

Why the Ministry of Deacon for me?

Rev Jeanne Beale (Deacon)



TRIGGER WARNING: This reflection discusses death, surviving abuse and sexuality. It seeks to tell the journey of a call to ministry and how life can get in the way. If you are distressed by these topics, please seek help from: Lifeline 13 11 14.

Well, quite frankly, it couldn't have been anything else; if the Ministry of Deacon was not available, I would not have considered Ministry of the Word. I think partly because I could never envisage myself leading worship, but mainly because it spoke to me about the desire to spread the Good News beyond the gathered Church; to go where Jesus would have gone - to the outcast, the lost, the rejected and broken. I suspect I was driven in this direction because that is where God found me; not in a church building, but on this world's rubbish dump.

When I was 14 and again when I was 17, I had a strong sense that God was saying "there is something I want you to do for me" to which I had replied "seriously God, you don't want me" (surviving childhood abuse had left me with a very poor self-image). Between my ages of 18 and 23, I watched my mother battle with cancer and my sexual identity had been awakened. I had left the church for fear of judgement; I was not listening to God, and it was obvious that God was not listening to me. When my mother died, I was so angry with God, I left any faith I had at her deathbed. However, the following year, when my maternal grandmother died, I had a faith conversion experience that turned my life around. Finally I was ready to listen to God. Now it was God's turn for the silent treatment, but I kept asking "What is it you want me to do?"

The renewal of the Diaconate in the Uniting Church was perfectly timed for my restlessness in trying to respond to God's call on my life. Early in 1991, after an evening Bible study group, my minister asked me if I had ever thought about going into ministry. I laughed in her face "me, a preacher" and I laughed some more, no way could I ever see myself in a pulpit. Lead a support group, coach a cricket team, organise small groups, be on a planning team for any number of community activities "yes", but get up and preach, nah ahh, not me. Then she said, well what about the new "Ministry of Deacon"? And she pulled out a brochure for the proposed Ministry of Deacon and began to talk about a community based ministry that reached beyond the fringes of the church, a ministry that focused on care and compassion for the oppressed and was driven to seek social justice for all.

It was at this point I heard a voice from within shouting "that's it!" - 5 years I had been asking God "what do you want me to do?" The Ministry of Deacon, "God are you sure?" I then heard these words "I want you to pick up my broken children and carry them home".

Feeling called to this new Ministry of Deacon, but at the same time feeling inadequate, I went through the process of applying to candidate, the whole time expecting someone to say: "seriously, who do you think you are?", as they showed me the door. The three day selection conference not only confirmed my call to ministry, it also provided me with the ability to pick up the broken child inside me and find her a home in the loving arms of God. I was one of six Deacon candidates accepted to commence training in Melbourne in 1992.

The National Assembly passed the decision to renew the Diaconate in July, 1991. Many serving Deaconesses transferred across to the new Ministry of Deacon. A conference for "The Renewal of the Diaconate" was held in Melbourne in 1992; Deaconesses, Deacons and Deacon candidates from all over Australia gathered, it was an amazing celebration for the Diaconate.

If you are feeling called to this amazing ministry, I would love to hear about it and journey with you as you discern God's call on your life. Deacon Brochure https://i.vimeocdn.com/portrait/48281664_640x640?subrect=9%2C135%2C879%2C1005&r=cover

UCA celebrates 30 years - Ministry of Deacon

Deaconess Margaret's Memories

Deaconess Margaret Allan (nee Eddy): I had completed matric and was working. My minister in Bendigo Rev John Aitken had spoke from the pulpit about the ministry of Deaconess—that planted the seed. He taught me biblical Greek too. I was walking down the street one day when I saw Una Ritchie, who I knew from school, in her grey Methodist Deaconess uniform. (Methodist Deaconesses did a two year home missionaries course for their studies.) That is when Margaret's call began to take shape within the presbyterian tradition.

To study I had to move to Melbourne. I lived at Rolland House, Carlton. Catherine Ritchie was my principal. We rode our bikes each day to Ormond College (Presbyterian Theological College). We did a three year theology course with the male candidates for the ministry. I studied under Rev Dr. Davis McCaughey and in my final year I won a theology prize. At that time the Principal was Rev Dr. MacLean. The Head of College was Rev Dr. Newton John, and his daughter Olivia used to play in the grounds. We studied in the morning with the professors, doing the same theological studies as the men. In the afternoon we had practical classes in how to teach Religious Instruction in schools and how to run clubs and meetings. The men were jealous of the practical skills we learnt.

On the weekend a group would walk from Rowland house down to attend worship at Scots Church in Collins Street, Melbourne. The minister was Rev. Chritton Barr. I led the Presbyterian Fellowship Association (PFA) at Scots as part of my placement. It was a great learning for me. Many university students attended the PFA at Scots and they would ask a whole range of meaningful questions which helped equip me for ministry.

As a student each year we would do another placement. One placement was at Abbotsford Presbyterian where I was mentored by Deaconess Heardman, a very experienced church leader. She taught me practical things about games to play and the importance of 'telling children a story' rather than just reading chapters from a book.



I was 'set apart', commissioned for the ministry of deaconess in March 1954 in my first ministry placement at Dandenong Presbyterian Church. (Pictured) In my new navy uniform with white collar that was starched and held together by a Deaconess Badge (Cross of St. Stephen) . Here I taught religious Instruction in primary, secondary and TAFE schools. One Year 12 class at Dandenong Hill School I had Coralie Ling as my student. In my PFA group was Mima Mitchell, who later became a Deaconess too.

I attended an ecumenical conference in Auckland, New Zealand with other PFA members. We lived in community and went to the conference with Rev. Dr, George McCloud who came from Scotland and was an eminent theologian. We spent a week on the southern Island and we broke into two groups: Margaret was the youth leader of one, and Mr. Norman Allan from the Mallee PFA was the leader of the other group. Who later became her husband.

At Sept 2019 Synod at Box Hill Margaret was presented with her 65 years of ministry certificate. And last weekend Margaret celebrated her 90th Birthday. Her advice to Deacons today is that Catherine Ritchie's Book "Not to be Ministered Unto: The story of Presbyterian Deaconesses trained in Melbourne." is a must read!

(This was an oral record to her daughter Rev. Linley Liersch.)

Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

My journey within the last 30 years of the Deaconate feels very new and very short. But in my year-and-a-bit as an ordained Deacon, the importance of connection has been ever present, especially as we continue to negotiate being Church in the time of Covid-19.

My role at Sunshine is a PPPW placement existing alongside both the Sunshine congregation and Uniting services. At the end of last year, Sunshine's minister, the Rev Ray Gormann, accepted an exciting call to another ministry placement - and I've been experiencing that good 'ole adage: "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone!" And not just because I miss Ray's company and support, but it has emphasised how important it is for Deacons to be connected to a prayerful community.

When I was preparing for ordination, a fellow minister gave me this advice: "Remember to stop and ask: "who's praying for me?"".

Deacons are not "sent out into the world" on their own, they are sent along-side, and with the blessing of, the Church. And together we are not only called to connect with the world, but we allow the world to connect with us: to change us, renew us and strengthen us.



JUSTACT is under JIM

New Public Square Project

(Click Picture for Link)

We're looking for Uniting Church volunteers willing to host a series of 3 consecutive conversations at your Congregation (between April and September). Training provided.



NEW PUBLIC SQUARES PROJECT: REMAKING PUBLIC GOOD

*Combined Pentecost
Worship Service*

All the Uniting Churches across the Greater Geelong area are joining together in a celebration service for Pentecost.

May 23rd, 2021

3 pm



If you like to sing, you are invited to join the combined choir for this event. You will need to register through this trybooking link <https://www.trybooking.com/BPVSP> or phone Rev Amanda Nicholas on 0413 617 469



May 5 Exploring Worship 1 (Mel Perkins)
What is worship? (Craig Mitchell)

May 12 Exploring Worship 2 (Mel Perkins)
Worship as Story (Trevor Bassett)

Click for Picture for Link

Education Events



28th April 1 pm	Ethical Ministry Refresher (Code of Ethics) @ Hopper Crossing (In-person & Zoom)	
5th, 12th & 19th May 7—9 pm	Worship & Preaching On-line Training 2021 By Mel Perkins eLM Lay Leadership Development	
8th May	Presbytery in Council @ Hopper Crossing UCA	
8th May 1:30 pm	Ethical Ministry Refresher (Code of Ethics) @ Hopper Crossing (In-person only)	
May 12th & 19th 9:30 am—12:30 pm.	Mental Health First Aid Certificate	
27th May 1:30	Messy Discipleship Book Club	
1st June	Ethical Ministry Refresher (Code of Ethics)	
1st—3rd June	PreachFest (On-line Hubs: Stawell, Warrnambool; Ballarat; Horsham; Blackwood; East Geelong; City t.b.a.)	

Mental Health First Aid Training

12th & 19th May
9:30am - 12:30pm



Blended Online MHFA Community Course

Learn how to provide mental health first aid to friends, family members, co-workers and other adults in your community.

- **Mental health problems covered:** Depression and anxiety, Psychosis, Substance use problems
- **Course Component 1**
A self-paced eLearning component (talks 5-7 hours to complete)
- **Course Component 2**
An instructor-led component using video conferencing (2 sessions of 2.5 hours each) 12/5 & 19/5.
- Subsidised places available \$150 per person
- Contact Linley Liersch—
Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au