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My theological and ministry formation took place within the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea before I joined the ministry of the UCC. I came to know diaconal ministry through the lives of extraordinary, courageous, and prophetic diaconal ministers who served as missionary co-workers in South Korea: Marion Current, Marion Pope, Mary Collins, and Lori Crocker. From the 1970s to the early 2000s, each of them worked for justice, peace, and equity in Korean contexts marked by division, discrimination, poverty, gender injustice, and social brokenness. Their ministry unfolded in classrooms, local congregations, and hospitals; among marginalized communities; and in street protests and bold acts of solidarity. Their voices, their actions, and their compassion toward vulnerable people in Korean society became for me an embodied pedagogy. In them I saw Minjung theology (the Korean theology of the people oppressed within intersecting structures of power) come to life, together with a feminist consciousness at work within a patriarchal culture.

With deep appreciation for their lives and work, and a growing longing to understand what diaconal ministry truly is, I came to the DUCC National Gathering full of curiosity and excitement. From beginning to end, the gathering was a space of welcome and connection. On the first day, every participant was greeted with a handmade bag holding the meeting materials, a wooden cross necklace, and a cute duck keychain. At coffee breaks, around meal tables, and during discussions, I saw the same spirit again and again: warm welcomes and introductions, caring check-ins, heartfelt appreciation for the staff, and a deep desire to connect with one another. All of this was, in itself, a taste of diaconal ministry as it is lived. Though I was a first-time participant and not a diaconal minister myself, I felt warmly embraced every time we shared, connected, and had fun together.

That spirit of welcome set the stage for the keynote address by Mable Sichali, Deaconess and Secretary for Community Development and Social Justice with the United Church of Zambia. She spoke on transformational diakonia, justice and security, and prophetic action for gender and social justice. Sichali emphasized that theological education and ministry are never neutral, and she linked theological truth to concrete action for justice. In her vision, diaconal ministry is a prophetic ministry that demands moral courage. It calls for resistance that dismantles systems of inequality, and for imagination and creativity that fuel the building of God's kingdom of equity and justice here on earth. As I listened, I thought of those who had first taught me through their lives in Korea. Through her message, and through the conversations at our small-group table afterward, I also came to see the shared calling that continues to kindle the hearts of diaconal ministers and of students preparing for diaconal ministry. It is a call to live out this transformative ministry in our diverse pastoral, cultural, gendered, and socio-political contexts, wherever brokenness and inequality persist in human and ecological life, both locally and globally.

Treasuring the conviction and calling I learned from the diaconal ministers at the gathering, I also began to wonder how these precious gifts might ripple outward beyond the gathering itself. I thought of all that diaconal ministry carries: its theological grounding and sense of vocation, its

spirit of justice-love, its bold action, and the joy of deep connection found in mutual care and empowerment. How might these gifts travel further, be enriched through dialogue and sharing, and both challenge and be challenged by cultural and racial communities in all their difference and diversity? And how might diaconal ministry's moral courage to resist, and its life-giving work, be shared, reimagined, and embodied through mutual gift-sharing with peoples and communities who may not yet recognize diaconal ministry?

These questions came home with me, along with the duck keychain and a handful of duck stickers. One of those stickers now sits on my coffee mug. Whenever I see that little duck, I remember that I came home as a companion and co-minister in this shared calling and journey. I am an ordained minister, a racialized Korean immigrant woman, and someone currently serving in the Office of Vocation. From this place, I now ask myself how I can live out diaconal ministry right where I am. I ask how, in my own life and work, its gifts might be shared in ways that are risk-taking, creative, imaginative, and effective, as we dream, act, and move forward together in hope-filled, intercultural, interdependent ministry.

Once again, my heartfelt thanks to the DUCC National Gathering for widening my vision in all these ways.