

# DIACONAL SUNDAY February 26, 2012

## Elizabeth Fedde, Deaconess



When Jesus took the towel and basin and stooped to wash the disciples' feet, he provided a most vivid picture of servanthood and a model for deaconess ministry. *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."* John 13:14.

In New Testament times deaconesses and deacons were set apart to assist and lead the church in caring for the poor, marginalized, powerless people whom it would have been so easy to forget. Throughout the ages the diaconate has shaped itself in various ways, but the central heartbeat has always been the same—to reach out in Christian love to those in need.

On February 25, the Lutheran Church especially remembers one such person, **Deaconess Elizabeth Fedde.**

In 1883 Elizabeth came to Brooklyn, New York, at the urging of her brother-in-law who was serving as a lay minister with the Norwegian Seaman's Mission. For 13 years, Elizabeth recruited and trained women to care for the urgent needs of the sick and suffering. She developed an ambulance program that served all people and established the Norwegian Deaconess Home and Hospital. This was both a training ground for deaconesses and a center that served the physical and spiritual needs of the community. The hospital continues today as the Lutheran Medical Center.

Elizabeth and her deaconess sisters began similar programs in Minnesota, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. Deaconess Elizabeth Fedde died in 1921.

*Source: ELCA website*



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