



## Geraldine Ann Swanson

Ordained in 1997, Geri Swanson is among the very first group to become Deacons after the order was revived in the Diocese of New York by Bishop Richard Grein. She has served as a deacon in Manhattan, but the bulk of her ministry has centered on the churches of Staten Island, her longtime home. Professionally, she was an educator in public and private schools, and was a mentor and trainer of new teachers, and a staff developer. In every place, her diaconal ministry has centered on service to under-represented and marginalized populations, where her profound gifts of leadership, coordination and direction have been transformational. She has organized and served in feeding ministries, an after-school music program, and the Staten Island Hunger Task Force and the Coalition for Housing Equality. It has been said that Geri is “all enthusiasm and energy; a consummate New Yorker; sleeves rolled up, a deacon’s deacon.”

She is an indefatigable supporter and promoter of the diaconate. She has served two terms on the Board of Directors of the Association of Episcopal Deacons, she serves even now on the Board of the Fund for the Diaconate, and on the Association for Episcopal Deacons’ Committee developing uniform Core Capabilities for Deacons. She has created a Mentoring Course for coaching deacons and has thrown herself into the recruitment of aspirants into the diaconal vocation, hosting gatherings of inquirers in her home.

Geri has also made an invaluable contribution to the history of the Episcopal Church by, in her General Theological Seminary Master’s Thesis, documenting the history of the New York School for Deaconesses and the life of Susan Trevor Knapp, an architect of the deaconess movement. Diocesan House on the Cathedral Close, home of the diocesan offices, is the former Saint Faith’s House, which housed the New York School for Deaconesses. This bishop, at least, has long lamented that the deaconess movement, a crucial forerunner to the full ordination of women, is a piece of our history not widely remembered. For her contributions to this work, and for her witness to the fullness of a deacon life, Geri was awarded the General Theological Seminary’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 2018.

In the time after September 11, 2001, but especially after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, Geri poured herself into disaster response work in this diocese. In this diocese Staten Island was hardest hit by Sandy and suffered the greatest loss of life and property. Geri provided needed food and winter clothing, arranged work crews from churches off the island, visited every parish, and helped coordinate the “Heart of the Home” initiative, rebuilding kitchens in damaged houses. In all this, she lives out the vocation of the deacon par excellence. Therefore, in recognition and gratitude for her life and vocation as a deacon, offered to the glory of God, we, on this 13th day of November 2021, in the tenth year of our consecration, do award her

### The Bishop’s Cross

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche  
XVI Bishop of New York