

THE ORDER OF DEACONESSSES IN THE M. E. CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

At the General Conference of 1888 a memorial was presented from the Rock River Conference asking for church legislation on the subject of deaconesses. At the same time the Bengal Annual Conference also presented a memorial asking that an order of deaconesses should be established, having authority to administer the sacraments to the women of India—the women of that country being so closely secluded in zenana life that, even when sick or dying, no consolation or spiritual help could be given them by the male missionaries. All the memorials and papers on the subject were put in the hands of a committee, of which Dr. Thoburn (at present missionary bishop to India and Malaysia) was chairman. The report of the committee was as follows:

“For some years past our people in Germany have employed this class of workers with the most blessed results, and we rejoice to learn that a successful beginning has recently been made in the same direction in this country. A home for deaconesses has been established in Chicago, and others of a similar character are proposed in other cities. There are also a goodly number of similar workers in various places; women who are deaconesses in all but name, and whose number might be largely increased if a systematic effort were made to accomplish this result. Your committee believes that God is in this movement, and that the Church should recognize the fact and provide some simple plan for formally connecting the work of these excellent women with the Church and directing their labors to the best possible results. They therefore recommend the insertion of the following paragraphs in the Discipline, immediately after ¶ 198, relating to exhorters:

“DEACONESSSES.

“1. The duties of the deaconesses are to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray with the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, save the sinning, and, relinquishing wholly all other pursuits, devote themselves in a general way to such forms of Christian labor as may be suited to their abilities.