

St. Phoebe Center
Annual Report
2024



St Phoebe Center
FOR THE DEACONESS
orthodoxdeaconess.org



We educate and prayerfully advocate
for the revival of the ordained female diaconate
to help serve the ministerial needs
of the Orthodox Church and the world today.

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Prayer to St. Phoebe

*Most holy Phoebe, who was found to be worthy of the diaconate;
who was Paul's helper and carried his words to the people of Rome;
who is called the lamp of Cenchrea;
we now humbly ask that you intercede for us, and pray to Christ our God for us
as we discern His will for revival of the ordained female diaconate
for the upbuilding of the entire Church today.
Pray that we will be blessed and fruitful in our works this day and always,
to God's glory.*

Amen.

Message from the Chair



Dear mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers in Christ,

The year of 2024 was a tremendous year for the St. Phoebe Center for the Diaconess. I began my letter for our 2023 annual report with essentially the same words, but 2024 exceeded all expectations, so I must say it again!

The most significant event of 2024 was not an initiative of the St. Phoebe Center; it was the ordination in the Alexandrian Patriarchate (the autocephalous, or self-governing, Orthodox Church in Africa) of the first deaconess in the twenty-first century. On May 2, 2024, Angelic Molen was ordained deaconess in Harare, Zimbabwe, by Metropolitan Serafim Kykkotis at her home parish of St. Nektarios. Several days later she was elevated to archdeaconess and now has the full title of Archdeaconess Angelic-Phoebe. Axia!

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this event. After more than 150 years of calls for the revival of the order of deaconess throughout the Orthodox world, we now have a deaconess in our midst, and a precedent has been set for other autocephalous Orthodox Churches to follow. The St. Phoebe Center hopes and prays that soon Archdeaconess Angelic-Phoebe will be one of many ordained deaconesses across the globe.

The St. Phoebe Center itself published a new version of the “Proposed Guidelines for the Revival of the Ordained Female Diaconate in the Orthodox Church Today” in August 2024. The “Proposed Guidelines” were composed over the previous four years with input from all populations of the Orthodox Church: hierarchs, priests, deacons, laywomen, and laymen; elders and youth; scholars and non-scholars. After receiving feedback from all of these groups as well as from online events and our 2023 symposium “Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today,” the Center incorporated feedback and released a new version online. It is the prayer of the Center that the “Proposed Guidelines” spark our God-given creativity as a community and facilitate conversation and action regarding this urgently needed ministry.

The renewal of the ordained order of deaconesses is vital to the future of the Orthodox Church. We can move together with love and hope to see deaconesses once again. The St. Phoebe Center hopes to spark our God-given creativity as a community, through documents like the “Proposed Guidelines” and coverage of the historic ordination of Archdeaconess Phoebe-Angelic. Our ongoing goal for years to come is to facilitate conversation and action regarding this urgently needed ministry.

The St. Phoebe Center offers this Annual Report as a glimpse of the work of our all-volunteer board and many supporters and volunteers. We are grateful for your continued support and prayers. May we be blessed and fruitful in our works this day and always, to God’s glory.

In Christ,
Carrie Frederick Frost, PhD
Chair, St. Phoebe Center for the Diaconess
stphoebecenter@gmail.com

2024: The Year in Review

JANUARY

- Zoom Panel Discussion of Our “Proposed Guidelines”
- Zoom Panel Discussion on Girls’ Participation in the Liturgy, co-sponsored with Axia Women
- Ancient Faith Radio Documentary on Deaconesses

MARCH

- First African Women’s Grant awarded to Women’s Leadership Seminar in Kenya
- New Board Member & Advisory Board Members Join the St. Phoebe Center
- Zoom event “Responding to the Critics”

MAY

- Zoom Panel “Exploring the Need for Diaconal Ministry and the Female Diaconate”
- The Ordination of Deaconess Angelic Molen Harare, Zimbabwe, in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa

JUNE

- 2023 Annual Report released

JULY

- GOA Clergy-Laity Panel “Women in Orthodoxy: Past, Present, and Future Roles”
- Information Session on St. Phoebe Feast Day Service Event

SEPTEMBER

- St. Phoebe’s Feast Day
- Proposed Guidelines – A Discussion of the Latest Collaborative Draft
- 2024 Annual Appeal
- Slavonic & Byzantine arrangements by Dr. Katya Ermolaeva released for the troparion & kontakion to St. Phoebe

OCTOBER

- Donation made to St. Olympia Orthodox Church in Norwood, NY for flood recovery

The St. Phoebe Center strives to support the numerous calls within the Orthodox Church for the restoration of the female diaconate for the past one hundred years, particularly the most authoritative call issued in Rhodes, Greece, in 1988, by an inter-Orthodox consultation attended by bishops and academics of twelve of the autocephalous Churches. The conclusion issued by the consultation states: “The apostolic order of deaconesses should be revived . . . Such a revival would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world in many spheres.”

Board Members

Carrie Frederick Frost, Ph.D.,
CHAIR

Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, Ph.D.,
SECRETARY

Gust Mecera, TREASURER

Ann Marie Mecera, FOUNDER

Kristina Baktis, MPS, LCAT, ATR-BC,
ATCS

Mardi Kring Perry

Teva Regule Ph.D.

Sara Tsugranis

Advisory Board Members

Metropolitan Seraphim of Zimbabwe

Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Ph.D.

Dr. Lori Peterson Branch

Fr. Marc Dunaway

Deacon Salvatore 'Sal' Fazio

Deacon Perry T. Hamalis, Ph.D.

Demetra Jaquet, D.Min

Valerie A. Karras, Th.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Cary J. Limberakis

Very Reverend Professor
John Anthony McGuckin

Paul Meyendorff

Jennifer Nahas

Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou

Fr. Philip Zymaris

Advisory Board Members of Eternal Memory

Metropolitan KALLISTOS of
Diokleia +

Archpriest Very Reverend Father
Daniel Rentel +

Financial Statement for 2024

Balance January 1, 2024 **\$32,991.65**

MONEY IN

Donations to AWG*	\$ 8,156.93	PayPal Gross & Checks from sale of shirts
Merchandise	\$750.62	Tote bags and t-shirts
Purchase discount	\$ 426.15	Redemption of Chase credit card points
Donations	\$ 11,576.42	PayPal & Checks
Fees	\$ 75.00	Bank fee reversal

\$20,985.12

MONEY OUT

Subcontractors	\$ (60.00)	Website updates
AWG* grants	\$ (7,340.00)	See AWG* report
Fees	\$ (100.00)	Bank & Filing
Donations	\$ (2,950.00)	Tithe
Miscellaneous	\$ (668.50)	Gifts and Postage
Subscriptions	\$ (5,272.32)	Operating Applications
PayPal fees	\$ (658.48)	3.57%
Other	\$ (422.02)	Printing postcards & tote bag gifts
Reimbursable	\$ (2,065.34)	Travel, honorarium, stickers, thank you notes
Wages	\$ (2,145.00)	Internship

\$ (21,681.66)

Balance December 31, 2024

\$ 32,295.11

**African Women's Grant*

African Women's Grant Recipients

Honoring the fact that women are richly engaged in African Orthodoxy, the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess initiated the African Women's Grant program to support their efforts to acquire education and skills in order to better serve God. Thanks to the generous supporters of the St. Phoebe Center and this new grant program, we have been able to award a number of grants in 2024.

Zipporah Mwaura for a St. Phoebe Feast Day seminar hosted by the Mothers Union of Kiambu, Kenya on: *The Role of Women in the Orthodox Church*. The seminar was organized to empower women, inspire them, and boost their confidence as



leaders who are taking a vital role in the Orthodox Church in Kenya. Through real-world case studies, lessons presented by the facilitators, eye-opening exercises, and spirited discussion, women learned how to bring out the best in the roles and leadership assigned to them in the Orthodox churches and lead from a position of firmness, fairness, and quiet strength.

Onthatile Thamaga towards studies in Philosophy at Nelson Mandela University. Her particular area of interest is exploring the ethical and metaphysical questions that arise when dealing with social justice, community and social cohesion, and spiritual well-being.



Archdeaconess Deaconess Angelic-Phoebe towards her university education in Geography and Environmental Studies. Her goal is to protect the earth, a sacred gift from God, and learn how to live in harmony with every living thing, plants, and animals. Her education will allow her to help African women take on leadership roles in solutions for ensuring the protection of fragile ecosystems, surviving natural disasters, and organizing natural resources in a sustainable manner to better adapt to the effects of climate change in their communities.

St. Catherine's Women's Group to purchase an industrial grade sewing machine. This will allow the women to acquire training in tailoring so that they can income-producing items in an effort to become self-sufficient.



Zipporah Mwaura and Fr. John Njoro for a

leadership training seminar to help prepare women for their roles in parish life, including how to overcome challenges they face in leadership and how to plan for the parish effectively.

Leah Wambui for projects that allow women to be self-sufficient such as making detergents they can sell and use in the church. In addition, to purchase sanitary items for girls to keep them from missing school at certain times of the month.

Farewell to Kristina Baktis



We would like to say a big thank you and farewell to our board member, Kristina Baktis.

Kristina brought unique insight during her time on the board. Her lifelong experience of serving within her parish, and skills as an art therapist, helped expand St. Phoebe Center's reach. Kristina worked to promote our work - further developing the St. Phoebe Network, designing various

materials, and using the latest technology and marketing practices to spread awareness of our mission. Kristina's contributions to our board are most appreciated and will allow us to continue our work for God's glory. May God grant Kristina many blessed years!

Memory Eternal

With sorrow in our hearts, but sure hope in the Resurrection, we shared the repose of our dear sister in Christ and past Governing Board member, Susan Smoley, on November 12, 2024. We continue to miss her dedication, keen wit, and bright spirit. May her memory be eternal.



The Ordination of Archdeaconess Angelic-Phoebe Molen

On May 2, 2024, Holy Thursday, Angelic Molen of Harare, Zimbabwe, was ordained Deaconess Angelic in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa (the Orthodox Church in the continent of Africa) by His Eminence Metropolitan Serafim of Zimbabwe (Kykotis) in St. Nektarios Mission Parish at WaterFall. She was elevated to Archdeaconess shortly after her ordination.



This historic event would not have been possible without the approval and support of the Alexandrian Synod and His Beatitude Theodorus. The ordination of Deaconess Angelic, using the Byzantine rite, was the culmination of efforts around the world to renew the ancient order of deaconesses in the Orthodox Church, and specifically for the local needs of parishes in Africa.

Deaconess Angelic is a respected member of the Orthodox community of St. Nektarios Mission Parish. For years, she has worked to engage the Orthodox youth of Zimbabwe and build a foundation of pastoral care within her community. She has organized church school, mothers' groups, and youth meetings.

For the first thousand years of Christianity, the female diaconate flourished, with her duties based on the particular needs of the communities, including assisting with female baptisms, taking the Eucharist to the homebound and ill, education, administrative work, and other ministries primarily focused on women. Since 1855, numerous calls have been made to revive the female diaconate for the upbuilding of the Church.

The ordination of Deaconess Angelic in Zimbabwe was the fulfillment of the unanimous decision of the Holy Patriarchal Synod Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in 2016 to follow the Apostolic Tradition of the Orthodox Church to renew the ancient institution of deaconess for pastoral reasons.



The decision of the Synod was in part based on the Rhodes Consultation as well as the 2016 Holy and Great Council's affirmation of the ability of the local Church to minister to local pastoral needs. The Alexandrian Patriarchate in Africa felt the need to revive this order to serve the daily pastoral needs of Orthodox Christians in Africa.

Thus, the ordination of Deaconess Angelic for ministering to the unique needs of the Orthodox Churches in Africa marks a significant event in the modern world.



2024 in Pictures



Dominika Xenia Theosebia Tatiana
 Apollonia Platonida Lydia
 Olympias Priscilla Nonna
 Radegunde Justina Gorgonia Irene
 Laencia Elizabeth Romana
 Poplia Tabitha Tryphaena Dionysia
 Susanna Melania Junia Paraskeva
Phoebe

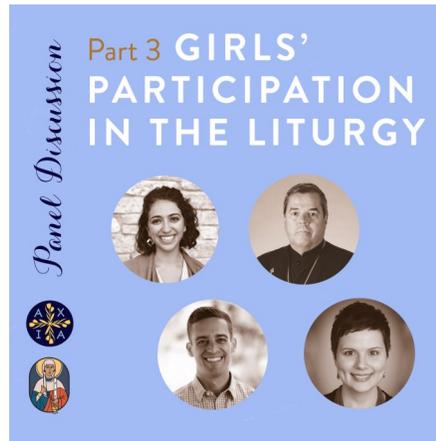
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Celebrating the female diaconate during Women's History Month in March with the sale of this tote bag listing the names of female saints who were also deaconesses.

January 11, 2024 7pm EST Zoom Discussion of Our "Proposed Guidelines"

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS:

From left to right: Ms. Kathryn McCord, Dn. James Wilcox, Ms. Laura Wilson, Ms. Dina Zingaro



St. Phoebe Service Event Project



Angelic Molen of Harare, Zimbabwe, was ordained Deaconess Angelic in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa.

INFORMATION SESSION:
 ST. PHOEBE SERVICE EVENT
 Tuesday July 9, 7-8pm EST



If you are interested in hosting a local service project in honor of St. Phoebe, join us via Zoom!



Welcome to new Governing Board Member Mardi Perry.

The St. Phoebe Center's
Proposed Guidelines:
 A Presentation and
 Discussion of the
 Latest Collaborative
 Draft

September 23, 2024
 7:00-8:30 pm EST



Welcome to new Advisory Board Members Dr. Lori Branch, Fr. Marc Dunaway, Dr. Paul Meyendorff, Ms. Jen Nabas, and Fr. Philip Zymaris.

The St. Phoebe Center's work centers around the recommendations of the 1988 International Orthodox consultation in Rhodes, Greece where the revival of the female diaconate was proposed, and numerous calls from around the world since 1855 for revival of the female diaconate.



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