

## The Rev. Beryl Turner Choi

April 29, 1926 – March 2, 2021



The Rev. Beryl Turner Choi, the first woman ordained in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, died on March 2, 2021 in Richmond, Virginia. Bishop Robert Appleyard ordained her to the diaconate on October 19, 1973 and to the priesthood on January 8, 1977, just one week after the ordination of women to the priesthood was officially permitted in the Episcopal Church. In Pittsburgh, she was sponsored by St. James, Penn Hills, served as a deacon at Church of the Ascension from 1974-1976, and as Associate at Calvary Church from 1976-1983. She later served parishes in California, Western New York, and, after her “retirement”, in the Diocese of Virginia.



When Beryl, age 18, approached her bishop in her native England about a vocation to the priesthood, she was told that the Church of England prohibited women from being ordained, and that she should study Christian education. She studied theology, and her gifts as a brilliant teacher and writer were valuable, both in her lay ministry and in her priesthood.

She was fifty years old when her early vision of becoming a priest was finally realized. In solidarity and with great respect, the men who were ready for ordination at the same time as she was, and could have been ordained in December 1976, chose to wait until Beryl could be included in the ceremony in January 1977.

Beryl was thoroughly British, born in the same month and year as Queen Elizabeth II, and never lost her distinctive British manner and perspective. She was clear, outspoken, and uncompromising about what she believed. She was a kind and devoted pastor and a faithful priest. She had a gentle but firm way of insuring that things were done properly.

Beryl's competence, authenticity, and genuineness helped break through the initial hesitation or refusal to accept ordained women. When Beryl was ordained deacon, the

Rev. William G. Lewis, Archdeacon of the Diocese, remarked that, “anyone who thinks women are inferior has not met Beryl Choi.” As people came to know her, and to experience her ministry, barriers naturally fell away. She opened the path for many who followed her and willingly served as a mentor in those early years.

Memories and condolences are welcomed by her children, and can be sent to Nan Choi, 4909 Bangor Court, Henrico, VA 23228.

We give thanks for the life and witness of the Rev. Beryl Turner Choi, and pray that she may rest in peace.

--*The Rev. Leslie Reimer*  
*Senior Associate Rector*  
*Calvary Church, East Liberty*

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