

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-C046
TITLE: Commemorating Appleton Deaconesses
PROPOSER: Atlanta
TOPIC: Church Calendar

Directly Related: (Attached)

None

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

C046 Commemorating Appleton Deaconesses

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| Proposer | Diocese of Atlanta |
| Endorsed by | |
| Sponsored by | |
| Page numbers | Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A |
| HiA / Leg. Cttee | / |
| Current Status | Pre-Filed Resolution |
| Version | Original (as filed) |
| Review Status | Not yet reviewed |

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognize the ministry of the Deaconesses who administered the Appleton Church Home and known as the Order of St. Katharine; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the General Convention set aside June 6th in the commemorations of this Church as a feast day honoring the Appleton Deaconesses.

EXPLANATION

The 110th Annual Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta bore witness to the role of women in the history of the Episcopal Church and to the service of this early order of deaconesses by resolving in 2016 to recognize the Appleton Deaconesses by setting aside June 6 as a feast day in their honor. Since 2015, Appleton Episcopal Ministries and the Diocese of Atlanta have held an annual recognition ceremony honoring the deaconesses by blessing graves at the cemetery lot and by celebrating with a choral Holy Eucharist.

Although the office of deaconess was mentioned in the Bible, the role of deaconesses fell out of favor for several centuries. In 1836, the Lutheran Church in Kaiserswerth, Germany, revived the office to help address the needs of the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, and the Anglican Church soon followed suit. It is believed that the first deaconesses in America were Lutheran women sent from Kaiserwerth to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1849. The first Episcopal deaconesses were called in 1855 by Maryland Bishop William Whittingham, who set aside two women for a ministry to nurse the poor in Baltimore. At the end of the Civil War, Alabama Bishop Richard Wilmer established a Church Home for children to help care for a growing number of orphans near the Episcopal churches in Tuscaloosa and Mobile. Wilmer called three women into service as deaconesses to run the home and set them aside for such ministry using a special service on December 20, 1864.

When John Beckwith was called from Trinity Church in New Orleans, Louisiana, to be ordained as the second Bishop of Georgia in 1868, his close friend William Appleton offered to build him a church. Instead, Beckwith asked Appleton to fund an orphanage for the daughters of Confederate soldiers. Appleton agreed, and Bishop Beckwith initiated plans for the Appleton Church Home in Macon. Beckwith had served under Bishop Wilmer while a priest in Demopolis, Alabama, immediately after the Civil War, and he was certainly inspired by Wilmer's deaconesses in Mobile. Even before Appleton Church Home opened in 1870, Beckwith asked Margaret Jennings, a Confederate widow from Trinity

Church, to assist him in Georgia by administering the new Church Home in Macon as a deaconess. Mrs. Jennings answered Bishop Beckwith's call. She became known as Sister Margaret. For the first three years of Appleton's operation, Sister Margaret ran the home herself. Over time, she and Bishop Beckwith identified two other women who had worked with them in New Orleans to join her. In 1873, Beckwith called Miss Katherine Burt to begin work at Appleton as a postulant, and within six months, he made her a full deaconess. With the addition of this new Sister, William Appleton increased his endowment of the Appleton Church Home. That same year, the deaconesses of Appleton Church Home were formally given the name of the Order of St. Katharine after the death of Katharine (Kate) Appleton Geary, daughter of benefactor William Appleton. Kate Geary, who had taken great interest in the success of the Church Home, died while in Hong Kong doing missionary work. In 1875, Mrs. Sarah Godwin Marks came to Appleton as the third deaconess. By answering Bishop Beckwith's call to serve, these three women became members of one of the Episcopal Church's earliest orders of deaconesses.

On Luke's Day, October 18, 1882, Bishop Beckwith officially dedicated the Order of St. Katharine and performed a ceremony for "setting apart deaconesses for work in the church," in the chapel of Appleton Church Home. Assisted by Reverend J.R. Winchester and Reverend D.W. Winn of Christ Church and Reverend C.J. Wingate of St. Paul's Church, Beckwith followed the service order developed by Bishop Wilmer of Alabama. Each of the three ladies – Sister Margaret, Sister Katherine, and Sister Sarah – presented herself and professed her intent as one "who, following the example of devout women, recorded in the Holy Scripture and written of in primitive times, desired to devote herself to the relief of the suffering and destitute, and came forward to ask his benediction and the prayers of the church, that she might have grace to do her duty as becometh so honorable and difficult a work." (The Macon Telegraph, 22 October 1882)

At least nine sisters are documented as full deaconesses of The Order of St. Katharine. In addition to Sisters Margaret, Katherine, and Sarah, the Order included Sister Mary (Miss Mary Francis Gould), Sister Maggie (Miss Maggie Perkins), Sister Louise (Miss Louis Aydelotte), Sister Elenor (Miss Elenor Beatrice Henry), Sister Katie (Miss Katherine Lindsay Campbell), and Sister Sophi (Miss Sophjenlife Petterson). For more information on these women, please visit [appletonepiscopal.org/History/Appleton's Deaconesses](http://appletonepiscopal.org/History/Appleton's%20Deaconesses).