



February 25

Commemoration: Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, 1921

Elisabeth Fedde was born in Feda, near Flekkefjord, in Vest-Agder county, Norway. She was trained as a deaconess at the Lovisenberg Deaconess House under the supervision of Mother Katinka Guldberg who had herself been trained at the Fliedner Motherhouse in Kaiserswerth, Germany.

Elisabeth spent much of her early career in Troms where she lived and worked under harsh and primitive conditions. On her thirty-second birthday, Sister Elisabeth received a letter from her brother-in-law Gabriel Fedde challenging her to set up a ministry in New York City for Norwegian seamen there. She departed for the United States three months later and arrived on April 9, 1883.

Sister Elisabeth firmly established her work beginning on April 19 of the same year with the founding of the Norwegian Relief Society. The service establishing the society was presided by Pastor Mortensen; Gabriel had served as his secretary. In the beginning, the Relief Society was a boarding house with three small rooms rented for a price of \$9 per month and located at 109 Williams Street, near the Seaman's Church. Sister Elisabeth also made significant efforts at visiting the sick and distressed, often writing in a journal about her experiences.

In 1885, Fedde opened a deaconess house for the training of other women to help in her ministry. Originally, the house consisted of a nine bed hospital that ultimately became Lutheran Medical Center of Brooklyn. After remaining in New York for several years, she left at the request of Lutherans in Minnesota to come and minister to them. She arrived in Minneapolis in 1888 and established the Lutheran Deaconess Home and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church the next year and helped plan for a third hospital in Chicago.

Eventually, the work in America proved to be exhausting and Sister Elisabeth returned to Norway in November 1895 to Ola Sletteb, a suitor whom she had left to conduct her missionary work. The two were married shortly after her return. Elisabeth died on February 25, 1921. She is commemorated on that date on the Calendar of Saints by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Photo: Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, 1921