

RESOLUTION 7

TO: The 182nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Kentucky
FROM: Sharon Receveur, Historiographer of the Diocese of Kentucky, Linda Speed, Linda Medley, Home of the Innocents, The Rt. Rev David Reed, St. Luke's Church
SUBJECT: Requesting the inclusion of Sister Emily Cooper, Deaconess and All Forgotten Children in *Holy Women, Holy Men*

RESOLVED, that the Diocese of Kentucky establish April 16 as a day of local commemoration for Sister Emily Cooper and all Forgotten Children. Activities appropriate for that day may include cooperation with local police in various programs such as the Children's Identification program, Crimes Against Children, Amber Alert, Childhood Internet Safety, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the Kentucky Seat Belt Program. Other celebrations may include artwork projects, music, drama and liturgy; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Diocese of Kentucky request the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to submit the name of Sister Emily Cooper and All Forgotten Children to the 2012 General Convention for inclusion in *Holy Women, Holy Men* (formerly *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*) using the date of her death, April 16, as the day of commemoration.

EXPLANATION

The following information will be sent to the Commission for Liturgy and Music to support this request.

The Deaconess Movement in 19th-century America: pioneer professional women

"The story of the deaconess sisters is as old as the Christian church. It begins with the apostles yet endures to this day. The deaconesses are dedicated women who dared to be different in order to give full-time Christian service to the ministry of mercy. Their life-style and work are part of the women's movement of modern times. They are the pioneer professional women of the church.

Deaconesses in the early church

"Deaconess means messenger, servant, or helper. It comes from the Greek diakonos and was first used in the Bible by the apostle Paul, in Romans 16:1-2, to describe Phoebe, a woman leader and worker in the early Christian community:

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well."

"Paul's letters indicate that women were prominent leaders and missionaries in the early Christian movement. Many in addition to Phoebe are named. Theological scholarship affirms that women were preachers, teachers, and leaders of the community as well as nurses serving the sick, the poor, and the persecuted. [1] When the time for definite ecclesiastical organization came, the work of deaconesses had become a necessity to the church and they received a place in its ordered ministry. They were highly respected and counted among the clergy. Evidence that

they were ordained to some of the functions of the ministry is abundant in early church records. [2] On this biblical foundation the ministry of deaconesses in all succeeding generations rests." *Ruth W. Rasche*

There are presently only two Deaconesses already honored in the 2006 edition of "Lesser Feasts and Fasts:" Harriett Bedell (p. 125) and Florence Nightingale (p. 343).

The Deaconess Movement in the late 19th Century

Renewed interest in the Office of Deaconess arose in the mid 1800's, first in England, then Europe and at the same time, here in the United States. The office, first recognized by the Anglican and then the Episcopal Church soon spread to the Lutheran Church and Evangelical bodies.

While committees were exploring what official training for this ministry might include, some women helped to form the New York School of Deaconesses and presented themselves at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. on June 11, 1873. Theirs had been a two year course of study. The records fail to show all the first and last names, only this record from the New York Times of the following day:

Protestant Sisters of Mercy

The interesting religious ceremony was performed at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Brooklyn, yesterday morning, in the admission of four women to the office of deaconess. The four candidates were Misses Mary Newman, **Emily Cooper**, Thayer, and Sister Elizabeth, whose term of probation was renewed. The office of deaconess is similar to that of Catholic Sisters of Mercy, the former being received into the order for three years, with the option of renewal. During the past year twelve candidates were admitted to this order. It is proposed to build a hospital for them, and money has been already raised for that purpose." - New York Times, June 12, 1873.

Emily Cooper, one of the four, was a native of Kentucky. She was a thirty-six year old widow born in 1836. Soon after her commissioning, she was called to serve in the Diocese of Kentucky by Bishop Benjamin Bosworth Smith, who was both Diocesan and Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. In 1880 Sister Emily was made director of the new Home of the Innocents, a Louisville home for neglected, unwanted, very sick and abused children founded by the Episcopal Diocese. The first year's budget of a little over \$2,500 provided her less than fifteen cents per day for each of the average of fifty children she served. (She was commended by the Diocesan Convention for her careful management of that amount the first year!)

Sister Emily found that often times the children were brought to the home with no name. She gave the unnamed Christian names and assisted at the baptisms of 284 and the burial of 220. These unmarked graves in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery were recently researched by a committee of concerned citizens who then raised funds for a likeness of Sister Emily to be sculpted for each of the two burial areas, along with bronze tablets bearing the names of the children buried in each of the two plots.

One figure of Sister Emily, entitled "Ascension", is in the plot containing children buried from 1880 to 1900. She is shown lifting up a child and the child releasing a dove. The other, at the

plot containing graves of children buried 1900 to 1920 is entitled, "Metamorphosis," and is of Sister Emily shaking out a receiving blanket from which are fluttering 220 butterflies representing the children's souls being released from her loving care to complete their journeys to heaven.

Gordon Brown, President and CEO of Home of the Innocents commented of the children in unmarked graves: "They've been abandoned twice. Once during life, and now in death."

Sister Emily contracted cancer and lived out her life at Louisville's Episcopal Good Shepherd Boy's Orphanage, later known as Woodcock Hall.

The committee that has done the research, raised the funds for the two statues and brought the attention of our Community to honor these Holy Ones have also established an endowment to collect funds to erect small Memorial Head Stones to mark the graves of other anonymous children. Their goal is to locate and mark the grave of every "forgotten child" buried in Jefferson County. The Committee consists of Sharon Receveur, Diocesan Historiographer and Chair; Linda Speed, Director of Gift Planning of The Community Foundation of Louisville and Linda Medley, Vice-president, Home of the Innocents, 1100 East Market Street, Louisville, KY 40206. (502) 596-1032.

Honoring Sister Emily and the Children and celebrating their lives.

Packets of material will be prepared locally for children of the parishes along with suggested means for adults to join in honoring Sister Emily and the Children on their appointed day. This will include options such as cooperation with local police in the Children's Identification Program, Crimes Against Children, Amber Alert, Childhood Internet Safety, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Kentucky Seat Belt Program. It will also include some ideas of celebration: artwork projects, music, picnic and local drama and liturgical ideas for the local parish.

To begin this time of honor and celebration, a dedicatory service was held at each of the two burial plots in Cave Hill Cemetery on All Saints Day, November 1, 2009. The Rt. Rev. David B. Reed, Retired Bishop of Kentucky, attended and pronounced blessings upon the project's benefactors and committees, the newly remembered children and the model of Christian service Sister Emily Cooper exemplified. The names of all the previously forgotten children were read aloud by actors from Stage One, a local dramatic group, and there was madrigal music by the Ballard High School Choir. This celebration produced extensive news coverage in the local media.

The Procedure for Inclusion in *Holy Women, Holy Men*

This is the new title of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. The process for having "Sister Emily Cooper, Deaconess and All Forgotten Children" honored on a special day each year requires asking the Diocese of Kentucky for a Resolution which is then presented to their next Diocesan Convention. If approved, it is sent to the national Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music who, upon processing, will recommend its passage to the next General Convention.

Sponsors of this proposed inclusion are: Home of the Innocents, the Diocese of Kentucky, and St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, Kentucky, as well as The Rt. Rev. David B. Reed,

Retired Bishop of Kentucky, Sharon Receveur, Historiographer and Chair of the Children's Memorial Marker Committee, and The Rev. Dr. Stanley Joe Smith, Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, Kentucky. The wording for the inclusion of "Sister Emily Cooper and All Forgotten Children" in *Holy Women, Holy Men* follows. First the historical sketch, the collect and the suggested biblical readings.

Emily Cooper, Deaconess, and all Forgotten Children – April 16 (date of death)

The Deaconess Movement of England in the late 17th Century provided two years training and commissioning for service to others under the supervision of the Church. The movement spread quickly to the U.S. Of the four women so commissioned at St. Mary's Church, Brooklyn on June 11, 1873, one, Sister Emily Cooper, was called by Bishop Benjamin Bosworth Smith to serve in Louisville, Kentucky. There, in 1880, the Episcopal Diocese founded The Home of the Innocents with Sister Emily as its first Director.

The purpose of the home was to save the small children who were suffering from neglect, disease, abandonment, and some whose parents simply could not afford their upkeep. The home provided the first kindergarten in Kentucky.

Sister Emily served until her health required retirement. She lived at the Orphanage of the Good Shepherd until her death. During the years in which Sister Emily was in charge, she assisted Bishop Thomas Dudley and some priests in the baptism of 284 children and the burial of an even larger number. In recent years it was discovered that over 220 children who died while in the care of the Home of the Innocents were buried in unmarked graves in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery; many surround the marked grave of Sister Emily.

Money was raised for statuary of Sister Emily bearing the names on bronze plaques of the children buried there. Many, otherwise nameless, had been given Christian names by Sister Emily when they were "marked as Christ's own forever."

Heavenly Father, we know not one of your children falls that they are not known to you. Receive, we pray, the souls of the little ones, the abandoned, the sick, the starving; the innocent and forgotten ones into the mercy of your Son who took them up into his arms and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." For this promise we give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested biblical readings:

Psalm 27:7-11

Isaiah 40:3-11

Matthew 18:10-14

Preface for Commemoration of the Dead