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General Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
The deaconess work in the
Evangelical Lutheran Church



The Deaconess Work

... in the ...

Evangelical Lutheran Church
in the United States.

Brief survey of the Nurseries of all birth babies.

Report of the Committee on Deaconess Work.

Presented to the GENERAL COUNCIL at Easton, Pa.,

OCTOBER 14, 1895.





The Mary J. Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses.

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REPORT

OF THE

Committee on Deaconess Work.

Your Committee appointed by the last Convention of the General Council at Fort Wayne, Ind., to report on the progress of the Deaconess cause in our Lutheran Church of this country, begs leave to submit the following report:

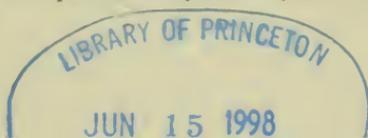
There are at this time six Motherhouses for Lutheran Deaconesses organized and in operation. They are located in the following cities: Philadelphia, Omaha, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Brooklyn, and Baltimore. According to language, they may be classified as German, Swedish, German-English, Norwegian, and English. The first three are in connection with the General Council; the following two with the Norwegian Synod; the Baltimore Motherhouse was established by the General Synod.

We submit a brief survey of the history, the principles and the present statistics of these different institutions:

1. The Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses. (Mary J. Drexel Home.)

REV. CARL GOEDEL, Pastor.

This institution represents the first successful effort to transplant the German Deaconess work on a large scale and in a systematic manner to America. The needs of the German Hospital in Philadelphia and the distressing experiences made with paid nurses had naturally directed the attention of its leaders to the service of Deaconesses, which had been gradually substituted for that of paid nurses in the majority of hospitals in the Fatherland. When the important change had been effected in the constitution and administration of the German Hospital in Philadelphia which brought it into regular connection with the Lutheran Church, the way was opened for the introduction of Deaconesses. In the fall of 1883 the preliminary arrangements were made to



bring to this country a little colony of German Deaconesses from Iserlohn, whose leading Sister had been educated in Kaiserswerth. In June, 1884, they arrived in Philadelphia, and at once took charge of the German Hospital.

In order to make the institution permanent, the president of the German Hospital, Mr. John D. Lankenau, resolved to establish a regular Motherhouse of Deaconesses in connection with the Mary J. Drexel Home, an asylum for aged people, which had been planned by him years ago in memory of his deceased wife. A separate organization was founded under the name "The Mary J. Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses." Mr. Lankenau then at once proceeded to erect the magnificent building opposite Girard College and west of the German Hospital, in which the Sisters found their home after having been the guests of the German Hospital for four years. November 11, 1886, the cornerstone was laid, and on December 6, 1888, the house was dedicated and formally presented to the Board of Trustees by its generous founder. On the same day, the first rector of the institution, Rev. A. Cordes, was installed.

Up to this time Rev. A. Spaeth, D. D., had been acting as pastor and spiritual adviser of the Sisters. In 1892 Rector Cordes resigned and was succeeded in 1893 by the Rev. Carl Goedel.

The work of the institution has been steadily growing and expanding during the few years of its existence. The Year Book for 1895, which has just been published, shows forty-two Sisters on the list. Their work is distributed over the following stations: 1. The German Hospital, twenty Sisters; 2. Parish work in Zion's and St. Paul's congregations, two Sisters; 3. The Easton Hospital, three Sisters; 4. The Lutheran St. Johannis Home in Allegheny (in connection with the Ohio Synod), two Sisters. In the Mary J. Drexel Home the following departments are served by the Deaconesses: 1. The Children's Hospital; 2. The Old People's Home; 3. The Lutheran Girls' School; 4. An infants' school.

The Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses aims to carry on its work as closely as possible on the lines laid down by the restorer of the female diaconate (the late Dr. Fliedner) and followed so successfully by the leading German Motherhouses. It means to preserve the historic link with the Deaconess work in its German home, and has therefore sought and received admission into the General Conference of Deaconess Motherhouses at

Kaiserswerth. At the same time, the Philadelphia Motherhouse has, from the very beginning, endeavored to advance the general cause of the female diaconate in this country in every way. It educated the first Swedish Sisters for Pastor Fogelstrom's institution in Omaha. It gave a temporary home and preliminary training to a number of Christian women who offered themselves for this work in the General Synod. It received and trained Sisters for the Dayton Motherhouse, and for weeks entertained a prominent lady who is a leader of the Deaconess cause in the Methodist Church, thus giving her an opportunity to become familiar with the character and spirit of German Lutheran Deaconess work.

2. The Swedish Motherhouse of Deaconesses in Omaha.

REV. E. A. FOGELSTROM, Pastor.

The Swedish Lutheran Deaconess work in America commenced at the Mary J. Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses, when Sister Bothilda Swenson was sent there by Rev. E. A. Fogelstrom in June, 1887, to be trained for the proposed Swedish Motherhouse at Omaha. The following year, 1888, he also sent four other Sisters to join Sister Bothilda. One of these Sisters having left the work after one year, the other three returned to Omaha in June, 1890. After two years' faithful service at the Philadelphia Motherhouse, Sister Bothilda was sent to Europe for her further training. She took one year's course in the Motherhouse of Stockholm, spent some time in visiting Kaiserswerth and other European Motherhouses, and came back to take charge of the work in Omaha in the fall of 1890.

During the time of the Sister's training in the East, Pastor Fogelstrom had succeeded in building a hospital for their future work in Omaha. At the close of the year 1890 this institution, the Immanuel Hospital, had been finished at a cost of about \$30,000. December 20, 1890, the first patient was admitted, a poor Swede coming from the far West, Wyoming. In 1891 a home for the Sisters was built opposite the hospital. All the property of the Institution in Omaha is worth about \$40,000, with a debt of \$10,000 yet remaining; this debt, however, is more than covered by legacies already made to the Institution.

April 5, 1891, the Institution in Omaha held its first anniversary and at that time the first Swedish-American Deaconess, Sister Bothilda Swenson, was consecrated. This was a time of

great rejoicing, several leading men of the Augustana Synod and Rector Cordes, from the Philadelphia Motherhouse, taking part in the services. Since then a festival has been held once a year and six other Sisters have been consecrated. This Swedish-American Motherhouse has at present 7 Deaconesses, 6 help-Sisters, and 7 Probationers, in all 20 Sisters. Outside of the Motherhouse these Sisters have been working in three permanent stations: At the Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul, Minn., 3 Sisters; parish work in Rev. Fern's congregation in Sioux City, Ia., 1 Sister; and in Rev. Kranz's congregation in Duluth, Minn., 1 Sister. Besides this regular work, the Motherhouse in Omaha does quite a good deal of temporary work in the city and neighboring congregations. In the summer several Sisters teach parochial schools for children. Six months ago Rev. Dr. Swaerd's congregation in Omaha engaged one Sister. A call from Rev. Petri's congregation in Minneapolis for a Sister to do permanent parish work has also been accepted, the work to commence this fall.

This, the only Swedish-American Motherhouse, feels a great need of a much larger number of Sisters.

The Augustana Synod has at several annual conventions very earnestly recommended this Deaconess Institute, and at its last two conventions the question of receiving it into full organic union has been brought up for the consideration of Synod. At the convention in Chicago, June 18, 1895, the question was postponed until next year, when the Synod will meet in Omaha; then it will no doubt be decided.

3. **The Milwaukee Motherhouse of Deaconesses.**

REV. J. F. OHL, Rector.

This Motherhouse is the result of the labors of the late Dr. W. A. Passavant, who, nearly half a century ago, took the first step to introduce the Deaconesses into America. In 1863 he opened the Milwaukee Hospital which, from the very beginning, was designed to be a Deaconess Hospital, but not until several years ago did Providence open the way to make this an accomplished fact. In December, 1891, after a course of instruction given by the Rev. H. W. Roth, D. D., the foundation of the Motherhouse began to be laid by the consecration of three Sisters, one of whom had been in the work at Kaiserswerth and another at Neuendettelsau. Sister Martha was made Directing Sister, and in the summer of 1893 a rector was called in the person of the Rev. J. F. Ohl, of Quakertown, Pa., who entered upon

the duties of his office in October of the same year. In the annual report just published the Rector says: "The Motherhouse, as now organized, conforms to the best European models in all their essential features, without being a stereotyped reproduction of any one of them. The principle is recognized and consistently carried out that for America and the Church in America certain modifications and adaptations are necessary in order to secure for the Deaconess cause the same regard and encouragement that it now enjoys in the Fatherland; and we believe that this can be successfully done without sacrificing any of its distinctive features."

The number of Sisters now attached to the Motherhouse is 17. Of these 8 are Deaconesses, 3 of whom were consecrated June 3 of the present year, and 9 are Probationers. The course of study, which is regularly taken up in October of each year and ends with the examinations in May, embraces all the branches usually taught in Motherhouses; and the terms of admission are practically the same as in European institutions. This Motherhouse is, moreover, believed to be the only German-English Motherhouse in the world. Both languages are constantly used in the instruction and in conversation, and there is regular alternation between the two in the Chapel services.

At least four new Probationers were expected to enter in October, with a prospect of even more. The Rector states that there is a growing interest in the work throughout the West and Northwest, and that he has to answer numerous letters of inquiry.

The following charitable institutions, founded by the late Dr. W. A. Passavant, look to the Milwaukee Motherhouse for their supply of Sisters: The Jacksonville Hospital, at Jacksonville, Ill.; the Passavant Hospital (Pittsburgh Infirmary), at Pittsburgh; and the Passavant Memorial (Emergency) Hospital at Chicago, Ill.

4. The Norwegian Lutheran Deaconesses Home and Hospital at Brooklyn.

Sister Elizabeth Fedde, who stands at the head of this institution, writes about its origin and present status, as follows:

"Our work began here in April, 1883, on a very small scale, among the sick and poor Norwegians. The necessity for a proper place to care for the sick, who had previously been referred to the County Hospital when in need of hospital care, became so urgent that in the spring of 1885 a small house was secured

which did service as a home for the Sisters and a hospital, so far as its limited capacity would permit. The difficulty, so commonly encountered in originating a new Deaconess home, of securing the proper persons to take hold of the work with the proper spirit, was gradually overcome, and under the guidance of the good Lord, our work has prospered beyond our most sanguine expectations. Considerable charitable and missionary work is being done outside of the hospital, particularly among the families of Norwegian sailors.

"There has always been a difficulty in procuring Sisters in Brooklyn, so that at present our number is only eleven. But with God's blessing our Home is ever perfectly harmonious and pleasant; the Sisters are earnest and ever eagerly working for the one cause—the furtherance of Christ's work among those who need it most."

5. The Norwegian Deaconess Home in Minneapolis.

Seven years ago the work in Minneapolis was started by Sister Elizabeth Fedde, who is now Sister Superior of the Brooklyn Motherhouse. When she left Minneapolis in 1890, the institution had 12 Sisters, a small home and \$2,000 towards a larger hospital. At present there are 31 Sisters, 10 of them consecrated Deaconesses, trained partly in Christiania, Norway, partly in Minneapolis; 12 Probationers and 9 in the Preparatory course. The course of training is divided into a Preparatory course from October to February, and the Deaconesses' course from March to May. The Sisters of this Motherhouse supply a hospital in Grand Forks, N. Dak.; one in Hillsboro, N. Dak.; one in Sioux City, S. Dak.; and a Children's Home in Beloit, Iowa.

6. The Motherhouse in Baltimore.

Several years ago the General Synod appointed a Deaconess Board for the purpose of practically reviving this office among its churches. Its labors have been so far successful, that on the first of October a Deaconess Motherhouse and training-school was opened under its auspices in the City of Baltimore, whose churches had offered suitable accommodations for the establishment of such an institution.

"The object of this house," says the President of the Board, Rev. Dr. G. U. Wenner, "is to afford an opportunity to the young women of our Church to engage in the work of the Christian ministry in such forms as are appropriate, such as nursing, teach-

ing, caring for the poor and neglected, and helping the pastor to look after and care for the flock. Its aim is to open to them larger fields of usefulness in the service of the Church, and by technical training and effective organization to make them a new force in the extension of the Master's kingdom. The methods will be in harmony with those pursued in the Deaconess' Houses of Europe, with such adaptations as the special needs and conditions of America may suggest. The nucleus of the work has been secured in the Sisters who for several years past have been carefully trained for this purpose in this country and in Germany, and who are soon to be set apart for the special work in which they are about to engage. They will have charge of a hospital, a Christian school, and various branches of parish work. But all of this local service is simply the foundation of their principal work, that of training young women for similar service in other cities and congregations. In this work they will be aided by a competent faculty, selected from the pastors and physicians of Baltimore, who will impart instruction in the various branches of science and Christian literature.

"Two classes of young women will be welcomed to this House: First, those who, after serving a period of probation, desire to remain with us permanently, or for an indefinite period. Secondly, those who come to prepare themselves to be Christian workers or pastoral helpers in their own homes and congregations, and who remain with us therefore only long enough to obtain the requisite training."

Summary.

Summing up this brief survey, we find that there are 131 (or, if we include 8 in the course of preparatory training in Philadelphia, 139) Lutheran women engaged in the work of the Deaconess, or preparing for it. Their Motherhouses represent an aggregate value of about \$700,000, and the amount spent on this work during the past year may be moderately estimated at \$75,000. All the principal nationalities and languages of our Church in this country are simultaneously taking hold of this great and sacred cause, and whilst they all are anxious to conform to the best European models in all their essential features, they recognize the fact that for America certain modifications and adaptations may be necessary in order to secure for the Deaconess work the same regard and encouragement that it now enjoys in the Fatherland. We have good cause to be profoundly thankful

for what has been achieved in this field by the Lutherans in America during the last decade. We may well rejoice that the Church of the pure Word and Sacraments is taking such a lead in this blessed ministry of the female diaconate. But we cannot deceive ourselves as to the fact that after all we have made only a very modest beginning in this work; that the majority of our people are still profoundly ignorant and sadly indifferent concerning its claims and its blessings. We would therefore most respectfully urge it upon this venerable Body, that it should use its influence to arouse a warmer interest in this blessed work; and that in our Synodical meetings and Conferences a proper place be given to it alongside of our missionary and educational operations; that our individual pastors, and, through them, our congregations may be impressed with the importance of this work and our obligations towards it, so that the number of devout women may be quickly increased, who will cheerfully and for the Lord's sake respond to the urgent appeals of our Mother-houses for an increase of laborers.

For the benefit of those who are desirous to inform themselves more fully on the history, the principles and methods of the Female Diaconate, we take the liberty of mentioning a few books and treatises in German and English, that will be of use to the inquirer:

Th. Schaefer: Die weibliche Diakonie. 3 Bde.

J. Disselhoff: Jubilate (zum 50ten Jubiläum Kaiserswerths).

F. Meyer: Von der Diakonissin und ihrem Beruf.

E. Wacker: Der Diakonissenberuf.

— *E. Wacker*: The Deaconess Calling, translated by Emma E. Endlich. Appendix by A. Spaeth, D.D. Mary J. Drexel Home, Philadelphia. Single copies, 50 cents.

Th. Schaefer: Im Dienst der Liebe.

Th. Schaefer: Diakonissen Katechismus.

— *J. F. Ohl*: Deaconesses and Their Work.

Annual of the Mary J. Drexel Home.

Jahrbuch des Mary J. Drexel Heim, printed for free distribution by the Mary J. Drexel Home.

Annals of the Institution of Protestant Deaconesses, published bi-monthly at Pittsburgh, Pa.

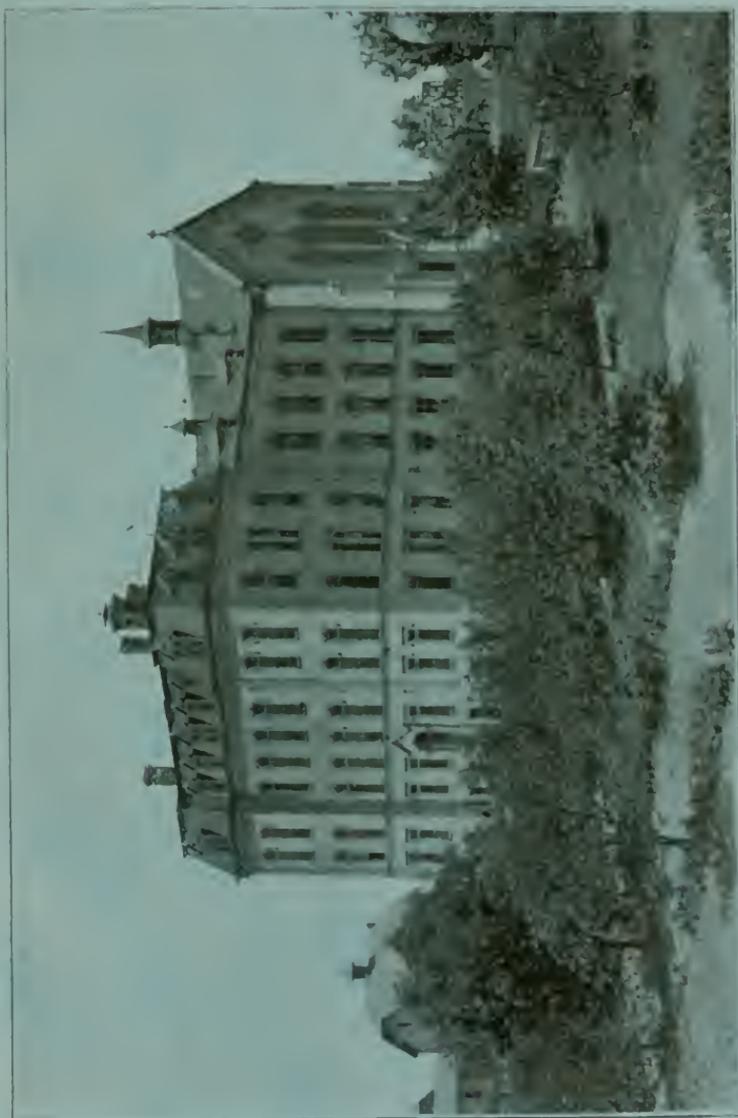
Respectfully submitted by the Committee.

A. SPAETH,

E. A. FOGELSTROM,

J. F. OHL,

C. A. EVALD.



Milwaukee Hospital and Deaconess Motherhouse.



Lutheran Deaconess Motherhouses in the United States.

**"The Mary J. Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse
of Deaconesses."**

2100 South College Avenue, **Philadelphia.**

Rector: REV. CARL GOEDEL. Sister Superior: WANDA V. OERTZEN.

The Milwaukee Motherhouse.

Twenty-second, Cedar, and State Streets, **Milwaukee, Wis.**

Rector: REV. J. F. OHL. Directing Sister: MARTHA GENSKE.

Bequests to be written to the "Institution of Protestant Deaconesses
of Allegheny Co., Pa."

Immanuel Deaconess Institute.

Monmouth Park, **Omaha, Neb.**

Rector: REV. E. A. FOGELSTROM. Sister Superior: BOTHILDA SWENSON.

"The Norwegian Lutheran Deaconesses' Home and Hospital."

Forty-sixth Street and Fourth Avenue, **Brooklyn, N. Y.**

Sister Superior: ELIZABETH FEDDE.

Norwegian Lutheran Deaconess Institute.

1417 23rd Street, Corner 15th Avenue South, **Minneapolis, Minn.**

Sister Superior: INGEBORG SPONLAND.

Deaconess Motherhouse and Training School of the General Synod.

907 North Fulton Avenue, **Baltimore, Md.**

Rev. W. H. DUNBAR, D. D., Pastor.



