

THE CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The Deaconess  
and her Ministry  
in the  
Episcopal Church*



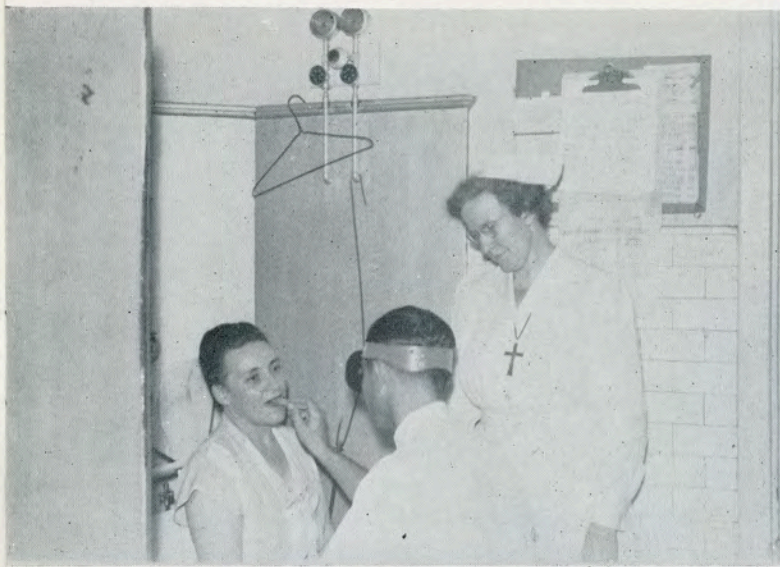
*Published by the  
Executive Committee of the  
National Conference of Deaconesses*

The duty of a Deaconess is to assist in the work of the Parish, Mission, or institution to which she may be appointed, under the direction of the Rector or Priest in charge; or, if there be none such, to perform such functions as may be directly entrusted to her by the Bishop.

*Canon 51, Of Deaconesses  
Sec. 2 (a)  
Journal of General Convention  
1949*

*Deaconesses Effectually Head Church  
Institutions Caring for Those In Need*

Deaconess Margaret S. Bechtol is superintendent of the Episcopal Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital in Washington, D. C.



Superintendent Deaconess Hilda Dieterly mothers homeless boys and girls at the House of the Good Shepherd in Utica, N. Y.



*The Forgotten and Forlorn in Certain  
Municipal and County Hospitals Know  
the Comfort of the Ministry of  
Deaconesses*

Deaconess Ruth M. Parsons is one of five  
City Missions Deaconesses in the Diocese  
of Chicago.



Deaconess Lillian W. Crow is on the City  
Missions staff in Dallas. She also directs  
the activities of a small but growing mis-  
sion giving no little attention to the  
young boys of the community.



*The Deaconess Assists the Rector in  
His Many and Varied Parochial Duties*

In Montgomery, Alabama, Deaconess Kate Sinton Mayer calls on a sick parishioner.

Primary children are guided in their worship by Deaconess Lydia A. Ramsay, New York City.

Deaconess Margaret in Los Angeles leads the Church School from the parish house into the Church for their service of worship.



*In Town and Country Deaconesses  
Serve in a Variety of Ways to  
Spread the Kingdom*



In the Diocese of Southern Ohio St. Andrew's Mission, Addyston, under the direction of Deaconess Clara M. Searle, cooperates with the county in the operation of its Chest Clinic.



Deaconess Brereton, in charge of a mission in Southwestern Virginia, recently presented twenty-seven to the Rector for Baptism.

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Deaconess Evelyn E. Seymour is a welcome visitor to the Church families scattered throughout the Diocese of Eau Claire.



Deaconess Edith A. Booth directs the Handicraft Guild of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia. Her class in woodwork gives opportunity for teaching more than craft to boys from isolated homes.

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*The Church Uses Deaconesses in  
Missionary Work Among  
Minority Groups*



Deaconess Harriet M. Bedell, living in Everglades, Florida, brings the Church to the Seminole Indians.



Deaconess Marian Brown is one of the workers among the Navajos in the Missionary District of Arizona.

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Deaconess Harriet H. English and Deaconess Grace E. Smith are co-workers among the Mexicans in St. Anne's Mission, El Paso, in the Missionary District of New Mexico and Southwest Texas.



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*The Devoted and Consecrated Work of Missionaries During Past Years is Now Bearing Fruit. In China Men and Women, Many Deaconess-trained, are Taking Over the Church's Work. Still Remaining in War-torn China are Deaconess Elsie Riebe and Deaconess Julia Clark of Hankow; and Deaconess Katherine Putnam and Deaconess Evelyn Ashcroft of Shanghai.*

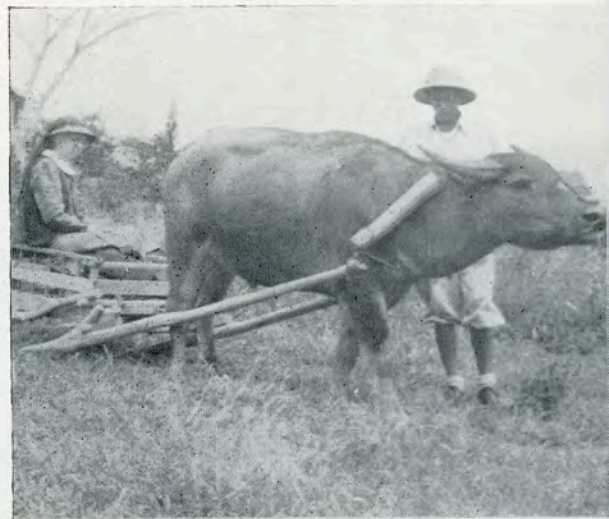


Bishop Mao discusses with Deaconess Putnam his plans for the short-term training institutes.



Deaconess Ashcroft

*Deaconess Mary Dawson Returned to Upi, Mindanao, Philippine Islands, Impaired in Health but Undaunted*



Many inaccessible places are reached by Deaconess Dawson on her carabao-drawn sled.



Crossing a stream in Upi on a native bridge is a precarious undertaking.



*Deaconesses Gather in Retreat for  
Spiritual Refreshment and Later  
Enjoy the Fellowship of Conference  
and Sociability*



*What is a Deaconess?*

A Deaconess is a woman who, feeling called of God, gives her life to others with the special authorization and blessing of the Church and under its direction.

*What is Meant by the  
“Ministry” of the Deaconess?*

The Deaconess’ talents, skills and potentialities are given to God to use as and where He will. But her dedication is to service, not to authority. In the official and authorized acceptance of that dedication the Church has recognized her ministry; not as a part of the historic threefold ministry—this should be clearly understood—but as a servant (Greek, *diakonos*) of the Church.

*How is a Woman Made a Deaconess?*

The Deaconess-Candidate is “set apart” in a special service of consecration by the solemn laying on of hands of the Bishop.

*Does the Deaconess Take Vows?*

The Deaconess takes no vows beyond the vow “to endeavor faithfully to fulfill the duties of her office” and to obey her Bishop and “those over her in the Lord.” To the woman who offers this self-dedication and asks the Church’s acceptance of it in so solemn a service, it necessarily means permanency. A deaconess’s vows of permanency are between herself and God, and must be of most serious import both to the deaconess herself and to others. If a woman finds, after being set apart, that her vocation is not to the Order of Deaconesses, the canon provides that she may resign her office to the proper ecclesiastical authority.

## *How Long has the Order of Deaconesses Existed in the Church?*

Developing through the early days of the Church, from the time of that Phoebe who was a servant (*diakonos* in its wide sense) of the Church at Cenchrea, (Romans 16:1) the Order gained its greatest importance in the fourth century and in the Eastern branch of the Church. Gradually with changing conditions it declined, and by the eleventh century was lost sight of. But with a recognition in the nineteenth century of the value of the work of women not living in religious communities, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Fry, for example, and with the establishment of the great order of Lutheran deaconesses at Kaiserwerth by Pastor Fliedner, impetus was given to a revival of the Order of Deaconesses in the Church of England, a revival which has continued to the present day with notable devotion and steadfastness in service. A generation later, in 1889, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted the first Canon on Deaconesses. Already candidates were waiting, and from that day deaconesses have served in the American branch of the Anglican Communion. The General Convention of 1949 reaffirmed the Church's recognition of the office and work of Deaconesses as "the one and only order of the ministry for women which we can recommend our branch of the Catholic Church to recognize and use."

## *What is Required of a Woman Wishing to Become a Deaconess?*

The Canon of Deaconesses, states that she must first be a candidate for two years. During the period of candidateship she is under the supervision of her Bishop. If possible she should spend at least one half of the time of her preparation in residence with Deaconesses or at a Church Training School. The candidate must pass examination in subjects prescribed by the Canon. She must be certified as to "her mental and nervous as well as her physical condition" by a physician appointed by her Bishop.

## *Is the Deaconess Vocation a Satisfying One?*

The Deaconess vocation opens up work that is wholly privilege and opportunity. It does involve sacrifices, and oftentimes discouragements and loneliness, but its yield of joy in her Lord's service is wonderful compensation.

*Additional information may be secured from the  
Executive Secretary, 419 West 110th Street, New  
York 25, N. Y.*