years, and during that time the women studied Bible, church history, psychology, doctrine, Greek, homiletics, and social welfare work. At the end of the training, they were recognized as probation deaconesses and were appointed to field work for three months. If their field placements proved successful, they were then eligible to become full-fledged deaconesses. This school, with its combination of academics and practical training, continues to be the place where most British Methodist deaconesses have been educated.

In the British diaconate there was no "mother house" or hierarchical structure. The diaconate functioned as an association of independent women affiliated with one another as would individuals in any profession. The diaconate in England quickly expanded and established a pattern of ministry. It was quite different from the diaconate in Germany. In England, deaconesses worked mainly in congregational settings. They often functioned as assistants to parish ministers, or worked in teaching or evangelism jobs. In addition, a large percentage of them did inner city work, functioning as Church-based social workers.

D.) In Canada in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches:

The diaconal model of service quickly spread to North America. By 1890, some Canadian women and clergy were mildly agitating for the establishment of such work in Canada. There had been a few women serving in Methodist Mission Work in Canada as early as 1876, and they had made a great contribution to the communities where they were stationed. In 1893 the Deaconess Aid Society was established in Toronto and in 1894, the Methodist Deaconess Orders were instituted. At the same time, the Presbyterian Church began formulating a similar kind of expression of ministry. In 1897, the Ewart Missionary and Deaconess Training Home was established in Toronto, and in 1909, the Presbyterian General Assembly established a Deaconess Order.

The Presbyterians quickly circulated the entrance requirements for the new Deaconess Order, stating that it was open to "Godly women of mature faith between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-five who had passed High School entrance and who would take the prescribed training in the Deaconess Home". Applicants were told that their activities as deaconesses would include meeting the sick, lonely, bereaved and troubled; finding employment for people; looking after travelers, and conducting Sunday Schools and clubs for women and children. All members of the order were expected to wear a uniform, and in some cases, live in a supervised home where they were required to do additional work both in the surrounding community and within the deaconess residence. The promotional material of this original Presbyterian Deaconess Order describes its members as excellent housekeepers, knowledgeable in music, able to work as religious teachers and to take Sunday services when necessary.

The educational preparation for work as a Methodist or Presbyterian deaconess was both rigorous and practical. The Methodist Training School offered two courses: a general two-year course which emphasized social service and religious education and was required for entrance into the Deaconess Order, and a missionary course for candidates for the Women's Missionary Society. Students in both programmes took courses at Victoria University, the Canadian School of Missions, the Social Service Department of the University of Toronto, and at the Methodist Training School itself. The areas studied were: Bible, Philosophy of the Christian Religion, History and Missions, Religious Education, Sociology and Social Service, Homiletics and Evangelism, Expression and Household Science. In addition, candidates for the deaconess order were required to pass a test on a prescribed list of books each year.

The Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training House offered a remarkably similar programme. The full course covered two sessions of six months each,

and each session was sub-divided into two terms. Several of the courses required additional practical training and this was usually done when the academic term ended in April. Students in the Presbyterian programme could take the General Course, the General Course with a Social Service option, or the General Course with a Household Science option. Course areas included study of the English Bible, Christian Doctrine, Church History, Mission, Religious Education, Social Service, Medicine and Surgery, Voice Training, Story-Telling, and Public Speaking. Practical training was provided throughout the term of study in four areas: Religious Education, Social Service, Church and Parish Work, and Medicine and Surgery. The Calendar and publicity materials state that a university training was the best preparation for participation both in the General Course and in the General Course with Social Service option. Because of this, all candidates were required to have a minimum of university matriculation or its equivalent (that is, a Teacher's Certificate, a Nurse's Diploma or a Business Certificate with a record of three year's High School standing), followed by successful work experience. If a candidate lacked an equivalent to university matriculation, she could present a case individually and ask for special consideration of the Studies Committee of the School.

Residential living was a requirement of both the Methodist and Presbyterian educational programmes, and continued to be a part of the educational preparation in the United Church until fairly recently. Educators and administrators of the educational programme firmly believed that it was through working, learning and worshipping together that students began to form their Identity as deaconesses. Being with others who were also struggling with what it meant to be a deaconess in the service of God was seen as essential to education and growth. Also living in the schools' residences were students who were training to be missionaries, and students who were from other countries. Thus, through the residential experience, students in the educational programme for diaconal work were put in touch with the concerns of Christians around the world, and were given an appreciation of the missionary work of the Church.

#### E.) In the United Church of Canada:

When Church Union was projected, those responsible for both schools worked hard to establish one strong united educational centre for deaconesses. Studies and negotiations for the joining of the schools began in 1924. Each school submitted to the first General Council "a concise statement as to its history, assets, liabilities, incomes and expenditure for the last three years, persons employed, equipment, present work and requirements". Each school was also asked to make recommendations regarding amalgamation procedures for the coming year, the first year of Union. Both schools recommended that for the current year the two training centres be conducted separately, but in close cooperation with each other, particularly regarding courses of study. This was approved by the Council.

At the Second General Council a rather important recommendation from the joint Boards of the schools was passed, and the functions of training deaconesses and directing the work of the two deaconess orders were separated. Both schools believed that training and administration were distinct functions and would be given more attention if they were performed by different bodies

within the Church. At this time, a request was also made that a committee be appointed to study the whole question of trained workers in the new United Church. Where were such workers most needed and what particular skills would help them most in their work? This was to be the first of many studies which the United Church would conduct on the role of "non-ordained professionals" in the Church.

Concerning the unifying of the Methodist and Presbyterian Training Schools, the following recommendation was passed at the second General Council:

That there be formed and developed at one of the present training centres in Toronto, the United Church Training School, under the control of a Board of Management, this Board to be subject to the supervision of the Board of Education of the United Church, the school being considered one of the educational centres of the Church, for the training of women for such departments of Church as may be approved from time to time by the General Council".

Though the wording stated that the new school was to be one of the educational centres for deaconesses, the United Church Training School was to remain, for almost fifty years as the main centre for the preparation of deaconesses. The pre-union policy of each school was continued to secure instruction "through co-operation with the Theological Colleges of the Church, the Social Service Department of the University of Toronto, and the Canadian School of Missions".

The formal union of the schools became effective on October 1, 1926, and the Methodist School at 135 St. Clair Avenue West was chosen as the location. The mechanics of the separation of the Order from the School were completed at the same time. Previous to Union, in both Churches, the Deaconess Order and the Training School had been under the same Board and the Principal of the School was ex-officio superintendent of the Order. At this time the supervision of the new Order and of other trained workers was separated from that of the Training School and was vested in an Inter-Board Committee on Women Workers of the United Church staffed by a full-time secretary.

The curricula of the two schools proved relatively easy to amalgamate. The emphasis in the new school continued to be on training women for a variety of roles: pastoral assistants, christian educators, missionaries, inner city workers, nurses, Church secretaries, home visitors, and heads of orphanages or other church sponsored social agencies. Academic studies and practical work continued to focus on the development of the very specific skills and knowledge which were required to meet the present and evolving needs of society and the Church.

In 1930 the United Church Training School completed negotiations with Emmanuel College and signed an affiliation agreement which was to last for many years. The Council of Emmanuel College at its 1930 meeting passed the following resolution:

"That having received the consent of the Senate and the Board of Regents of Victoria University and also the General Council of the United Church, this Council do now declare the United Church Training School affiliated with Emmanuel College, in accordance with terms herewith appended.

1. That the 1 year course for university graduates shall be of a standard similar to that of first year work in theology.
2. That the 2 year course for matriculants be of a standard similar to that of undergraduate courses of a university.

Also, that Emmanuel College continue to give its services to the Training School as in the past".

In addition to High School matriculation, the Training School continued to require for admission into its two-year course, training and experience in a profession such as teaching, nursing or business. In 1945 fifty percent of the students at the school were university graduates. More recently, the percentage has varied from year to year, but the average over the last several years would be remarkably similar. Emmanuel professors continued to teach classes at the Training School, and supervised field work was provided for all students. The 1930 Calendar statement emphasized the importance of providing practical experience for students. "Care is taken in the assignments made and the School is under obligation to ministers who undertake supervision and who report at the end of the session on the student's work. The Church is being asked by the School to make a real contribution to the training of effective leaders".

During the next fifteen years the academic portion of the programme remained relatively unchanged, but several refinements were made to the supervised field work opportunities.

In 1936 a supervisor of field work was appointed to the staff of the School. In 1940 the Principal assumed the responsibilities of field work supervision, an indication of its growing importance in the programme. In 1946, a double system of supervision was initiated, in which students were supervised directly by the minister, or deaconess, or worker in the congregation or agency where they were placed, and were also required to meet for discussion and evaluation sessions with an experienced deaconess or church member who was not directly connected with the placement. That same year, a seminar for reflection on problems in field work became a required part of the curriculum. The next year, the time commitment required for field work was set at four to eight hours per week, and a second semester focusing on field work research was added to the curriculum. Regular meetings of the field work supervisors were also instituted as a way of facilitating the discussion, evaluation and revision of the processes of effective supervision. These meetings of supervisors, though in a much more intentional and developed form, continue to be an important part of the educational process at the Centre for Christian Studies. All of this work on the practical dimension of education was being done at a time when field work and supervision were receiving little emphasis at those theological colleges training candidates for ordination.

Throughout the 1950's the academic portion of the educational programme for Diaconal Ministers was evaluated and revised several times. During this decade there was great excitement about the role of deaconesses and other women workers in the Church, and in the 1950's the Training School had the largest enrolments in its history. In 1952 there were 44 students, with 27 graduates. In 1953 a report on a revised curriculum was approved, providing

for a two-year course for most applicants, a one-year programme for nurses, and missionary field experience for all students during the summer. During the 1950's the admission standards remained the same, although there was considerable pressure put on the School both to accept junior matriculation as the sole requirement, and to provide a course of study which was shorter. Through memorials and correspondence, concern was expressed several times that the present entrance standards were "banning some women who might give important service to the Church" at a time when the whole Church was experiencing a shortage of trained women workers. In 1957 there were twelve graduates from the United Church Training School with eighty available openings. In response to repeated requests to simplify the programme and lower the entrance requirements, the Church conducted an investigation of the need for women workers and of the kind of educational programme which would best equip such women. The survey took several years to conduct, and at its conclusion the admission standards and programme of the Training School were upheld.

As a result of its own internal evaluation process, the United Church Training School began to increase the number of theoretical and academic course offerings, beginning in 1950.

By 1960, seventeen courses were being offered in theology, biblical studies, and church history, in comparison to the eleven courses offered in 1930. Similarly, in 1960 nine courses were offered with an academic or philosophical approach to religious education, courses such as "Philosophy of Christian Education" and "Developmental Aspects of Christian Nurture". In 1930, only two courses of this nature had been available.

At the same time that the Training School was in the process of adding courses to its curriculum, Emmanuel College in, 1954, was seeking approval to institute a Bachelor of Religious Education degree. In 1954 approval was given to begin "a two year post-graduate course of study intended for those who seek to specialize in some form of educational work within the Church, at home, or overseas". (The degree granted was changed several years later to a Masters Degree in Religious Education.) In 1959 an agreement was approved between the United Church Training School and Emmanuel College whereby the 1959-60 class of UCTS students, if they were college graduates, could enroll in the B.R.E programme of Emmanuel and the UCTS diploma programme at the same time. Thus, previous graduates of a university could for the first time simultaneously obtain a diploma from the Training School (and with it the right to be designated a deaconess) as well as a B.R.E degree from Emmanuel College (and with it the right to do post-graduate studies in theology). One of the results of this arrangement was the separation of degree from non-degree students. It was now possible for field work seminars and community events to be the only activities in which all students shared together. With the finalizing of this agreement with Emmanuel, the expectation was clearly stated that the United Church Training School would "become an institution which normally asks from prospective students a standing of college graduation".

The dual arrangement offered many new opportunities in the area of academic course work. It seemed to work fairly well, although some students spoke of the lack of understanding which candidates for ordination had of diaconal ministry, and of the possibility of conflicting loyalties arising when they

were students of two parallel institutions. Many described it as a valuable opportunity. They appreciated the dialogue which occurred as they learned and worked with others who were preparing for a different kind of professional work in the Church. Many saw it as a chance to educate ordination candidates about the history and activities of Diaconal Ministers. During this period, field work continued to be emphasized as crucial for the successful training of deaconesses. The Studies Committee of the Training School spent a considerable amount of its time discussing various aspects of the field work situation, and establishing new standards for supervision. Also the required amount of time for field work was increased in 1957 to 150 hours per term.

During the 1960's the course offerings and requirements for field work remained relatively unchanged, but the home of the School was changed to Covenant College and the constituency which it was to serve was enlarged. In 1962, a proposal that the work of training men for non-ordained professional work be undertaken was approved, and the section in the Manual referring to the mandate of the College was changed to allow the inclusion of men in the programme. Though the number of men interested in this form of ministry has remained small over the years, the opening of Diaconal Ministry to men was a highly significant event. Males were first called Certified Employed Churchmen. The name was later shortened to Certified Churchmen in 1969.

Also in 1969, the Anglican Women's Training College and Covenant College (formerly The United Church Training School) amalgamated to become what was one of the first ecumenical theological centres in Canada. The name chosen for the new college was the Centre for Christian Studies. When negotiations between the two Colleges had begun in 1967 it was hoped that the current degree work with Emmanuel College could continue, but at the time of the founding of the Toronto School of Theology, the agreement was terminated and a joint degree and diploma programme was no longer a possibility for diaconal candidates.

Subsequently, students at the Centre for Christian Studies who had university degrees were encouraged to register in the Toronto School of Theology as special students and to take individual courses at Emmanuel and the other T.S.T Colleges. Students who did not have a prior degree registered as special students at the University of Toronto and took individual courses in Religious Studies or other departments. Thus it continued to be possible to undertake university work, but not to complete a degree, during the two-year programme at the Centre for Christian Studies.

With the amalgamation of the two Training Colleges, plans were begun for a revised curriculum which would incorporate the strengths of both previous programmes, and move towards an "involvement and reflection" model of education. Throughout this period, educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry continued its long-standing emphasis on practicality and flexibility. The first years were ones of both challenge and struggle, during which both denominations began to identify and work out the problems and practical steps involved in doing education together. At the same time, many Christians began to shift towards a new social gospel and to express their dissatisfaction with both the structures and practices of the institutional Church.

In the midst of this, in 1972 the United Church initiated a major study on education for Diaconal Ministry, and began to look at the possibility of partially integrating the educational programmes of diaconal and ordained



candidates. The committee which was constituted to conduct the study was asked to consider making the M.R.E. (Masters of Religious Education degree) course the "normative" requirement for entrance into diaconal ministry, and to examine models of partial joint training with ordination candidates at Emmanuel College. It was suggested that there might be common courses provided in Biblical and Theological Education which diaconal and ordained candidates would take together, as well as separate and specialized courses for each. The committee's work took the major part of a year and included extensive interviews with Diaconal Ministers, with Ordained Ministers, and with members of the congregations they served.

As a result of the committee's work, several major changes were made to the educational programme for Diaconal Ministry. The committee recommended that, as far as possible, common educational experiences be provided for both ordained and diaconal candidates. In addition, Emmanuel College's MRE programme was approved as an acceptable alternative avenue of preparation for Diaconal Ministry, but the committee recommended that it not be considered as normative. Thus, there were now two approved possibilities for educational preparation for diaconal ministry, both located on the same street in Toronto. In terms of number of students, the Centre for Christian Studies remained the main centre for education, with relatively few choosing the MRE programme. Those who did choose Emmanuel often spoke of it as a "mixed blessing". They often experienced the isolation of being the only diaconal candidate in their classes, and the accompanying lack of opportunity to share concerns with others preparing for the same kind of ministry. On the positive side, Emmanuel graduates spoke with appreciation of the opportunities provided to develop working styles and an appreciation of the ordained ministry which would help them in congregational situations later.

In addition to these recommendations, new educational guidelines for Diaconal Ministry were approved and written into the United Church manual;

"The Basic Programme for all candidates (will) make adequate provision for:

- a) Biblical Studies
- b) Theology and Ethics
- c) Church History
- d) Pastoral Theology (including Worship, Christian Development, Church Policy and Administration, Supervised Field Education).

In addition to the basic programme of training for diaconal ministry, each candidate shall engage in a MAJOR and a MINOR area of concentration. These two areas of concentration shall be:

- a) The Congregation
  - the educational process
  - group leadership
  - planning
  - administration
  - community-building
  - visiting

- b) The Community
  - social and power structures
  - community agencies
  - how to help people help themselves
  - change agent skills
  - visiting."

The programmes for diaconal education at the Centre for Christian Studies and at Emmanuel College both focus on training people for a ministry of education, service and pastoral care, but the emphasis and strategies used at each institution are very different. After several years of experimentation and struggle, the Centre for Christian Studies instituted a new programme of studies in 1974. The focus was clearly on providing training in educational theory and skills, although the definition of education was vastly expanded to include conscientization, social analysis, and strategies for social change, as well as nurturing, counseling and leadership training techniques. The programme eventually came to include an emphasis on discovering and eradicating sexism in the Church, and on working towards an expanded understanding of male and female roles in society. The Centre for Christian Studies was one of the first educational institutions both to offer courses for laity and Order of Ministry on feminist theology and to begin to integrate its insights into the process and content of its own educational programme. Throughout its history, the Centre had become painfully aware of the devastating effects of sexism. Though Diaconal Ministry and training had been available to men since 1962, the education and service ministry of the Church had attracted few men. It continued to be perceived as "women's work", and was both undervalued and marginalized by the Church. The Centre for Christian Studies was also perceived by many as a "women's college" and, though its programme was highly innovative and always advanced in terms of the field education it provided, it was consistently labeled as inferior or "not real theological education". Part of this had to do with the fact that the Centre for Christian Studies was not in and of itself a degree-granting institution, but another part of it was a result of the Church's sexist attitudes, and its assignment of women to less important and less visible roles.

At the time the new programme was put into place, the educational stance at the Centre for Christian Studies emphasized the importance of joint education for ministers and laity. Learning experiences were offered in two programmes: the Professional Study and Action Programme, designed primarily but not exclusively for those who wished to work professionally in the outreach or educational ministry of the Church, and the Continuing Study and Action Programme which provided short courses (one or two weeks, weekends, or a series of evenings) for both volunteers and employed workers in congregations and in the community.

The Professional Study and Action Programme combined three areas: academic studies at colleges within the Toronto School of Theology or at the Departments of Religious Studies in the University of Toronto; the Core Group, which provided an opportunity to work in a group at integrating biblical, theological and life experiences with practice in an educational ministry; and a practical field work experience in a congregational and in a social service ministry. Since the programme's inception in 1974 there have been several adjustments, but the basic three-part format has remained the same.

Opportunities for evaluation have always been built into the Centre's educational offerings, and because of this the present programme has continued its predecessor's strong tradition of listening to and responding to the changing needs of both the Church and society. The educational process used in Core facilitates self-discovery within a learning community and encourages the development of skills to work with people whose background and ideas are different. Participants are helped to develop enabling skills which will be useful in helping a community or a group discover its gifts and carry out ministry.

The programme at Emmanuel College is also focused on equipping people for leadership in educational or outreach ministries. The programme includes biblical and theological studies as well as courses in Church history, worship, pastoral theology, psychology, Christian education, and involvement in Field Education. The professors believe that one of its greatest strengths is that all of its courses are integrated with those of students for ordination. Through this combining of courses, the opportunity is provided to learn about the other form of ministry and to get practice in teaming and learning together. The goals and objectives of the Master of Religious Education Programme include the following: the ability to reflect upon and interpret the meaning of documents and heritage of the Judeo-Christian tradition; the ability to communicate the concerns of the Church, and understand the human situation as set forth in Theology and in other disciplines; the ability to understand the assumptions and practices of education; and the ability to plan and carry out an educational ministry in many settings.

For the Emmanuel programme the integration of the practical and the academic is facilitated through the Church and Society course and through supervised Field Education experiences. In order to develop skills in education, all students are required to teach in a practicum and to take, during their final semester, an Advanced Seminar in Education. Styles of teaching and learning in the two-year educational programme include anecdotal journal writing, colloquia, forums, panel discussions, symposia, workshops, case studies and demonstrations, as well as lectures and seminars. Many elective courses are provided for students who wish to explore specific areas or develop individual talents.

In recent years, the Centre for Christian Studies has had an increasing number of older students in its programme, men and women who were entering a second or third career. Many came with a wealth of experience in lay leadership in the Church. Also on the increase is the number of students wishing to work part-time, taking from three to five years to complete the programme. Both of these developments have been possible because of the flexibility of the curriculum and the willingness of the staff to adapt to the changing needs of the Church. Also, for many years, there have been requests for the provision of diaconal ministry educational preparation in other parts of the country. Many people have been attracted to an expression of ministry which emerged from and continues to focus on the laity, but have been unable to come to Toronto for the two-year programme. Work has begun on the expansion of access to diaconal ministry educational preparation so that its emphasis on nurturing and empowering laity for their work in the world can be strengthened and expanded. The resurgence of interest in Diaconal Ministry can, among other things, be seen as a recognition and affirmation of the ministry of women in the church.

### III. DIACONAL MINISTRY TODAY:

#### A. The Essence of Diaconal Ministry:

Diaconal Ministry continues to reflect a commitment to the laity. Only very recently in its history has Diaconal Ministry been considered a part of the order of ministry. Before that, deaconesses and certified churchmen were considered lay professional Church workers, and had no official status in the courts of the Church. Thus, it is not surprising that the most common response given by Diaconal Ministers to the question "what is the essence of diaconal ministry?" is that it is a ministry which is closely related to the laity. Its purpose is described as to support and equip the laity for their ministry in the world. More specifically, this "equipping" of the laity is seen to involve helping people to identify and develop their gifts and strengths, to examine and express their theology and faith, to understand the reconciling ministry of Jesus and their own call to participate in this ministry, and to begin to work individually and corporately for the promotion of justice and peace in the world. As one respondent suggested: "the main function is to promote and enable the ministry of the whole people of God".

Within this general focus on the laity, Diaconal Ministers see their ministry as primarily an educational one. "An emphasis on education" is the second most frequent response given to the question of uniqueness. Diaconal Ministers seem to be using the word "education" in one of two ways. Some are clearly referring to the traditional educational programmes of the Church, such as Bible Study, Sunday School, youth work, confirmation classes, and are saying that Diaconal Ministers are unique because they specialize in and lift up this educational work as essential to the life of the Church. Others use the word "education" to refer to a more general orientation or way of functioning in ministry, a way of organizing and carrying out all the tasks of the Church so that learning experiences and growth processes are emphasized. This understanding of the uniqueness of Diaconal Ministry was stated most succinctly in the CCS Staff and Student Response to Project:Ministry, "For most ministers, education is one of the many tasks of ministry. For the (Diaconal) Minister in educational ministry, education is the perspective from which all tasks are approached".

The next most frequently-mentioned essential element of diaconal ministry is "service" or response to the needs of the Christian community and the world. Respondents speak of the Biblical understanding of service, of diakonia, and point to the example of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Such service, they point out, has little to do with servitude, or with being forced to be subservient or deny the self. As one respondent suggested, "Diaconal Ministry involves taking on the role of servant, but a servant who recognizes his/her own worth, a servant who is valuable for him/herself alone". Such a servant ministry is radically different from the derogatory and patronizing way in which servanthood is thought of in society. It reflects a conscious choice to embrace a ministry which is not based on status and which leaves itself open to the pain and needs of others. It is a ministry which requires the ability to stand with the suffering, and to work with them for healing and dignity and growth. Thus, as one respondent suggested: "It is the embodiment of the Church's pastoring and service and nurturing functions. Diaconal

Ministry affirms them as really valid functions and not simply something that the Church does when they can afford to have a second person."

Service, as distinct from servitude, involves a willingness and an ability to face injustice, both inside and outside of the Church, to critique oppressive structures and to work for social change. As several Diaconal Ministers suggest, as well as responding to the suffering of individuals, the diaconate is also active, and involves developing and implementing strategies which dismantle the social and political structures which oppress people. Several respondents speak of Diaconal Ministry as "prophetic", "justice-oriented" and "focused on social change".

In speaking about what they do, Diaconal Ministers rarely use the words "my ministry". Instead, they speak of mutual ministry, of shared vocation, of collectivity and accountability, including in this both laity and order of ministry. They mention familiarity with and belief in the value of team ministry and learning in community as one of the most exciting things about Diaconal Ministry. Most see Diaconal Ministry as both being shaped by and having validity only in relation to the ministry of others. This springs partly from an understanding of the Church as the "people of God" in which all must participate in ministry, and partly from an understanding and experience of teaching and learning as inseparable processes. Several respondents echo the following comment: "Diaconal Ministry is basically a shared ministry. It involves living out the reality that all authentic ministry is mutual; it is the work of people together and tends to become open to shared responsibility and trust of other people's ministries." Thus, Diaconal Ministers see themselves as both helping others and being helped themselves to deepen their theology, their responses to God and their appreciation and understanding of themselves and the world. Images of "journeying together" and "co-ministering" are common in the descriptions of ministry.

Such an understanding of shared ministry clearly has implications for the style of ministry used by Diaconal Ministers. Several specifically mention aspects of style or process in their comments on the essence of Diaconal Ministry. They speak of their style as nurturing, supportive and enabling, and see it as growth-oriented, focusing on the development of people of all ages. They talk of standing with people, of being present, of functioning as both a friend and counselor.

A number of the respondents emphasize that the identification of nurturing and supportive roles with Diaconal Ministry clearly has to do with the fact that most Diaconal Ministers have been women. Nurturing and support are functions which society has traditionally emphasized and rewarded in females, while confrontation and assertiveness have been considered more masculine traits. Thus, Diaconal Ministry has, through its history, both conformed to and pushed the edges of society's expectations and limitations for women. In many ways, Diaconal Ministers have been placed in the shadow, under-rated and marginalized by the Church. They have been taught to see themselves as secondary, as less important to the life of the Church than the ordained. One Diaconal Minister describes her educational preparation and early years in the ministry as a time of "indoctrination into secondary status". "The notion was that we were at the call of the minister and the people. Many ideas communicated and emphasized our little importance. Christian education was seen then as marginal/trivial to the "real" functions of ministry

(liturgy/pastoral care). We were not expected to 'aspire' to other than our defined roles. We were clearly accountable to the senior ministers in all situations."

Today such perceptions of Diaconal Ministry continue, in spite of the fact that the roles of women in the Church have expanded and changed radically, and in spite of the fact that Diaconal Ministers themselves have expanded their understanding of nurture and service to include social criticism and advocacy, as well as enablement. Because of its hidden nature, its collegial rather than its solo working style, and its emphasis on processes of growth rather than measurable results, Diaconal Ministry has often been overlooked or undervalued in the life of the church. Yet actually, as one respondent suggests, with its emphasis on probing and questioning, and on helping people to make connections in their lives, such a ministry is central: "Diaconal Ministers are persons who can ask the critical questions as to how growth might happen, how groups and individuals can make decisions etc., and in general enabling persons to take ownership of their own growth and life in community, and to affect structures accordingly".

Such a ministry is both difficult and challenging, as the following comment shows: "Diaconal Ministry is educating, enabling people to do their/our ministry. In life it is always easier to do it yourself than teach another to do the task. Difficult though it is, the Christian faith must be claimed/owned individually and corporately. Diaconal Ministry enables this both in philosophy and style. (The following misprint appeared in a local newspaper, 'Diagonal Minister - ministry with a different slant!')" Because this kind of emphasis on mutuality of ministry and enabling others is radically different from the way in which people in the Church have both thought of and experienced ministry, Diaconal Ministers are well aware that their expression of ministry is seen as both strange and threatening by many in congregations and community groups. Their style of ministry works to break down the gulf between lay and order of ministry, and challenges the need for hierarchies in the Church. Through their work, Diaconal Ministers encounter and openly challenge clericalism in all its forms, including the idea that members of the order of ministry are "the Church", and that clergy are somehow "larger than life". This unique form of ministry based on service and enablement calls the Church to look at what it means by "Church" and "Ministry". Why is preaching the word traditionally given more value and prestige than teaching the Word? Why is doing considered more important than enabling? As one respondent stated: "If working together and focusing on education catches on, then a whole lot of the Church's structures will come tumbling down, taking with them the over-emphasized power and authority of some... we mustn't underestimate the threat that Diaconal Ministry poses to the security of the hierarchy in the Church".

While few respondents speak so bluntly, several describe the difficulty of always using a different style of ministry. They speak of the pain of being described as "not a real minister, or as being somehow less than the real thing". Diaconal Ministers talk of living with a constant awareness that they were "in but still out" of ministry in the Church. The problem, as they describe it, is one of constant exclusion.

Several respondents express discouragement because of the Church's failure to deal with the fundamental issues raised both by their unique expression of

ministry and of their second-class treatment by others. Many see their "otherness" and uniqueness as both positive and negative. On the positive side, they see it as essential for the revisioning of all of ministry. On the negative side, they speak of the loneliness and disempowerment of always being the exception, the peculiarity, the odd one. A number of respondents speak of being treated as if they were invisible, and of not being supported by their colleagues. "Diaconal Ministry can be an incredibly painful ministry. It takes a lot of energy to not only do your job, but also to constantly have to explain yourself, to answer questions about why you are not ordained, and why you work the way you do. Most people, because there are so few of us, know nothing about Diaconal Ministry, and we're always having to start the advocacy and explaining over again".

Closely tied to this feeling of uniqueness, are comments which talk about the challenge of being different, and of the freedom to risk and experiment which is present in Diaconal Ministry. Many see themselves as pioneers, on the forefront of change in the Church. Others link themselves to the innovative and daring work done by some of the deaconesses of the past. All see it, because of its closeness to the laity, its lack of structured roles and its short history as part of the order of ministry, as a form of ministry which is essentially open to change, flexible and varied. It is "growth oriented", as one respondent states, and new forms of "service" ministry are emerging continually. Diaconal Ministry means versatility, being able to adapt to the quick-changing needs of the congregation. In some ways we are like chameleons changing emphasis continually to respond to congregational needs. In some places it might be needs for adult education, sometimes it might be pastoral care, sometimes ministry to/with children and youth. I find the variety to be exciting, challenging and faithful to God's will".

Several respondents observed that this flexibility was made possible because of the "bridge" or "in-between" position of Diaconal Ministers in the Church. Several respondents clearly see themselves as located "on the creative edge of the Church" or as "a bridge between the ordained and the laity". They see their work being most effectively done in a place on the fringe where there is a clear view of what is and is not being responded to through the traditional forms of ministry. They suggest that there is a sense in which Diaconal Ministry is able to respond to needs which are not being met elsewhere, to identify gaps in service, and to minister with people who are falling through the cracks. As one respondent suggests: "Diaconal Ministry is infused with both imagination and dedication to the Church so that what is not being done in total ministry is noted and acted upon...There is always a challenge to do what is not being done, which is needed - for example, education, welfare, counseling, advocacy".

In the process of sharing this information on the essence of Diaconal Ministry with CTEM, the image of Diaconal Ministry as enabling the people of God to enter into and remain faithful on "the long march through the institution" emerged. Diaconal Ministers have a commitment to nurturing, working in community, and travelling with others as they are both victimized by and work towards change within the world and its institutions. Diaconal Ministry can and does enable people to uphold the vision of the Gospel, and participates in Christ's ministry as He expressed it in the Lukan passage (Luke 4:16-20) - it involves bringing good news, proclaiming release, bringing sight to the blind and sustaining the broken in spirit.

## B. Educational Essentials for Diaconal Ministry

The style and understanding of ministry held by Diaconal Ministers has clearly been shaped by the education which they received. With the Centre for Christian Studies and its predecessors having provided the educational preparation for all but a few Diaconal Ministers, it is not surprising that the educational philosophy of the Centre finds embodiment in the ministry of its graduates. In answering the questionnaire, many Diaconal Ministers, particularly those who had entered Diaconal Ministry in the last five years, used many similar words to describe the values of their educational preparation and to describe the style of their own ministry. This would indicate that their education was extremely significant, not only in terms of providing them with specific educational skills, but also in shaping their identity as Diaconal Ministers.

Both the Women in Ministry Research Project of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and the present questionnaire results show that the vast majority of Diaconal Ministers surveyed found their educational preparation extremely valuable. For example, the Women in Ministry Report makes the following statement: "Diaconal Ministers appear to have been the most satisfied (with their theological training) which is a reflection largely on the Centre for Christian Studies in Toronto, the principal training centre for Diaconal Ministers". Over ninety percent of present Diaconal Ministers, the Task Group discovered, have received their educational preparation through this institution or its various predecessors.

Most diaconal ministers are able to isolate some essentials for educational preparation by articulating what was most valuable and what was least valuable (or lacking) in their educational preparation. While answers varied somewhat according to when individual Diaconal Ministers graduated, there are remarkable similarities in their answers across most time periods.

Most frequently mentioned as an essential ingredient of effective educational preparation is field education, or the provision of an opportunity to work within a congregation or an institutional setting while preparing for ministry. For such an experience to be valuable, respondents stated that there must be built-in regular opportunities for reflection and supervision with a trained supervisor who has both an understanding of the philosophy and history of Diaconal Ministry and an interest in exploring all aspects of ministry as a co-learner with the diaconal student. The actual working placement must provide opportunities for goal-setting, planning, designing, implementing and evaluating learning experiences, and must be similar to the actual work that Diaconal Ministers do. Thus, an effective field work setting must provide learning opportunities, which allow for mutuality, self-discovery and affirmation and which call for skills and understanding related to education, service and pastoral care. Several respondents state that provision of a trained supervisor was critical, and that, without this, field work often turned out to be either a waste of time or so full of "growth-denying" characteristics that "it was difficult to see any learning experiences at all".



Diaconal Ministers see a strong and varied academic component as essential for their educational preparation. More specifically, they list Biblical Studies and courses in theology as most significant, and state that the emphasis in both of these must be personal and practical. Through these studies, they expect to learn how to do Biblical exegesis, how to enable others to let the scriptures speak to their lives, how to understand the theological tradition of the Church and articulate their own understanding of God, self and the world, and how to wrestle with ethical and moral issues in their own lives and in the world. As well as Biblical Studies and theology, respondents also mention a need for courses in worship, education, church history, church polity, psychology and pastoral theology.

In terms of what was missing from their educational preparation, many Diaconal Ministers responded that there is a need for a course which deals specifically with the history and development of Diaconal Ministry, from its beginnings in the early Church to its present form in the United Church. Reference should also be included to Diaconal Orders in other denominations around the world, and the history and ethos of Diaconal Ministry should be set within the context of the whole ministry of the Church. Several respondents feel that careful theological reflection on the meaning of diakonia and on its unique history in the Christian community would help in the identity formation of Diaconal Ministers, and should not be ignored or minimized.

Several comments on the questionnaires which concerned educational essentials - focused on aspects of the style or processes of education rather than on the content. Diaconal Ministers see as essential the continuation of an interdependent style of learning, which emphasizes processes of listening, mutual questioning, consensus, partnership and cooperation. Such a style of education, Diaconal Ministers suggest, breaks down the distinctions between teachers and learners and invites all to participate in a mutual time of affirmation, challenge and growth. As one respondent suggests, this style sets the "context for all of Diaconal Ministry, where no one has power over another, and everyone works for the empowerment of all". Others comment that this style of education is particularly valuable because it prepares Diaconal Ministers for teaching and learning with others in the Church and community.

The next most frequently expressed comment about Diaconal Ministry education is that it must include time and a process which helps the participants to integrate the academic, spiritual and practical aspects of their work so that each contributes to and challenges the other two. Otherwise, learning becomes compartmentalized, and the kind of personal awareness and ability to ask questions and make connections which is so important in ministry does not develop. Also, respondents noted that the content and learning activities used in education must be essentially learner-directed. They believed that their education was particularly valuable because they were encouraged and supported to take responsibility for deciding what they wanted to learn and how they wanted to learn it. Participation in such a programme, they observed, not only forces students to get in touch with their own strengths and weaknesses, but also results in them actually "learning how to learn". In connection with this, other respondents stress qualities such as "non-directive", "flexible", "constantly evolving" and "owned by the learners" as essential.

Other respondents mention that participatory evaluation processes and skills are an important part of all educational experiences. Constant evaluation enables them to identify learnings, plan for future areas of exploration, and adapt styles and programmes to make them more effective. Other aspects of their education which Diaconal Ministers listed as most significant are: the strong emphasis on social and political analysis and-action, the use of an action/reflection model, the practical emphasis, and the presence of Diaconal Ministers as teachers. Such teachers are seen as role models who both manage and demonstrate the unique and valuable perspective that Diaconal Ministry brings to the Church.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK GROUP

After its examination of the historical development of education for Diaconal Ministry, the results of the questionnaire on Diaconal Ministry, and of previous studies and reports on education for this type of ministry, the Task Group makes a number of recommendations and referrals. These are made based on a number of convictions held by the group:

1. we affirm three expressions of ministry -diaconal, lay and ordained;
2. all of these expressions of ministry have a place and should continue to have a place in the United Church of Canada;
3. a different process is necessary for educational preparation for ministry;
4. theological educational preparation for ministry has a distinguishable ethos when related to diaconal, lay, and ordained expressions of ministry;
5. the variance in the actual form of theological education at different educational centres enriches the life of the United Church of Canada.

#### A.) Recommendations to the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education

##### RECOMMENDATION A: Length of Course

Whereas: 1. the majority of respondents indicated that in their experience a longer period of study would have been beneficial;

2. in the experience of all the United Church's theological schools the time for the maturation of the integration of theological study and practical experience is barely adequate now;

3. specific elements which respondents identified as necessary could not adequately be built into the present curriculum (e.g. the history of Diaconal Ministry, the theological understanding of diakonia);

Therefore: The Task Group recommends that the course of study for the diploma for diaconal ministry be three years, normally, with the provision of time for the theological disciplines; field work and the integration of academic, spiritual and practical dimensions of ministry.

RECOMMENDATION B: Commonality of Educational Preparation for Ministry  
(from Project Ministry report 1980 General Council)

- Whereas: 1. the understanding of ministry in the United Church of Canada is based upon collegiality and mutuality of the Whole People of God;
2. the exercise of ministry of the ordained and the diaconal persons in pastoral charges and in the world requires their cooperation and mutual support;
3. the diversity of expressions of ministry based on the variety of gifts of the Spirit have the same theological understanding;

Therefore: The Task Group recommends

- B.1. that as much as possible, education for all expressions of ministry be undertaken with lay persons, candidates for diaconal ministry and candidates for ordained ministry together, with particular reference to the integration of theological studies and field education experience.
- B.2. that candidates for diaconal and ordained ministry take together those courses which are common to both;
- B.3. that joint Field Placements be provided wherever possible;
- B.4. that where necessary, for identity formation specific to diaconal ministry, lay ministry or ordained ministry, courses be taken separately.

(It is the hope of the Task Group that this commonality of training will provide an understanding of the mutuality of ministry as expressed in the statements on ministry of the United Church of Canada.)

RECOMMENDATION C: Access to Educational Preparation

- Whereas: 1. correspondence received by MPE staff and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry indicates a need for educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry to be available in locations in addition to Toronto;
2. people in other areas of Canada, who are unable to move to Toronto, have been denied access to Diaconal Ministry or have had to seek access through special, exceptional routes;
3. the current necessity of having to take educational preparation in one geographic location, creates undue burdens not faced by persons wishing to prepare for ordained ministry

Therefore: the Task Group recommends

- C.1. that two additional places for diaconal ministry educational preparation be established within the existing theological schools, one in eastern Canada, and one in western Canada, and that the format of this educational preparation, whether residential, or otherwise, be determined by the educational centre and the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education.
- C.2. that prior to recognizing these two places, the Division of MPE assure itself that there is both a willingness and the capability to provide the essentials for Diaconal Ministry educational preparation, including Diaconal Ministry supervision, specific courses related to Diaconal identity formation, etc.

#### B.) Referrals to the Committee on Theological Education for Ministry

##### Background

The deliberations of the Task Group and the feedback from C.T.E.M. and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry have brought to light several issues which need further work. The Task Group is convinced that integration of learnings and identity formation are two key parts of educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry, and that both of these require time and an educational programme which is flexible, rooted in the learner's needs and goals, and structured to allow for the integration of academics and practice. The Task Group is impressed by the work being done at the Centre for Christian Studies and believes that it is an invaluable programme for Diaconal Ministry educational preparation. It provides a model for an action/reflection style of education which is being used more and more in other theological schools across the country. Over the past thirty years the ministry exercised by Diaconal Ministers (formerly deaconesses, certified churchmen, or commissioned ministers) has changed to reflect more of a consciousness of social justice and of the importance of education for all phases of the Church's life. This exciting development is largely a result of the innovation and experimentation within the programme at the Centre for Christian Studies.

The Task Group observes that Emmanuel College's Diploma/MRE programme leading toward commissioning is unable to offer, to the same extent, the integration and identity formation so essential for effective Diaconal Ministry education. Diaconal Ministry candidates enrolled in this degree programme have been consistently few over the years since the joint programme with the Centre for Christian Studies was terminated.

## Referrals

As a consequence of the feedback received from C.T.E.M. and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry and of the further deliberations of the Task Group, in light of the previous recommendations, the Task Group makes the following referrals to C.T.E.M.:

1. that the Masters of Religious Education degree course (Manual 732(d), [1985 edition]) be phased out as an acceptable training alternative for diaconal ministry in the United Church of Canada and, therefore, that a diploma for Diaconal Ministry no longer be granted for the M.R.E. degree course;
2. that C.T.E.M. find the means to meet the following urgent needs in relation to diaconal ministry education:
  - A) perceived equivalency, in the eyes of the Church and the eyes of academic institutions, in terms of educational preparation;
  - B) access to graduate and post-graduate education;
  - C) educational preparation which incorporates the identified needs for educational preparation as expressed by respondents.

The Task Group notes that the beginning steps for this are contained in the Recommendations and Referrals to the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education in this report. The Task Group and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry suggest to C.T.E.M. that one way of dealing with all three of these needs would be that the M.Div. (or the B.Th. for those without the necessary prior degree) be the academic degree granted along with the diploma for diaconal ministry when candidates complete the educational requirements for commissioning. In the case of a programme for which a M.Div. (B.Th.) cannot be granted, C.T.E.M. would need to develop an alternative form of recognizing the educational equivalency;

3. that, if the diploma for diaconal ministry operating within a M.Div. or another Masters level degree programme is accepted as the academic requirement for educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry, a shorter course option be explored;
4. that the Professional Study and Action programme at the Centre for Christian Studies be maintained as one of the routes of educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry.

C. Referrals to the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education

The Task Group, having recommended to C.T.E.M. that the Centre for Christian Studies' Professional Study and Action programme be maintained as one of the routes of educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry (referral #4 above) and in light of Recommendation B, urges the Division, through C.T.E.M., to facilitate close co-operation and mutual recognition in theological education for Diaconal Ministry between Emmanuel College and the Centre for Christian Studies. [Reference should be made to the notes gathered over the years which discuss the previous joint relationship between the Centre and Emmanuel College.]

(In the minds of the Task Group, while the M.R.E. degree is recommended as being phased out as a route to educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry, it is thought that Emmanuel College will continue to participate in the educational preparation of candidates for Diaconal Ministry through developing a programme in the same way as the two additional centres, through co-operation with the Centre for Christian Studies, or through a route to be determined by C.T.E.M.)

D.) Referrals to the Committee on Diaconal Ministry

As a result of the Task Group's deliberations the following recommendations are referred to the Committee on Diaconal Ministry:

1. that a complete history of Diaconal Ministry be compiled and that copies of all historical materials relating to it be gathered together and made available to the Church through the United Church Archives;
2. that all records, files and computer listings of Diaconal Ministers be clearly identified as such so that statistics and mail lists of Diaconal Ministers can easily be compiled and policies can quickly be critiqued by tracing their effects on this group.

Related Concerns and Observations

The questionnaire prepared by the Task Group contained a number of questions about how Diaconal Ministers perceived their expression of ministry and about how their work is received and responded to by the Church. While such concerns were outside of the specific mandate of the Task Group, it was felt that this information was crucial in locking at the context for a discussion on educated ministry. Because of the wealth of information received, and because many of the comments given point to serious theological and practical issues which need to be addressed by the Church, the Task Force decided to include a list of concerns and observations about Diaconal Ministry.

1. Continuing Education

Education for ministry is a life-long process, and regular involvement in Continuing Education programmes of the Church is essential. The responses to the question of Continuing Education goals and needs indicate that Diaconal Ministers can identify several very specific areas that they wish to pursue and that many of these are not being included in the regular offerings of the Continuing Education Centres across the country. Several respondents mention specifically the need for courses in programme design, current Christian education theory and practice, Inter-generational worship, feminist theology, social analysis skills, and pastoral care of children. Other respondents state that many of the courses that are currently provided use an educational style in which the "expert" imparts knowledge to the passive learners, and that this mode of education contradicts both the philosophy and goals of Diaconal Ministry. Therefore, the Task Group urges the Continuing Education Programmers, through the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, to consult with and develop more programmes which will support the work of Diaconal Ministers.

2. Settlement

Now that Transfer and Settlement is mandatory for Diaconal Ministry candidates, the inability of the structures and policies of the Church to appreciate and facilitate this unique type of ministry has become obvious. In some cases, because Diaconal Ministers are often women with family commitments and are not as mobile as the policy of settlement requires that candidates must be, they "fall between the cracks" or are left to find a placement on their own. In many of these cases, as several respondents point out, neither the interests of the congregation nor the Diaconal Minister are served. Greater care needs to be taken in the settlement of Diaconal Ministry candidates. Other respondents feel that the problem has to do with the fact that many of the Churches who could be successfully served by Diaconal Ministers never request settlement. Thus, for a number of reasons, the Settlement process remains problematic for many Diaconal Ministers. Therefore, the Task Group urges the Transfer Committee and through it, the Conference Settlement Committees, to take these concerns under consideration.



### 3. Sacraments

Access to permission to administer the sacraments continues to be a problem for many Diaconal Ministers. It is not a problem which they created, but rather is a result of the Church's perceived unwillingness to struggle with its theological understanding of sacrament and its relationship to the people of God. Though guidelines were approved by General Council in Montreal, whereby permission would be given to Diaconal Ministers in specific situations to celebrate the sacraments, these guidelines continue to be interpreted in different ways in various Conferences across the country. Thus, one Diaconal Minister may be granted permission to administer the sacraments while another in a similar position is denied it. Several respondents feel that the only way out of this inequitable position is to have permission available for all Diaconal Ministers in the pastorate. Others believe that the question of who is permitted to preside at communion and baptism is part of a larger issue in the Church. Moving the administration of the sacraments beyond the exclusive realm of the ordained, they note, often brings about such resistance that questions need to be asked about the Church's theology of the sacraments. Does the resistance signify that baptism and communion are seen by many people in a magical way, as some kind of powerful blessing which the ordained minister dispenses on God's behalf? Because of the experience of Diaconal Ministers across the Church and across the years we emphasize the importance of the Church considering seriously its theological understanding of the sacraments.

### 4. Staff Associates, Ordained and the Job Situation

Several respondents indicate that they believe that the growing number of staff associates could result in fewer positions being available for Diaconal Ministers. Others express the feeling of being "squeezed" in between the ordained and staff associates. "We're being squeezed out because we're not well enough known. The role of Diaconal Ministry needs to be lifted up before the Church (i.e. educate the Church about it and encourage it) or I believe it will become a dinosaur very quickly. This may happen... especially in urban areas where staff associates and ordained clergy are being hired to do jobs where Diaconal Ministers might be better placed."

Staff Associates, several Diaconal Ministers point out, can be hired for less money and do not have the extensive involvement with Presbytery and Conference that order of ministry people have. At the same time, ordained are often perceived as being able to "do everything that a Diaconal Minister can, and more", and are therefore thought to be "better value for the money". Also, respondents point out that there is a continuing lack of understanding of Diaconal Ministry in all parts of the Church - in congregations, at Presbytery, among pastoral relations people and Conference Personnel Ministers and within national committees. As the following comment suggests, the problem is extremely pervasive: "It is my perception that many lay people have never heard of Diaconal Ministers, and many ordained discredit them without knowing what they offer the Church (other lay and ordained are very supportive, but it is an uphill battle). I think some work with, for example, the National Pastoral Relations Committee, is needed to raise consciousness. It needs to be done, in all places in the Church, again and again, because of changing personnel and committees." The Task Group urges the Division of

Ministry Personnel and Education, through its Lay Ministry Committee, Women in Ministry Committee, Committee on Diaconal Ministry, and Pastoral Relations Committee, to continue to address these concerns.

#### 5. Recruiting and Candidature

Several Diaconal Ministers mention that one area where education needs to be done on the theological understanding and unique training of Diaconal Ministers is in all committees related to the candidature process. Respondents tell horror stories, for example, of interview committees which asked them why they did not want to be ordained, implying that ordination was the norm, and that somehow they were settling for something else than what was desirable. Others recall committees which did not take them seriously, and did not ask them questions about their faith because they were "only being commissioned". Still others spoke of the difficulty of finding out about Diaconal Ministry so that it could be considered as a possible vocation in the first place. Ordained ministry is often actively promoted, while Diaconal Ministry is barely mentioned. Further work needs to be done both on clarifying the process for candidature and on promoting Diaconal Ministry as an exciting and valuable vocation in the Church. The Task Group urges the Committee on Diaconal Ministry to be in consultation with the Candidature Committee about these concerns.

Diaconal Ministry Questionnaire

1. Where and when did you receive your educational training for Diaconal Ministry?
2. What background, previous training, life experience did you have before your educational training for Diaconal Ministry?
3. What aspects of your education for Diaconal Ministry have been most helpful in your work?  
  
Which aspects have been least helpful?
4. Do you feel that your educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry helped you in your "identity formation" as a Diaconal Minister?  
If so, how?
5. What do you think is the unique quality, or essence, of Diaconal Ministry?
6. When and where have you worked as a Diaconal Minister?
7. In your experience, has Diaconal Ministry changed during the last ten years?  
If so, how?

8. What were your reasons for choosing Diaconal rather than Ordained Ministry?
9. What problems, issues, questions do you see in the way Diaconal Ministry is perceived and responded to in the Church?
10. What do you see to be your continuing education needs for the next five years? Where would you like to take your continuing education?
11. If you have since become ordained, what were your reasons for making this decision?
12. If you are no longer working in Diaconal Ministry, what events, factors, etc., led to this situation?
13. Are there any further comments you would like to make about Diaconal Ministry or the educational preparation for Diaconal Ministry?

Some Statistical Information about Questionnaire Respondents

<u>DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES:</u>	<u>Number of Questionnaires sent out</u>	<u>Number of Questionnaires completed</u>
Currently Diaconal Ministers, both active and retired	168	97
Former Diaconal Ministers (who left the order of ministry)	8	2
Former Diaconal Ministers (who have since entered Ordained Ministry)	16	8
Others taking Diaconal Ministry educational preparation (not Diaconal Ministers)	5	2
<u>TOTALS:</u>	<u>197</u>	<u>109</u>
REFUSALS AND MAIL RETURNED	15 QUESTIONNAIRES	

DIACONAL MINISTRY EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF RESPONDENTS:

United Church Training School (1959 and earlier)	46 respondents
United Church Training School or Covenant College (during the joint B.R.E. Programme with Emmanuel College)	17 respondents
Covenant College or the Centre for Christian Studies	31 respondents
Emmanuel College M.R.E. Programme	4 respondents
Other equivalent programmes	11 respondents

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