

Women Deacons in Church History

Early Church History

Pliny the Younger to Trajan, c. 110

"Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition."

Origen, Commentary on Romans 10.17, c. 246

"And this passage [Rom 16:1-2] teaches with apostolic authority that women are likewise appointed to the ministry of the Church."

Burial inscription from Jerusalem, c. 300-400

"Here lies the slave and bride of Christ, Sophia, the deacon, the second Phoebe, who fell asleep in peace on March 21st..."

Council of Orange, 441

"Canon 22: Declares that in future married men shall not be ordained deacons, except they will make a vow of chastity."

"Canon 26: Forbids the ordination of deaconesses in future, and directs that those actually ordained shall receive the benediction together with lay persons."

Early Baptist History

John Smyth, Principles and Inferences concerning the Visible Church, 1607

"The Deacons are officers occupied about the works of mercy respecting the body or outward man. Act. 6, 2."

The Deacons are 1. men 2. or weomen deacons or widowes. Act. 6, 2. Rom. 16, 1.

The widowes cheef office is to visite and relieve the widow, fatherless, sick, lame, blind, impotent, weomen with child, and diseased members of the church."

Thomas Helwys, Confession of Faith of the "True English Church", 1610

"Article 13: Officers were of two types, for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church...The latter were called deacons, or if women, widows, and their special care was to fill and wisely administer the treasury of the church."

Recent Baptist History

Neither the "Baptist Faith and Message 1963" nor the "Baptist Faith and Message 2000" limit the office of deacon to men only.

An excerpt from "<http://www.baptisthistory.org/21stcentury/womendeacons.html>" about women deacons in Baptist churches today:

Women deacons exist in Baptist churches all across the United States. For example, in Missouri they serve or have served in such churches as First Baptist, Jefferson City; Kirkwood Baptist, Kirkwood; Memorial Church, Columbia; Second Baptist, Liberty; University Heights in Springfield; and Webster Groves Church, Webster Groves.

Among states in the South, North Carolina probably has more churches with women deacons than any other state, with Virginia a close second. Dozens and dozens of North Carolina churches use women deacons, and many have made them chairs.