

# THE COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRY

## the people who recommend official policy about diaconal ministry

This Committee on Diaconal Ministry within the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education has the vital task of promoting awareness within the church of the unique biblical roots, history and contemporary expression of diaconal ministry. In addition, the Committee makes recommendations about all policy matters which relate to diaconal ministry, engages in advocacy when necessary, and monitors the educational preparation programmes provided for this unique expression of ministry. Within its membership, the Committee includes diaconal ministers, a lay person, a diaconal ministry student, an ordained person, and the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education staff person, Virginia Coleman.

Over the period of the last three years the Committee has been involved in four specific projects. First was the participation, in consultation with the Committee on Theological Education for Ministry, in the preparation of a report for the Division entitled, *Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry*. This document includes a history of diaconal ministry, an explanation of its biblical roots, a discussion of the essential elements of both diaconal ministry and educational preparation, and a proposal for expanding access to preparation to other parts of the country.

The second project, an ongoing one, involves the preparation and distribution of educational materials which will help all parts of the church to understand diaconal ministry and to affirm its importance as part of the order of ministry. To date, four specific actions have been taken. *The Mix of Ministry*, a new brochure on diaconal ministry has been prepared and distributed across the church. Information and workshop design materials have been produced for use by Conference and Presbytery committees who wish to know more about diaconal ministry. All Presbyteries have been asked to focus on diaconal ministry during one of their 1987 meetings.

Finally, an information newsletter has been established and is distributed to all diaconal ministers across the country.

The third project of the Committee involves the monitoring of the educational preparation of two individuals who have been chosen as "special cases" and are preparing for ministry in places other than the recognized centres for diaconal training, The Centre for Christian Studies and Emmanuel College. This experimental project is being carried out in consultation with both the Committee on Theological Education for Ministry and The Centre for Christian Studies.

The last focus of the Committee during the past three years has involved monitoring all of the policies and decisions made in the Courts of the Church, including General Council, Conference and National Committees, to make sure that all decisions made take into account the work and needs of diaconal ministers. This has involved studying the Manual and suggesting changes which will ensure that diaconal ministry is recognized and treated as part of the order of ministry of the church.

The Committee believes that this is an exciting and crucial time for diaconal ministry in the church and that much work and visioning still needs to be done. The Committee's goals for the future include continued participation in and discussion of the implementation of the report, *Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry*, the preparation of an extensive account of diaconal ministry, focusing particularly on its biblical roots and early Christian practice, and the collation of all diaconal ministry records, historical materials, and policy reports and discussions. The Committee is also beginning to look seriously at the possibility of sponsoring a Continuing Education event for diaconal ministers.