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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Lutheran Diaconal Association Expands Opportunities for Lutherans Called to Christian Service**

Valparaiso, Ind. — The Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA), which prepares Lutherans for a lifelong calling to Christian service as deaconesses and deacons, is expanding opportunities for people to pursue that calling. The organization has introduced a new program pathway for people with previous education and ministry preparation and received recognition allowing the LDA to endorse its deaconesses and deacons interested in pursuing board certification as professional chaplains.

The organizations redesigned formation program now includes two pathways. The Traditional Pathway continues to be available for anyone preparing to become an LDA deaconess or deacon. The new Rostered Minister Pathway provides a more direct route for Lutheran rostered Ministers of Word and Service and others who have already completed recognized preparation for diaconal ministry. Rather than repeating education and ministry preparation they have already completed, students in the Rostered Minister Pathway focus on becoming part of the LDA community and integrating their previous preparation with the LDA's approach to diaconal service.

Students enrolled in the Traditional Pathway are not required to change careers or take a position within the Church. They prepare to serve as a bridge between the Church and the community, living out their calling through their current work, congregation, community, volunteer service, or other areas of daily life. Both pathways lead toward consecration as an LDA deaconess or deacon, the LDA's public recognition of a person's lifelong commitment to Christian service, and membership in its lifelong community.

"People come to the LDA with different experiences, education, and ways they feel called to serve," said Deaconess Deb Lennox, Director of Student Experience. "We want to meet them where they are while giving them the spiritual growth, theological learning, hands-on ministry experience, leadership development, and community that are central to a life of diaconal ministry."

New Opportunity for Those Called to Chaplaincy

The LDA has also been recognized by the Board of Chaplaincy Certification Inc. (BCCI®) as an endorsing faith organization. This allows the LDA to provide faith-community endorsement for deaconesses and deacons pursuing board certification as professional chaplains.

Faith-community endorsement is one of several requirements for professional chaplain certification. In the past, LDA deaconesses and deacons pursuing board certification generally had to seek endorsement through another church body or recognized faith organization, which could mean completing a separate

and extensive approval process in addition to their LDA preparation and consecration. Eligible LDA deaconesses and deacons in good standing can now receive that endorsement directly from the LDA.

The recognition benefits both current LDA members and future students who feel called to professional chaplaincy. Candidates must still complete the education, professional experience, and other requirements for board certification.

“For someone who feels called to chaplaincy, this removes a significant hurdle,” said Deacon Matthew Petersen, a board-certified chaplain who helped lead the effort for LDA recognition. “It allows our deaconesses and deacons to pursue board certification through the faith community that has already formed and consecrated them, rather than having to pursue an additional process elsewhere.”

Together, these changes expand the ways the LDA can prepare and support Lutherans for a lifelong calling to Christian service, whether they are beginning their preparation, bringing previous ministry education and experience, or pursuing a calling to professional chaplaincy.

To explore opportunities through the LDA, visit theLDA.org or contact Deaconess Deb Lennox at debra.lennox@valpo.edu or (219) 464-6925.

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***The Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA)** is an independent organization that prepares and supports Lutherans across multiple denominations for a lifelong calling to Christian service as deaconesses and deacons. This calling, known as diaconal ministry, bridges the Church and the community through compassion, justice, leadership, and faith. LDA members may live out their diaconal calling through the work they already do or in settings such as healthcare, education, nonprofits, social ministry, community organizations, chaplaincy, and congregations.*