

## The Word Becomes Flesh

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Mrs. Gahr, my teacher for several years in the one-roomed country school I attended, always said a word is really yours when you have used it correctly in a sentence three times. There is a sense in which we can say the “living Word” becomes “ours” when we use it. Using the living word, however, is not just putting nouns and verbs and other parts of speech together. Using the living word correctly is not even just rightly dividing law and gospel. Using the living word must also involve actions and deeds. One of the ways the church uses the word correctly is what we have often called *diakonia*. Through its service within the community of faith and for the world, the church uses the word, making it flesh in the lives of people. And as we use the word that way, we may well find that the word becomes not only flesh but also really *ours*.

All over the world renewed attention is being given to the church's diaconal task. (Perhaps an aside is in order regarding the pronunciation of the “diaconal.” I learned to say it “di-a-con-al,” but the more common pronunciation these days seems to be “di-ac-on-al.” You may hear me saying it both ways, but the latter pronunciation always makes me want to wear the sweatshirt I got a few years ago at a meeting of the diaconal ministers of the United Church of Canada that reads across “That's diaconal, not diagonal.” Maybe that's the real reason we diaconal folks wear our stoles the way we do.)

All over the world Christians are giving renewed attention to diaconal ministry. That current interest in *diakonia* comes, I believe, from something we know deep inside: that the word of love and the works of love cannot be separated. The action must be rooted in the word or it becomes empty, a tiresome activity coming from our edges and not from the core of our being. And the word needs to be expressed in action so that it can become really ours and so that it will be believable to others. The word and the deed are really one thing. To give attention to *diakonia* is to care about how the gospel we proclaim becomes flesh in our lives.

### *Images of diakonia*

There are many ways we might explore that together. This morning, I invite you to probe with me five images of *diakonia* that grow out of the traditional diaconal roles in the liturgy. As I talk, I invite you to do some focused daydreaming (which, by the way, I think preachers should encourage more). I invite you to go with the images and pictures I suggest—to use your creativity, to ruminate on what you already know, and to recall people you know. As we look at these images in turn, you may

see a deacon or deaconess or diaconal minister, but more likely you will envision someone else you know where you live or work or worship—someone who embodies the word. You might even see yourself in the picture. If you picture someone in your mind's eye, someone in whom the word becomes flesh in their *diakonia*, I invite you to make a note of it, to thank God for them, and perhaps when you go back home to let them know what you have seen and celebrated this morning. So sit back, see the pictures, and let your mind wander.

### *Servant*

It is, of course, Jesus who came among us as one who serves, who provides us with the most vivid picture of *diakonia* as servanthood. Jesus, the one called Lord and Master, takes towel and basin and stoops to wash the disciples' feet. But it is not just that foot-washing picture of Jesus that enfleashes servanthood. Perhaps even more helpful are the gospel stories of Jesus' life and ministry, showing compassion to those in need, embracing the outcasts and those on the fringes, ministering to the lost, the least, and the little ones. Encountering the servant Christ, the living word, compels the church to Christlike servanthood.

From earliest times deacons and deaconesses were the focus of the church's care for its most vulnerable member—the widows and orphans, the imprisoned, the poor. They visited those in need and carried their concerns back to the bishop and the congregation gathered. They collected and dispensed alms.<sup>1</sup> You may know the story from the third century, perhaps legendary, of Deacon Lawrence of Rome, who took care of the offerings for the poor. Lawrence was arrested with the bishop and the other deacons, but he was not immediately martyred as they were; rather, he was given a stay of execution and instructed to produce the church's treasury. Lawrence is said to have gathered the poor, the lame, and the blind who had been in his care. He presented them to his persecutors. "These," he said, "are the treasures of the church."

Some think that the etymology of the Greek word *diakonia* comes from *dia*, or "through" and *konis*, or "dust".<sup>2</sup> Whether or not that's a fact, the truth is that those who do *diakonia* go through the dust to where the lowly are whom God would raise up. Those who do *diakonia* are those who work close to the ground, among the grassroots, to be servant and advocate. Liturgically, the deacon/deaconess was the symbol of the servant Christ in the midst of the people. The members of the diaconate were dressed with diagonal stoles to symbolize being girded for service, having whatever would encumber them tied out of the way to make for easy movement and flexibility.

This kind of servanthood is hard work. It's humble service, responding to real personal needs. It takes us often where we would rather not go, to touch parts of humanity that we would rather not see, to feel compassion and kinship even with those who are easiest to ignore and forget.

When I think of such servanthood, I picture a number of deaconesses from the community of which I am a part. I think, for example, of Deaconess Linda Schaefer, who has worked for 26 years at Lincoln State Hospital and Development Center in central Illinois. The residents whom she serves have multiple disabilities, both physical and mental. Many of them can barely communicate, if at all. Linda sees worth and beauty in each person. She is willing to take on the most difficult residents, even when everyone else has given up on them. She embodies the love of God even, and perhaps especially for, those who cannot read, hear, or understand words. She is word become flesh for them.

I think of the diaconal workers I visited in Kingston, Jamaica, who gathered the poorest of the poor dying on the city streets, to provide a hospice where they could be valued and cared for in the last days of their lives. These women spoke and embodied the word of God for these dying people. I think of the Stephen Ministers I know who are prepared to reach out to the sick, the dying, the depressed, the bereaved. I think of countless people—some who have names for me and some who don't—who are prepared to be the arms of the body of Christ for people with AIDS, for crack babies, for street people, for those people who are ever present in our communities, who because of their life situations or their personalities are hardest to love. When you think of such servanthood, who are the people you see who are word become flesh in this way? Who are the servants you know who wash feet literally and figuratively?

#### *Serving at Table*

Most of us who know any Greek learned that the word *diakona* meant to serve at table. Some have suggested that Jesus' words "I have come among you as one who serves" imply that Jesus himself waited table for disciples. Jesus surely cared about the nurturing and feeding of people in body and spirit. Jesus surely understood the meaning of community gathered at table. To do *diakonia* is to follow the example of this table server, this word made flesh. It, too, can involve personal service, giving to people what they need to sustain their lives. This table service can involve not just the care of individuals, but also the service of the one who caters the feast—the one who has a care for the whole, the one who makes sure there is enough food and wine to go around and who helps everyone have a good time.

The members of the diaconate were actively involved in the early church's *agape* meals—gathering the gifts, preparing the table, serving the food. From as early as the second century, we have evidence that they served at the table of the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> They laid the table and served sometimes both the bread and wine and sometimes only the wine. The members of the diaconate carried the gifts, the food, the bread and wine, to those who could not participate in person at the meal. And they gathered the needs of those they served and brought them back as the prayers they bid when the community gathered again.

One does not need to work very hard to begin to picture such table-serving *diakonia*—responding to the hungers in our world today—for bread, for meaning, for spiritual nourishment, for community, for the Bread of Life. In responding to those hungers with the gifts of the people of God, we have opportunity not only to bring “bread” but also to become tangible signs of the word we speak. Again, I see many pictures of such table-serving *diakonia*. Deaconess Darlene Mortimer, over here at Immanuel Lutheran Church, among other things oversees a huge food pantry that serves hundreds of people regularly from the gifts and offerings of congregations and groups from throughout the area. Deaconess Karen Bakewicz serves with the youth of Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Illinois, by going with them into the city to Chicago Uptown Ministry to prepare and serve a meal for the street people who gather there. I think of the people I know who regularly volunteer at soup kitchens; others who offer spiritual guidance formally or informally to those who are searching; others who are banquet bearers or eucharistic ministers extending the holy communion to those who are homebound or isolated; others who deliver meals-on-wheels or take a pot of soup or casserole to a neighbor who has need. Who are the people you know who by their table serving become living, nurturing word for others?

*Storyteller*

Tell me how you talk about God, and I will tell you what your *diakonia* is like.” So wrote someone named Ulrich Bach nearly twenty years ago.<sup>4</sup> (I don’t recognize his name. Maybe you do.) The same thing is stated a little differently by Marcus Borg, a name more familiar to us these days, as he has been quoted in recent weeks in numerous news magazines and papers in articles on the historical Jesus. In his provocative book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, Borg writes that “There is a strong connection between images of Jesus and images of the Christian life. . . . Our image of Jesus affects our perception of the Christian life in two ways: it gives shape to the Christian life; and it can make Christianity credible or incredible.”<sup>5</sup> The church has taken its images of Jesus primarily from the Gospels, from the stories gathered and told and written and read about the crucified and resurrected one. These are the stories that give shape and credibility to the Christian life, to our *diakonia*.

The reading of the Gospel has had a privileged place in the worship of the church, for it has been seen as “a powerful means of encounter with Christ.”<sup>6</sup> From the fourth century, reading the gospel was seen as a diaconal task. Sometimes the deacon also preached, and almost always the reading of the gospel was associated with the diaconal role of teacher. The members of the diaconate were entrusted with preparing the candidates for baptism, an education/formation process that was linked to those wonderful gospel stories that are in the lectionary for the Sundays in Lent. And the deaconesses and deacons provided ongoing instruction and nurture for

he newly baptized, to help them give expression to their discipleship and hope to their Christian life. When the member of the diaconate read the gospel, it was a reminder, a symbol, of that close connection between what we say we believe and how we act.

In the gospels we have stories about Jesus. We also have stories that Jesus told. There we meet Jesus the storyteller, who gives us an example to follow and is the one to whom our diaconal storytelling points. Diaconal storytelling is more than adding a story for comic relief or using one to illustrate a point. Rather, diaconal storytelling seeks to touch the hearer more deeply, to give space in the story for the hearers to find themselves, to unleash imagination and memory, to open the possibility for healing, for challenge, for transformation. Such storytelling is powerful. Reading the gospel is one such opportunity for storytelling. And when it works, the hearers become the tellers, and the gospel stories become intertwined with their own stories.

Part of the diaconal task of storytelling is to help the biblical stories come alive in the hearts of people. It is also to help people tell their own stories of the gospel enfolded in the lives of the people of God—to bring those stories back to the community for witness, celebration, instruction, and prayer. Perhaps you have begun to recall storytellers you know and stories that have moved you—stories you heard or read that have left you never quite the same again.

I know diaconal storytellers. There is the Presbyterian deaconess I know from Belfast, Ireland, who uses bible stories, drama, and street theater to help people who have lived so long in the midst of hatred and fear and violence to tell their stories, to listen to each other, to learn of God, and to begin to bring healing, especially among the youth. One of my favorites is Deaconess Karen Melang from Lincoln, Nebraska, who uses her gifts often in writing (for example, in *Lutheran Women Today*) and speaking to groups. While her children were growing up, she phones me with stories about them—some of them funny and most of them with deep truths. I tell this story as she told it to our deaconess community a few years ago, a story that she heard from Elaine Hansen, who was an American missionary in Cameroon, where Karen was on a woman-to-woman exchange. Elaine taught in a school that trained men as catechists for service in the small, isolated congregations that have no pastors.

Here's the story as Elaine and Karen reported it: This year at the Bible School, the wives of the students asked me to teach them the Bible. These women have come with their husbands and families from the bush. They have very little or no formal education. To come to the Bible School, they had to leave their fields and livestock behind. And they often have a real struggle to earn a living while there. They are quite poor and often feel discouraged about the situation. They feel sorry for themselves and want everyone to help them out. I wanted to help them lift their eyes from their own problems and see that God calls *all* of us to share with those less for-

tunate, even if we feel that we are in that category. So it was in this group of 20 women that we read together from Luke 14:12-14: "Then Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, brothers, sisters or relatives, or your rich neighbors. If you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'"

"Have you ever done this?" I asked.

"No," they replied.

"Neither have I," I said. "Do you want to do it together?"

They looked at me and at one another and then, one by one, said, "Yeah. OK. We'd like to try it." So we began to plan the meal—lots of cassava, a beef and ginger sauce, a chicken and tomato sauce, a leaf and peanut butter sauce, rice, sweet potatoes, pop to drink, cake and coffee for dessert. . . a real banquet! I had said at the beginning that I would buy the meat and that I would make the cake. Somewhere in the discussion one of the women raised her hand and said, "Ah, who is going to pay for the rest of this food? Are you?"

"No," I answered, "I said I would pay for the *meat*—the rest is up to you." The light dawned.

"You mean we have to pay for this with our own money?"

"Well, yes. We agreed to do this together, didn't we? It costs us something to help others and do as Jesus tells us here in Luke."

Silence. Re-thinking. Some women voiced their reservations. It would cost each one close to a dollar. Some women who had jobs said, "Ah, come on, can't we do this?" But the ones without jobs said, "We just don't have that kind of money. We can't do it." Their spirits fizzled like a flattening tire. "Let's pray about it for two weeks, then we'll talk about it again." So we prayed. I took a look at the menu and cut out the leaf sauce, the pop and the sweet potatoes. And I prayed that God would open their hearts. When we got together again two weeks later, I told them about the proposed menu changes and together we added up the costs. This time it came out to \$.55 per person. I asked again, "Do you think we can do it?" I looked into their faces, hoping for a positive response.

"Yes, I can; Yes, I want to; Yes, I will" came the answers from all over the room. Joyfully we divided up all the tasks and made our guest list. The best time for us to do it was the following Sunday, February 23. "We can't get together \$.55 by Sunday," they told me. "Could you pay for everything now and we'll pay you back later?" Now it was my turn to step out in faith. Would they really pay me back? "Oooo-kay," I faltered. "I guess I'll have to trust you." They giggled and class was dismissed.

We were all busy Saturday and Sunday preparing for our banquet. Sunday afternoon I rented a car and went out to pick up the lame and others too weak to walk. This was an experience in itself. Some of these peo-

He had never ridden in a car before and didn't know how to get in. People stood around and ridiculed them and stared at me. In fact, all along the way, we made quite a spectacle on this sunny Sunday afternoon.

We held the banquet in our classroom at the Bible School. The women had cleaned it and put a nice tablecloth on the table. I brought over four beautiful roses from my garden. All the guests were seated, 12 in all. Then we heard singing from a distance as the women came singing, dancing in procession, carrying the food on their heads. They were all dressed up in their finest. They sang a song and then I asked the class president's wife to pray. "Dear Lord, thank you for this day. You said in your word that we should help the poor and the blind and the lame, so that is why we are doing this today. Bless them all, dear Lord, and bless us. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Then the ladies served the meal. Really they had done a good job in the choice of their guests. I have never seen people in such need. One older woman was so thin and weak that she couldn't sit up at the table the whole while. It was very moving, and I had to blink back tears several times. Our guests ate and ate and ate. When they could eat no more, the women gave them plastic bags to put the leftovers in to take home. They thanked us all profusely, and then I returned the guests to their homes, while the women ate what remained.

It had been a lovely banquet and a special day, one we will never forget. The women were so touched and so blessed that they thanked me over and over for giving them the idea. "We heard God's word and we did it," one woman said. And you know what? Every person paid me her \$.55 just as she promised. The poor feeding the poor. And there were leftovers! Surely it was a foretaste of the feast to come.

#### *Doorkeeper/Go-Between*

When the early church was under persecution, it was the deaconesses and deacons who stood at the door when the community gathered. They checked the credentials of those who wanted to come in. They welcomed the worshippers and arranged for hospitable and orderly space for the community to gather. We might say that they were the first greeters and ushers. Liturgically the members of the diaconate announced the movement of the liturgy. They received the offerings from other people. They served a reconciling role by giving attention to lawsuits or quarrels in the community and by inviting people to exchange the kiss of peace.<sup>7</sup> They dismissed the congregation after the benediction at the end of the liturgy. They assisted at (and sometimes performed) baptism, the rite of initiation into the community.

They stood, as it were, at the boundaries between the church and the world. They were positioned at the edges, and they moved across those boundaries as go-between, as agent, as emissary—from bishop to the community, from God to creation, from the church to the world. They carried

messages, ran errands, acted on behalf of the one who sent them. They were responsive and mobile and accessible—leading the church more and more into *diakonia* in the world and inviting the world with its longing and pain ever more into the church. Here, too, Jesus has shown us the way—Jesus who was on the boundary between heaven and earth, between God and humanity—Jesus who moved among the people so that they could cry out to him or reach out to touch him—Jesus who ushered the reign of God into the fallen creation—Jesus who winsomely welcomed all kinds of people into the circle of God's love.

We might call such *diakonia* today ministries of outreach and hospitality and interpretation and reconciliation, bringing distant parties together, arranging welcome spaces, making the word come alive in languages that people can understand, putting flesh on it. When I think of such *diakonia*, many pictures come to my mind. There are the obvious ones, like Deaconess Sheryl Olsen in New Hope, Minnesota. She has coordinated her congregation's ministries of outreach and new member assimilation. I think of Deacon Tom Dorris, who was tragically killed in an accident in Switzerland nearly two years ago. Tom was a journalist who was also an interpreter of *diakonia* throughout the church worldwide. I think, too, of the diaconal ministers I visited in Porto Alegre, Brazil, who operated a home for unwed mothers. Most of the mothers were virtually children themselves. When they became pregnant, they were kicked out of school and out of their families. They would have little hope for much future but for these diaconal workers, who opened doors for them by giving them a safe home, providing job training, teaching them parenting skills, valuing them, by becoming word made flesh for them.

I think of congregations like Ebenezer, on the north side of Chicago, where I worshiped on Easter this year. As a Reconciled in Christ congregation, the people of Ebenezer reach across the boundaries others would build by welcoming gay and lesbian Christians into their community. I think of all the people of God who put themselves in awkward or even dangerous places to open doors and reach out. Who are the people you know who are on the boundaries of the church, enfleshing the word with their doorkeeping? Who are the go-betweens, the mediators in your congregation? Who are the ones you know who reach across boundaries others would build? Who are the ones who enflesh the reconciling gospel in your congregation and community?

#### *The Keeper of the Light*

When night fell, it was the task of the servant to light the household lamps. It seems natural that a member of the diaconate should have the task then of blessing and lighting the pascal candle at the Easter vigil. That diaconal role goes back to the third or fourth century.<sup>8</sup> A member of the diaconate carried the candle, the light into the darkness in which the people waited, proclaiming, "Christ our light," and then singing the *Exultet*,



invited the whole creation to rejoice at Christ's resurrection. Traditionally it was the members of the diaconate who carried the candle and presided at the evening "Service of Lights" or *Lucernarium*. It is a diaconal role to take the flame from the pascal candle to light the baptismal candle to be given to the newly baptized. The movement is from the light of the risen Christ to "Let your light shine. . ." This kind of *diakonia* is about having the light, bearing the light, being the light, and shedding light. This kind of *diakonia* is about hope. It is about knowing that what we see is not what we get. The night does not have the last word. The light shines in the darkness and is not overcome by it. This kind of *diakonia* is about having vision. It is prophetic. It keeps the vision alive. It calls God's people again and again to return to the life of that vision. It lives the vision by putting the prophetic word into action, putting flesh on it. Who are the keepers of the light you know?

I think again of deaconesses, for example, Norma Cook Everist, professor at Wartburg Seminary. The vision seems always so fresh when she describes the life of the community of the risen Christ—where power is shared, where people's life experience is valued, where men and women are partners, where there is always the possibility of a new and creative solution to a problem. This is a vision she tries to live and to articulate for her students and colleagues at Wartburg and for the church wherever she speaks and writes. She embodies a hopeful word.

I think of the European deaconess communities, who believed that the terrible national divisions after World War II must be overcome in the church. They could not let the night of war prevail. A meeting was convened in a deaconess motherhouse in Riehen, Switzerland—a place I visited several years ago. *DIAKONIA*, the World Federation of Diaconal Associations, resulted. We will celebrate our 50th anniversary at our world assembly in July in the eastern part of Germany. Thousands of diaconal workers from all over the world have rallied around the light these deaconess communities raised up in the darkness. They were a word of hope become flesh, and they have helped many others be that, too.

I picture Karl Lutze and Walt Reiner, recipients of this year's Martin Luther King Award from Valparaiso University. They are people known to many of you. They have borne a light and spoken the prophetic word and gotten their hands dirty doing *diakonia*, because they believe that the one whose light shines in them calls us all to a new day beyond the divisions of race and economic status. The light they bear is word made flesh.

I think of a young member of the congregation where I belong, who at a women's retreat talked about how important tending the creation was to her and her family. She talked about the choices they had made, father and mother and children together, not to watch any television for six months, or to walk rather than drive whenever possible, to eat lower on the food chain, to do with less so that others can have more. Her witness in word and action, her word made flesh lights the way home, back to the

role of steward and caretaker intended for humankind from the creation. Who are the ones you know who are prophets, bearers of hope, the ones who enflesh the word by being keepers of the light?

I hope you have had some beautiful pictures this morning. If it seems to you that I have blurred the distinction between the ministry of the diaconate and the “deaconhood” of all believers,<sup>9</sup> that has been somewhat intentional. It is both the genius of the diaconate and the source of frustration for many that there is no unique ministry for the diaconate. Anything that we do can be done by others in the church. “Who needs the diaconate, then?” many would ask. “It just confuses things.” Some think it takes away from the ministry of the laity. Others fear that a full diaconate will diminish the role of those ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament.

The diaconate is not about taking ministry away from anyone. Rather it is about multiplying the *diakonia* of the whole church. There surely is enough need to go around. The diaconate, if effective, can be the focus of that *diakonia* which belongs to us all. That focusing can happen in at least three ways. The diaconate is sometimes a doer of *diakonia* as agent and emissary of the church. This is sometimes the most effective way for the church to be diaconal in places and in ways that the church might not otherwise have a presence. Secondly, the diaconate is an enabler of *diakonia*, calling forth the gifts of the baptized for *diakonia*, equipping and nurturing the whole people of God for their diaconal task. And finally, the diaconate is a sign of what the whole church is called to be and to do—foot washer, table server, storyteller, doorkeeper, and light tender. What if every congregation had such a diaconal minister in its midst? What if that diaconal doing, equipping, and signing were expressed liturgically every time the community gathered? What difference might that make in the life of a congregation?

In Finland, I understood that’s the law: every congregation must have a deacon, male or female. But that is not the case in most of our congregations. It becomes a special challenge to express liturgically, to symbolize when we gather that the word of love and the works of love cannot be separated. I know we believe that, but how do we show it? How can we lift up the church’s diaconal calling whether or not we have a member of the diaconate there? How can we remind and encourage the whole people of God for *diakonia*? How can we express liturgically the word made flesh in the *diakonia* of the people of God? Learning to do this may be more important than we think, for it may well be that word that does not take on flesh in the lives of the people of God, word without *diakonia*, will not be credible. And if we don’t learn to use it correctly, this living word will not be really ours.

One final reflection. As I came to the end of my presentation, I noticed that the images I had used involved water, bread, word, door, light. All of them are images that in the Gospel of John take on flesh in Jesus Christ. All of them are images of the Christian’s life in the resurrected Christ. And

without my intention, the word found its way into the middle as the central image, taking on flesh in all other images as well. The word and the water create, cleanse, and refresh. The word and the bread nourish and strengthen. The word and the door open out and invite in. The word and the light transform the darkness and provide a beacon to welcome the traveler home. Jesus said I am the water, I am the bread, I am the door, I am the light, I am the word. As I am, so you are to be also—word made flesh. May it be so.

notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ormond Plater. *Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons*. Cowley, 1991:31.
- <sup>2</sup> Jaap Van Klinken. *Diakonia—Mutual Helping with Justice and Compassion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989:22.
- <sup>3</sup> Plater, 38.
- <sup>4</sup> In "Room for all of us to be Free." in *Partners in Life: The Handicapped and the Church*, Geiko Mueller-Fahrenholz. ed. Geneva, 1979:30, quoted by Jaap Van Klinken, 16.
- <sup>5</sup> 1, 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Antonia Lynn. "Finding Images." *The Deacon's Ministry*. ed. Christine Hall, Gracewing, 1992:111.
- <sup>7</sup> Plater, 38 and Jeannine E. Olsen. *One Ministry Many Roles: Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries*. Concordia Publishing House, 1992:33. See also John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- <sup>8</sup> James M. Barnett. *The Diaconate—A Full and Equal Order*. New York: Seabury, 1981:6-78.
- <sup>9</sup> Rosemary Skinner Keller, Gerald F. Moede, and Mary Elizabeth Moore. *Called to Serve—The United Methodist Diaconate*. Publication of the Division of Diaconal Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, 1987:18.