Drawn to the cause

Julian Wright

Despite being one of the first women in Australia to be ordained as a priest, there was no "call from heaven" that put the Reverend Joyce Polson (86) on that path.

Ms Polson said her lifestyle change was simply a decision she made to do something more fulfilling.

"I was working in a sharebroker office... and I decided there's more to life than that," she said.

"I enjoyed being with people and I met a deaconess who was full of life and I thought 'oh I will try that'."

Last month her 60 years in the ministry were recognised in a ceremony at St Mary's Anglican Girls' School (SMAGS), where she was chaplain from 1986 to 1994 and has assisted current chaplain Geraldine Nicos since 2010.

Mr Polson was admitted to the Order of Deaconesses in 1933 - the only ministry open to women at that time - and then made deacon in 1948. She was one of the first women in Australia to be ordained as a priest in 1962, something she said was a huge deal at the time.

"We didn't know whether we would be ordained or not the right before the service was to be held because the whole matter was still before the court and then we got told at 9pm the court had said we should be ordained. They searched the cathedral for hammers and everything under the sun (there were) sniffer dogs around," Ms Polson said.

Ms Polson said of the 11 women ordained that day, five were still in the ministry.

Despite retiring four times, Ms Polson said she was always drawn to SMAGS.

"I love it. I love being with young people. I love the challenge of trying to answer their questions," she said.

Ms Polson said two moments stood out in her time at the school.

"One senior boarder said to me 'thank you for letting me help you', which made me think 'stop being listen to others'," she said.

"In the 1990s, a Year 9 of my class suddenly opened a window and someone suddenly the