

## *Epiphany Women*

*We toast them again!*

*by Frances Elliott*  
1990

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### *Preface*

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This brief history of the women's organization of the Parish of the Epiphany was suggested by Florence Jope Smith as a supplement to the Parish History and Chronology compiled by Lane McGovern. Vestry minutes and Parish Annual Reports give only a glimpse of what the women were doing, emphasizing mostly their efforts at fund raising in time of need. Lane has paid gracious tribute to the work of the ladies, and I have tried not to duplicate any of his material, but to add more detail where possible.

The women's records have not been carefully preserved, but those that remain reveal an amazing amount of study, devoted work and creative contributions far beyond quantitative measure. We fortunately can tap the memories of some of the great ladies who have served for many years and in many capacities. Doris Hills, Kate Shoemaker, Marian Wright, Florence Jope Smith, Edith Knoettner, Peggy McCreery and others have added to our knowledge of the enormous contributions "the women" have made to the foundation, growth and continued strength of the Parish.

There are bound to be sins of omission. It is not possible to name all those who have made service to Epiphany a top priority in their lives. The women's organization has provided the framework within which many have found a way to contribute as their time and family life permitted, and the sum of their accomplishments is impressive.

Frances Elliott

### *The Ladies' Guild and Womens' Guild (1883 -1921)*

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The Ladies' Guild was founded in 1883 before the organization of the Mission which preceded the Parish in Winchester. The year book record states "it is the oldest bit of organization in connection with the church here."

Minutes of the organization are recorded in beautiful script starting with 1892, when a constitution was drawn up under the supervision of the rector,

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the Reverend John Suter. Mr. Suter was always in attendance and opened each of the meetings with prayer. Membership listed 36, with an average attendance of 20 to 25. The home meetings lasted several hours, and it was specified that lunch be kept simple and consist of “one substantial course, cake and coffee with each lady bringing a napkin, knife, fork and spoon.”

In addition to four officers there were chairmen of several committees. The Mission Committee included sub-chairmen for the following departments: Foreign, Domestic, Indian, Colored, Mexican, Diocesan, Temperance, House of Mercy and City. Other committees were Hospitality, Social, Charitable and Work.

In the Parish Annual Reports the Ladies’ Guild is listed under the larger heading “WORK,” so it was no frivolous organization. Its stated principle was “the securing of a strong centralization of all departments of women’s work, with the preservation of the efficiency of local or specialized groups within the larger body. There should be opportunity for the one parish guild of women to know about and be interested in every conceivable branch of women’s work.”

The Missions Committee met as a study class and then presented to the Guild suggestions for their work. And what a lot of work these ladies did! There was a delegate to Woman’s Aid at the Episcopal City Mission, and response to needs there was constant. There was close interaction with the Diocesan Woman’s Auxiliary, and a delegate was sent to the meetings in Boston, thereby alerting the Guild to needs both in the City and in smaller parishes. For example, a church in Chelmsford had an emergency shortage of funds for heat, and the Guild quickly responded. The Charitable Branch found ways to help needy families in the Parish, being cautioned by the rector to use “tact and delicacy” in this work.

In March 1892, at the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Guild, Mr. Suter urged the members “to take always the broadest views of life and duty and to see that the flame burns brightly in our own hearts which will light us to devoted work for the world.” In this spirit the women seemed to give “outreach” the highest priority from the very beginning. But the needs at home were not neglected. The ladies worked vigorously on the “Land Fund” for the site of the church to be, continuing to meet and work even through the summers. The Annual Report of 1894 shows that twenty meetings were held that year, with an average attendance of twelve. After three years of uninterrupted meetings, it was voted to have a summer vacation!

Every summer highly successful lawn parties were held and all monies from such fetes were paid directly to the church treasurer. The *Winchester Star* noted after one such party that “the Episcopal Church, though small in numbers, makes up for this deficiency in energy.” One wonders what caused the communication of October 1894 to the Guild that “it is the sense of the Vestry that no fairs or entertainment shall be given in the name of the Church of the Epiphany without the sanction of the Vestry, and for definite

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stated objects.” Thereafter, the Guild minutes indicate a careful notification to the Vestry of any fund-raising plans.

The Annual Report of 1895 shows a busy year. Money was raised for the Land Fund. Whist parties were given to generate funds for charitable purposes. Members visited the sick and needy. Clothing was sent to the Episcopal City Mission. All this work was “by willing hands,” the Report observed, “but only a few women comparatively have taken part.” In 1896 there were ten regular meetings, with an average attendance of ten. In 1897 attendance rose to nineteen. Both years most of the work was devoted to charity, particularly through the Episcopal City Mission. In addition, “rich vestments for the Rector” were made with skill and devotion by members of the Ladies’ Guild.

In 1898 all efforts were directed toward the Land Fund, with the Guild pledging itself to pay for 1000 feet of land as soon as possible. A succession of chafing dish suppers, whist evenings, musicales, cooking lessons, plays and dancing parties followed. In December of that year the Treasurer of the Church asked for an “emergency loan” of \$100 from the Guild. This was paid by the Chairman of the “Open Table,” a new committee which arranged cake sales, and which had started an annual sale near Thanksgiving (possibly the beginning of the harvest fairs held for many years).

The minutes of these early years make interesting reading, for these ladies were creative in their fund raising, but they never neglected to include some spiritual or educational material in their meetings. While they sewed to help the newly established local district nurse, they also had afternoon readings at the suggestion of Mr. Suter.

In April, 1899, Epiphany Women celebrated the Parish’s completion of its installment purchase of land for a new church site, and turned to raising money for the Building Fund. They voted to keep the proceeds from their various efforts in the bank until the new church’s activity actually started, adding that “though greatly interested in our own work. we have not forgotten other interests.” From the Secretary’s report of that year comes a note which could be a cry from any church in any year: “There are many women in our Parish who take no part in the Church work, but perhaps they would gladly do so if they knew of the many ways in which they might assist. How shall we reach them?”

With the move into the new building in 1905, the Guild’s work expanded. Meetings occurred every two weeks on Tuesday afternoons, always ending with “a social cup.” Notes appear concerning Sunday School activities. Seventeen teachers were listed (mostly women), including Mrs. William Sache, whose contributions to the Parish continued for many years.

A letter was sent to every woman member to join one of the standing committees of the Guild, which included Missions, St. Cross (predecessor of

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Altar Guild), Hospitality, Charities, Vestments, Open Table, Housekeeping, Church Periodical Club, United Thank Offering and Church Temperance Society. Active membership numbered 70. The programs covered abroad range: there were talks on mission work in Nebraska, Japan, Puerto Rico, and among Italians in Washington, D.C., cooking lectures, a pre-Thanksgiving sale, a doll sale and several social events. Contributions included work for the Sailors' Haven in Charlestown, the Winchester Home for the Aged, mission work in Mexico, Alaska, and Puerto Rico, plus special efforts to meet a portion of the cost of the proposed Parish House.

For a number of years the records show an "Epiphany Circle," which was organized in December 1895 with the motto: "If it is not right, do not do it. If it is not true, do not say it." (Just say "No"?) This group, with a membership of about 15 girls from 10 to 14 years of age, met Monday afternoons, and did a remarkable amount of sewing and "gifting" for Boston Floating Hospital, Boston City Mission and the Winchester Old Peoples Home. The pedestal of the Font was their gift to the Church. The St. Cross Committee, through the early 1900's, cared for the altar and altar flowers, and delivered flowers to shut-ins and those who were ill. The Rector's Stall was their gift. The communicants' rail was the gift of the whole Guild.

In these early years a volunteer choir of women sang at special services during Lent and served with the regular choir in summer. Apparently, the "regular" choir was all male (with a "Choir Mother" to take care of vestments, of course). It was at a Parish Supper on January 6, 1909 that Edith Sache paid tribute to the work of all these ladies with her delightful "Ballad of the Epiphany Women." After twitting the men,

If the rector or vestry  
some new plans have laid,  
they call on the women  
to lend them their aid.

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If the men are discouraged,  
and finances are low,  
they exclaim with one voice,  
"Give the women a show!"

Oh, these men they will fret,  
and these men they will fume,  
but success is assured  
with the bonnet and plume!

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she concluded with a well-deserved toast to the Parish's female powers-behind-the-throne:

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Ah—you'll talk of your Clubs  
and Epiphany men.  
But Epiphany women—  
we toast them again!

A Quiet Day was held in March 1909. An invitation was sent to all women in the North Suburban District of the Diocese to join in this worship service. It has continued through the years as a meaningful part of the women's program in this Parish.

In 1912 the Vestments Committee gave a party for the children of the Parish and their friends, with games for the younger children and dancing for the others. This apparently became a successful annual event. Epiphany Circle continued to thrive under Mrs. Sache's leadership, and the girls made curtains for the Parish House, in addition to comfort bag for sailors, scrap-books for Boston City Mission, and sewing for the Visiting Nurses.

The Reverend Murray Dewart, who came in 1912, must have continued Mr. Suter's encouragement of the work of the women, for over half the space in the Episcopal Messengers (the church paper from 1910-14) was devoted to the activities and contributions of the women's committees. Monthly meetings of the Guild had now shifted to the Parish House, where pertinent topics such as "neighborhood work at the North End among the Italians" were presented. There was continuing emphasis on the work of the Episcopal City Mission, which included support for the Sailors' Haven in Charlestown and St. Mary's, East Boston, with the aim that "every sailor who comes to this port may be hospitably entertained and have plenty of good reading matte... which keeps them from the saloons."

By 1912 the Parish Nominating Committee usually had one woman member, of the three serving, and this pattern continued for a number of years. Appointments were apparently made by the rector. No women were nominated for Parish offices, nor was the idea discussed in Vestry minutes until 1957. From 1939 on, however, delegates to the Archdeaconry Convention were women.

Records of the women's organization are incomplete in the period of World War I. However, Mrs. Sache was president of the Women's Guild in 1912, so one can presume that numerous activities continued both within the Church and in connection with community war efforts. For some of the war years union services were held in the Protestant churches so that the community's limited ration of coal could go to heat the schools. The rector took a sabbatical leave to serve as military chaplain.

By 1919 there were nine churches in town. Winchester's history indicates that the churches were important centers of social activity, with men's and women's societies, missionary societies, and young people's groups playing an important part in social life.

*The Church Service League (1921 - 1961)*

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In 1921, following a national pattern, the name of the women's organization became the Church Service League. New by-laws were drawn up. Work was carried forward through Departments of Mission and Church Extension, Religious Education, Social Service, Worship and Prayer, Finance and Stewardship. The meeting format was a sewing meeting with box lunch and coffee. Other activities included evening bridge, luncheon bridge, a mother and daughter luncheon, a silver tea with music, and a rummage sale and bazaar. A Junior Service League for young people of high school age and a Church School Service League for boys and girls provided activities for younger members.

Upon the resignation of the Reverend Murray Dewart in 1922 there was an attempt to set up a committee, including three women, to canvass for candidates for the rector of the Parish. This was voted down, however, and the choice was returned to the Vestry. Four out of eleven members of the 1925 Parish Stewardship Committee were women—perhaps a sign that women were beginning to be allowed to move into the larger church organization. In 1927 the new Parish House was opened. Also in that year Deaconess Helen Lane was honored by the women for her service to the Church—an occasion marked by another poem by Mrs. Sache.

Records of the women's activities in the thirties are scarce, but Kate Shoemaker, who came to the Parish in 1938, is a wonderful source. She has served in every possible role in the women's organization up to the present day. She was Mission Chairman for the Diocesan Board of Episcopal Church Women, as well as being active in many town organizations. This seems to be the pattern in a number of instances, for the names of women active at Epiphany appear as leaders in other charitable activities in Winchester as well—Winchester Hospital, Winton Club, Red Cross, En Ka and others. The women were now becoming active in Town Meeting, and were involved in efforts to enable our schools to meet the needs of a growing population in the boom period of the late twenties.

An activity begun in this period was the Thrift Shop, founded by Eva Pringle; Beginning in a small way, it grew quickly and performed a service for the whole community for many years. Later it became the Epiphany Exchange.

The years of the Depression were difficult ones for Winchester and for Epiphany, and the ladies must have directed much effort to the Citizens' Community Relief Committee, which coordinated welfare and relief to those most in need. The Reverend Dwight Hadley came to Epiphany in 1931 in a time when the Parish was struggling under debt.

As the Parish and Winchester struggled back to better times the thirties brought concern for events in Europe. Bruce Stone's *History of Winchester* notes that "during the months that followed, Winchester organized to aid those...in bombed out Britain. The Fortnightly and the ladies of the First Congregational Church, the Church of the Epiphany, and the Winton Club

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made and sent over everything from afghans to Royal Air Force scarfs.” Doris Hills, who had come here from England in 1928, recalls the tremendous effort of the Church Service League during those dark days. Working in cooperation with the local Red Cross, League members made many sweaters, woolen dresses, wool socks and hospital garments. Doris adds that the fellowship of the Sewing Group of Epiphany, of which she was a steadfast member for many years, was something she treasures. She too has served quietly and efficiently in every possible capacity, including Chairman.

Fortunately Mrs. Hills kept some of the reports from her time as Chairman in 1939-40, and these show the Church Service League with 21 active committees represented on the Council in addition to the officers. There was an active Evening Branch along with the Tuesday Luncheon Group and other daytime activities. In a two-year period, the Work and Supply Committee did a large assignment for the Diocese to benefit the Pennywise Thrift Shop, much sewing for the Red Cross, and over 18,000 surgical dressings for the Winchester Hospital. Beyond the Parish, representatives attended monthly meetings at the Women’s Aid to the City Mission, served at the Sailors’ Haven in Charlestown, and attended Diocesan meetings and conferences. Successful bazaars made it possible for the League to pass on a gift to the Vestry to reduce the mortgage on the Parish House—“the first reduction in twenty years:”

The Altar Guild of the Church Service League was quite active in the forties. Mr. Hadley regularly attended their meetings and expressed appreciation for their support. They worked hard to supply communion linen for Army camp altars and donated communion vessels to chaplains in the Army and Navy. Mrs. Sache was an active Altar Guild member and leader, and notes indicate that she urged members to visit the Chapel for personal or intercessory prayer. An inconspicuous receptacle was placed there where one could request a prayer. Yearly participation in the World Day of Prayer was noted in the records from 1940 on, and became a well established ecumenical activity. Quiet Mornings at St. Margaret’s were arranged in close cooperation with the rector. In Holy Week the Altar Guild took responsibility for arranging a Quiet Morning in cooperation with the Tuesday Luncheon Group.

Altar Guild minutes contain much discussion of the delivery of altar flowers after the service. Mr. Hadley worked closely with the Guild to see that flowers went to those passing through new grief. He also tried to take altar flowers to the families of those who had lost sons in service, timing this near the anniversary of the death or of a birthday. The rector’s visit made the flowers doubly appreciated, but flower chairmen helped as needed.

The minutes describe a number of educational meetings, demonstrations of altar preparation, and a trip to St. Margaret’s Convent in Boston to see the making of Communion wafers. (St. Margaret’s sent wafers to churches all over the world, even to Japan.) Miss Ethel Davis and Mrs. Sache did careful work in recording memorials. Miss Davis completed a booklet for altar guild workers, as well as a descriptive booklet of the windows in the Church

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and other memorials. Ruth Hart and Carrie Williams were active in this period, each later becoming a directress of the Altar Guild. The behind-the-scenes efficiency and dependability of the Guild was often praised by the rector.

In the fifties we see the women achieving more prominence in parish decision-making groups. The beloved Dwight Hadley resigned in 1952, and the "Committee to Select a New Rector" numbered ten, including five women: Marion Grush, Kate Shoemaker, Betty Haley, Marjorie Livingstone, and Frances Hultgren.

The Parish was without a rector for fourteen months. The Reverend John Ellison came in 1953, and ushered in a period of considerable activity. One early project was the organization of an aid committee for a group of 21 Hungarian refugees who needed housing and help in adjusting to this country. The women took an active part in this, under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Y. Hills.

Many present day members still speak of the "Tuesday Group," which was such an integral part of the women's organization in this period. They met monthly in homes of the members and heard speakers on a variety of topics. There was emphasis on bringing in new members. The women gave financial support to the Sunday School, made lunch at Church on Tuesdays for the Work Day, and brought gifts for distribution to the women's reformatories.

A large project undertaken in 1955 was the purchase of pew cushions for the Church. Mrs. Hills recalls that it was a first for a woman to go before the Vestry to present a plan for a purchase, but this she did at Dr. Ellison's request. It was voted through with a sizable contribution from the women.

In 1955, with Dr. Ellison's encouragement, the Church Service League was reorganized under the "Unified Plan" set up by the National Church. The Plan stated that "Life is growth, growth is change, and change is an ever challenging experience. Regardless of how many things appear new, remember they are built on the strong foundation prepared by all the able persons who have gone before." Under this reorganization the Church Service League had a four-fold purpose: "to unite the women of the Church in a program of worship, study, service and fellowship, which will deepen and strengthen their own spiritual lives, and lead them into service for the parish, the community, the diocese, the nation and the world."

The organization chart was complex. It incorporated all the existing activities plus ten circles. Each woman in the parish chose the time best suited for her to attend a circle meeting. Four morning, three afternoon, and three evening circles were formed, with each circle choosing its own leader, who became a member of the League Council. Florence Jope, who helped organize the circles, remembers this as a period of great strength, learning and productive activity.



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The excellent minutes of the Council of these years (lost for some time and only recently found) reveal good participation: a Council of 33 members—4 officers and 29 chairmen of standing committees, in addition to 10 Circle leaders, coordinated by Dorothy Howard. No wonder so much was accomplished! The Council meeting always began with Holy Communion, and all were urged to attend.

Circles met in the homes of members once a month to study, do handwork, knit bandages for lepers, reclaim usable clothing for shipment to distressed areas, mend prayer books and hymnals, or make surgical dressings for the Winchester Hospital. Some adopted a mission (including missions in Korea, Japan, Okinawa, and South Dakota) to which they sent clothing and cash. Some pressed vestments, and each in turn served lunch on Tuesday Work Day.

Other groups worked alongside the circles carrying out the many needs of a growing parish. The Hospitality Committee greeted members at the church door, followed up newcomers with calls, and supplied transportation to circle meetings, church, and church functions. A welcoming tea in Spring and Fall was given for a number of years. The Christian Social Relations Committee, now very active, furnished a rented house for the Vandenburg family from Holland, and worked with other churches in helping the Hungarian refugees settling in the area. For a number of years Mrs. Alfred Denley led a group which helped the Seamen's Club in Boston by arranging for Sunday parties and an occasional dance.

The Altar Guild, a group whose service was performed quietly and skillfully, and whose role is central to the worship of the Church, was always a part of the women's activities through the years. Yearly reports contain many tributes to these loyal ladies who gave and still give so many hours of which the congregation is not always aware. The Vestment Committee was another loyal cadre working behind the scenes. In 1956, parish reports show fifty women were caring for clergy and choir vestments. In 1956 Mrs. Milton Brown was asked to serve on the Canvass Committee—a first!

General meetings had speakers of considerable note. For instance, in 1957 then Archdeacon Burgess (later Bishop) spoke on his many concerns and responsibilities in the inner city, including the Episcopal City Mission, Morville House, the Seamen's Club (the only social agency dealing with both seamen and sailors), St. James and Roxbury Crossing. He also emphasized the need for more work in hospitals and hospital chaplaincies. He expressed gratitude for the women's support through the Pennywise Thrift Shop and other gifts over the years.

With respect to the many causes to which women gave both time and money, a concern for careful stewardship of hard earned funds was at all times evident. There was always a careful study or a special speaker to highlight the need, but also to provide full knowledge of the way the money would be used.

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To coordinate activities for the entire parish it was customary to hold a Planning Day on an early June Saturday. All parish groups were included and each was given a sample calendar and asked to fit in dates for their activities that year. Everyone worked around established events on the Church Calendar. This was an excellent way to stimulate planning; it gave each organization a head start and a better overview of what various groups were doing.

The Parish Nominating Committee of 1956-57 finally raised the question of women serving on the Vestry. It reported to the Parish Meeting with a resolution stating, "Resolved, that it be the wish of the Parish that nothing in the wording of the By-Laws be subject to any interpretation that would exclude any member of the Parish from any Parish office by reason of gender, providing he or she is otherwise qualified." Lengthy discussion followed, but the resolution passed. In 1958 Mrs. Merton E. Grush was elected as the first woman vestry-person. She had served from 1948 through 1954 as the President of the New England Council of Episcopal Church Women, had sat as a member of the Diocesan Board, and had served two terms on the Bishop's Council. In 1955 she had been one of five women representing our denomination at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Churches. After election to the Vestry she became the liaison with the Church Service League. The women quickly responded to Vestry needs for support of the publication of the *Three Crowns*, and for funds for equipment for the new kitchen. In the years following there was rarely a year when special needs of the Parish were not met, at least in part, by the women's organization.

The late fifties brought a period of tremendous growth leading to the decision to build new facilities for the Church School. Mrs. William Hopkins, through this period, served as Executive Assistant to the Reverend Charles Batten (our much beloved Director of Christian Education) and she made an enormous contribution to the life of the Parish. Miss Katharine Philbrick skillfully managed the financial affairs of the large Church School, and many women already serving the Church Service League in other capacities responded to the urgent need for more teachers for the School. Laura Parkin (Betty Coffelt's mother) was one who served faithfully as Church School teacher, as well as filling many other roles.

The Church Service League increased the scope and variety of its work and, in studying the Middle East, endeavored to correlate its educational program with that of the Board of Christian Education and the National Church. Six circles continued active programs of study and work, sending clothing to Indian missions in the West, helping the University of Beirut with needed books and magazines, making leper bandages, and supporting a parishioner, Henry Horn, in his Church Army work. The Parish Nominating Committee continued to include one woman chosen by the Council. At this period it was the custom to choose a woman who had been a former member of the Council of the Church Service League and who had a good understanding of the work of the women. The Nominating Committee of the League under Jeanne Nyere's leadership developed an excellent "talent and interest card file" for

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each of the women. For a number of years this served as a helpful resource for committee leaders, drawing women into service on the League Council, as well as general Parish work.

One report of these years asks, "How do the women of the Church feel about this year? Did you learn something? Did you give of yourself? Has your life been in any way enriched? If only one person can answer 'Yes' then every effort has been worth while."

Florence Jope as President drew up a careful set of notebooks giving detailed job descriptions for each member of the Church Service League Council. The number of activities carried on by the women was remarkable. The Council functioned well as a forum for communication and coordination of efforts, with continuing four-fold purpose of worship, study, service, and fellowship.

The *worship* program included two Quiet Days, participation in the World Day of Prayer, prayer within the context of the Council meetings, and participation in Tuesday communion preceding every Council meeting.

A *study* program focused on the Church of South India, and from this the Parish was led into a most rewarding experience. In 1962 Bishop Solomon of South India came to speak at a tea given by the Women of Epiphany. This prompted the women to undertake support of a Bible woman (a teacher of the Bible in Indian villages). This special gift provided a nucleus of a fund to fulfill Solomon's dream of sending a clergyman to the United States for training in our modern pastoral theology; Christopher Duraisingh was the remarkable young man who came. He made a great contribution to the life of the Parish, and especially to the young people with whom he worked. It became a yearly custom to hold a Valentine card party ("Heart Line to India") to aid the work of the Church of South India as well as to help with Chris's support. In May each year, for a time, there was a children's festival tea ("Doings for Domakal") to benefit Chris and his work.

In *service* the policy of the Church Service League continued to be that funds going to others were to be equal to or more than funds given within the Parish. Service activities included the Church Periodical Club, Missions Committee, Maintenance and Meals, Sewing Group and Surgical Dressings, plus participation in the Church World Service, United Thank Offering, Altar Guild and Vestments, Christian Social Relations, and Church Home Society.

The Church Home Society was a private child care agency associated with the Episcopal Church to assist unwed mothers to place children for adoption. The chairperson on the Service League Council sought creative ways to help this diocesan organization. Silver coffees were held, and Bundle Teas were given to restock the shelves of the Pennywise Thrift Shop in Boston, which furthered the work of the Society. For a number of years "living trees" provided a chance for young people to share by placing foil wrapped

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coins on small trees placed in the Narthex during Advent.

Cartons of clothing were collected after each rummage sale and taken to Sister Mary Christine for the women prisoners at the Charles Street jail.

Epiphany women were active in the Diocese as well. In 1957, Mrs. Harlow Russell was District Chairman of the Women's Division of the Church Service League. Marjorie Nichols was active in helping the Girls' Friendly Society, and interested the Council in the needs of their camp in Milford, New Hampshire, where girls might go for a reasonable price. Support was voted for this "Holiday House" for a number of years.

*Fellowship* was fostered by working and studying together in the above activities, by the Tuesday Group and Church Service League Hospitality welcoming tea, and the Circles. The World Day of Prayer gave interdenominational fellowship, and it was a custom of long standing to extend invitations to other church women's groups to attend general meetings. Little has been said in these pages about the women's means of fund raising to carry forward their many concerns, and perhaps this should fall under the "fellowship" heading, as the principal aim of fairs, bazaars, rummage sales and other fund raisers has been not just raising money (necessary as that may be) but to bring Epiphany women together to know one another better while working for a common cause. More than forty women were listed as chairpersons for various activities in the November 1955 "Bazaar" and they in turn involved many others in this successful event. The chairmen of these fairs deserve tremendous praise, for it was a mammoth task to coordinate and manage such an event involving so many different activities within a limited time and space. It was quietly understood that there was to be no comparison of financial detail of the current year with that of the preceding one, so that the ongoing spirit of fellowship would not be damaged by divisive competition.

As the National Woman's Auxiliary had expressed a preference for money raised by pledges and offerings, an attempt was made in 1957 to ask for pledges for a Fairless Fair. This did not bring in sufficient funds to support the many requests made of the women. However, it did prompt the suggestion that there might be a twofold commitment to the women's organization—One of work and/or one of money. Most felt the sociability of working together was the best reason for any of the fund raising activities.

### *Women of Epiphany (1961 - Present)*

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In 1958 the women of the Episcopal Church were organized as the General Division of Women's Work of the National Council. The name "Episcopal Church Women" was adopted, and the women's groups in various parishes were to be called women of that parish. Once again by-laws were revised, and in March 1961 the name "Women of Epiphany" was voted. The purpose was stated as follows: "to unite the women in a program of worship, service, stewardship and fellowship which will deepen and strengthen their

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spiritual love and lead them in service in and beyond the Parish.”

It was emphasized that all women parishioners were automatically members, and special efforts continued to involve a greater proportion of the women. Flyers were sent out prior to all meetings in addition to publicity in the “Three Crowns.”

The circles now numbered only six, but were vigorous, and there were continuing activities on Tuesday Work Days. The Tuesday Group was incorporated into Hospitality, with some sadness noted at these changes. In 1963-64 Hospitality welcomed 38 newcomers. Over 14,700 dressings for Winchester Hospital were prepared on Tuesdays, and warm clothing was taken to St. Stephen’s regularly. (The Epiphany-St. Stephen’s link is a long-standing one, as Mr. Hadley had been a curate there early in his ministry.)

The Prayer Group continued active under the leadership of Anna Havard. Ruth Chipman and Sunny Kirkwood worked on a landscape sub-committee in planning the Cloister Garden. They recommended in their notes that contemplative colors—blues, greens and white—be used.

The accomplishments of the Women of Epiphany from 1962 to 1964 were so outstanding that a whole issue of the *Three Crowns* was devoted to a detailed summary. Contributions for projects within the Parish included money given for the Chapel of Praise, where Inez Woodberry had designed the panels for the carving on the pews. Also, the Prayer Group gave a new credence table; an Elizabethan trestle table for Hadley Hall was given in memory of Margaret Hadley; and card tables, sewing machines, kitchen storm windows, a public address system for Hadley Hall and various other necessities were purchased by the Women. An equal amount was allocated outside the Parish, including help to Bishop Solomon in South India, to the Protestant chaplaincy at Walpole prison, and to other carefully chosen causes.

The Reverend John Ellison resigned in 1965, and a search committee of five, including two women (Marjorie Nichols and Frances Elliott) was appointed by the Vestry. In May 1966 the Reverend John Bishop accepted the call. From the outset the new rector took a great interest in the work of the women. He was the key speaker for the opening general meeting in November, 1966, where he outlined his hopes for new directions in the program of the women, and recommended the appointment of more women to Vestry committees. This was soon implemented.

The Women of Epiphany through their Hospitality Committee welcomed the new rector and his family with a series of 21 Open Houses, giving parishioners friendly contact with each other as well.

The circles (now only three) continued active, asking the new Rector to speak on their current topic of study, “The Restless Church.” Dorothy Howard was a prime mover in the St. Elizabeth’s Circle, and gave generously of her time and talent for a number of years. The Round Table Circle con-

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tinued strong, working on gifts for women at the Charles Street jail and for the halfway house "Vei Lomani." Betsy Bishop, the rector's wife, reinforced this effort by speaking at a general meeting about her work at the jail with Sister Mary Christine.

In 1965 Sue Scott, with the encouragement of the rector, expanded the work of the Christian Social Relations Committee to include, in addition to families suffering misfortune, the elderly, shut-ins, and all parishioners confined to nursing homes. This group has continued in this direction, and expanded, through the years. In 1978, it became the Epiphany Visitors. Financial assistance for a considerable period came from the Murray Dewart Fund.

In 1968, under Barbara Towner's leadership, a new service began, at first called "Monthly Luncheons for Retired Citizens." This was designed not to make a profit but to fill a need-to provide a tasty luncheon and to give retired citizens a chance to come together for food and fellowship and a light program. This was open to all seniors and was an immediate success. The following year other church groups offered to take a turn at hosting the Luncheon, and a great activity was established.

The Women of Epiphany have interacted with the women of other churches long before there were formal structures. The first activity planned together on a yearly basis was the World Day Of Prayer, a single symbolic voice of prayer in 130 countries circling the world. In Winchester the Protestant churches arranged this special day for a number of years. After Vatican II, they were joined by the Roman Catholic churches, and later by representatives of the Christian Science Church. Now the Church Women United Board coordinates this event, in addition to its many other activities-Meals on Wheels, UNICEF sales, Senior Citizens lunches, Church World Service, and Sale for the Blind-which bring women of all faiths together for both faith and fellowship.

The acceptance of women into the ranks of convention delegates to the General Convention in Houston marked 1970 as a significant year for Episcopal Church Women everywhere. Marjorie Nichols and Florence Jope were delegate and alternate from the Diocese of Massachusetts, making two out of the six delegates from Epiphany; Marjorie had been President of the Diocesan Board of Episcopal Church Women in 1966, and was elected province chairman of the National United Thank Offering, later becoming National Chairman. In 1972 she served as lay delegate to the standing committee of the Diocese.

In 1970-71 the year's theme was "Where In The World Does Our Money Go?" Interests were current and far reaching. There was emphasis on changing meeting times and topics to attract younger women, as well as the need for supplying baby sitters and for focusing programs in new directions, including women's liberation. The notes indicate disappointment in response, and the end of the circles came soon thereafter.

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Women were becoming involved in newly formed task forces and Parish committees. Fortunately many had gained valuable experience through service on the Council and were well prepared for Vestry committee tasks, and provided easy liaison with the Women's Council.

This was, however, a time of some disagreement among parishioners about the Trial Liturgy and about the role of the Church and its involvement in what were felt to be political issues, so that the Canvass results were lower than expected. The Vestry's recommendation to postpone payments on the mortgage principal for 1970 sparked a lively discussion in the Parish Annual Meeting. A special request from Shirley Potts asked for authority to plan events to retire the \$10,000 mortgage remaining on Hadley Hall. So began the "Monthly Meals for Mortgage Money" organized and served by Shirley and her committee of 17, culminating in the burning of the mortgage on June 22, 1972.

In the mid-seventies Jeanne Nyere as Chairmen of the Women was having difficulty in finding leaders to chair the Fair. She decided to reach out to the talented women who had worked professionally for years but had only recently retired. Hilda Hope, Dorothy Lamed, and Edna Parks were three who were drawn into action. They led successful fairs and other events, and moved into other leadership roles as well. The imaginative titles of the Fairs in these years give a clue to the spirited leadership: All Hallowtide, Drury Lane, Yankee Doodle, Happiness Is a Family A-Fair, Holiday Adventure, Story Book, Jubilee, etc. In some years a duplicate auction or a lively talent auction was added as a fund raiser.

The Prayer Group has continued through the years quietly going about its mission dedicated to the spiritual needs of those who seek help through the intercession of prayer. Meeting following the Tuesday service of Holy Communion, it gives comfort, understanding and quiet support to those who seek this source of strength. Inez Woodberry and Jackie Leonard are among those who have provided leadership to this Group.

The Sewing Group from the earliest years of the Parish has contributed an enormous amount of work for both near and distant causes, and those who have given of their time and talent in this way have formed fast friendships. Doris Hills, Dorothy Lamed, and more recently Teddie Poulos provided leadership and untold hours to this activity. The Quilting Group developed as a special interest for a small number, but the contributions were large, as the quilts were beautifully made and much prized. Edith Knoettner, Betty Rutherford, Marjorie Kaufman, and Mary Govoni have been prime movers.

The Spring and Fall Rummage Sales have been another activity which has brought income to the women year after year. They also encouraged recycling long before it was the "in" thing to do. In the sixties leftover articles were put to good use by being carefully sorted and taken to Father Gardinar's Thrift Shop, the Church Home Society, or Morgan Memorial. This activity continues to the present day and nets a tidy sum almost free of over-

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head. In recent years one dedicated worker, Mary Govoni, has managed this event again and again. She organizes a corps of workers, beginning with help from the YPF for transporting the rummage to Hadley Hall, and including sorters, pricers, and finally cheerful and gracious salespeople, who have given Epiphany the reputation of having a well managed and worthwhile sale.

Publicity Chairmen on the Council have been vital to the success of every event, providing timely articles to newspapers, colorful art work and posters, material for the *Three Crowns*, and other innovative ways of making the women's work visible and effective.

By the late seventies the number of women working outside the home was growing, and the Women of Epiphany found it harder to enlist volunteers in their program, as did all volunteer groups. The custom of keeping detailed annual reports and carefully preserved notebooks seems to have been set aside, so activities are not as well documented, though contributions both in time and money continued large.

The Christian Social Relations Committee changed its name to "Epiphany Visitors" and was given much direction and inspiration by Jeanne Sproat, pastoral associate, and later the first woman to be ordained a priest in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Her talk on pastoral visiting to the sick and shut-ins, given first to this Committee and later at an open meeting of the women, has served as a model for this Committee's role. The Committee also asked the Reverend George Hunter to speak on his work concerning "Death and Dying." This later was presented by the Pastoral Care Committee as a topic in Adult Class. Often ideas approached in smaller groups of the women are later shared with the whole church.

The Mission Committee became "Outreach," with the Council representative also serving on the Vestry Outreach Committee to provide coordination and exchange of information. The women voted support for their own special concerns, as well as those recommended by the Vestry. These included the women's Campaign for Social Justice, Parents United for Child Care, Harbor Me, the Big Sister program, Hospice, St. Monica's, and Meals on Wheels. Time as well as money was given to inner city needs. Patricia Hitchcock led a number of volunteers serving in the Boston School Library program. Nancy Budd was the prime mover in organizing support for the St. James Tutorial program in Roxbury. The Women gave regular financial support, and some help as drivers, to this worthwhile and expanding program.

The Women also took a leadership role in socially responsible investment, and voted that \$2,000 at no interest be lent to the Boston Community Loan Fund to provide financing for affordable housing.

Growing out of Church Women United and Meals on Wheels, a program called "Share A Meal," led by Hilde Zerwekh, provided meals for shut-ins



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on Thanksgiving and Christmas—holidays when Meals on Wheels did not serve. Through Church Women United's perseverance the Meditation Room at the Winchester Hospital was dedicated in 1965, and the Women of Epiphany, represented by Virginia Bird, gave support. It is interesting to realize how much the Church Women United, now representing all the churches in Winchester, has grown in strength and accomplishments. Its work, in which the Women of Epiphany participate enthusiastically, includes the Christmas sale of UNICEF cards, help for Church World Service, the Sale for the Blind, Seniors Luncheon, Meals on Wheels, Share-a-Meal, and the World Day of Prayer.

Through the years Epiphany has had able Episcopal Church Women's Representatives who keep the Council up to date on the needs and news of the Diocesan ECW. Our women have taken leadership roles on the ECW Board as well, including Marjorie Nichols, Jeanne Nyere, Florence Jope Smith, and Hilde Zerwekh.

It was at the October 1985 Triennial General Convention that an independent national Episcopal Church Women was voted—free of control from any department of the Episcopal Church. This structure was not seen as a separation, but as a means of assisting the women of the Episcopal Church in carrying on Christ's work of reconciliation, mission and ministry in the world, and in taking their place in the life, governance, and worship of the Church.

In October 1987 the Women of Epiphany, led by Laurie Malouf, sponsored a special day of celebration marking the tenth anniversary of women's ordination in Massachusetts. Those attending explored "how women live faith today, what changes the decade has brought, and what vision there is for tomorrow." This was the first educational conference by and for laity that truly explored the potential for women's ministries, and was a great success.

Jane Gould, assistant rector, helped to bring into reality a Mothers' Morning in which child care was provided, thus allowing mothers to meet for adult discussion of topics of interest. The response has been very positive, and the Council has gladly supported this program when requested. A Women's Bible Study was another group facilitated by the Reverend Jane Gould in response to an expressed need.

To give support to the Jewish community in Winchester, Shir Tikvah, the women (and some husbands too) have offered child care for the Jewish Holy Days. In turn, Jewish men and women of Shir Tikvah have provided loving child care during our Easter services.

One small note: It has been stressed again and again that the Women prefer the acronym WE not WOE. WE signifies the desire to work together with everyone in the Parish in a deep sense of fellowship to benefit our Church and its work in the world. Though by-laws, office titles and portfolios change to meet the needs of the times, certain tasks continue to be performed with creativity and devotion by the Women of Epiphany.

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The Women have been responsible for the kitchen management for many years under various titles going back to one originally called “Parish Housekeeper,” and later “Maintenance.” In 1988 a large part of this responsibility was transferred to the Property Committee and Vestry, and the sextons. The Women still continue to donate funds, however, and recently helped with the purchase of a new refrigerator. Help has also continued with purchasing, inventory, and some laundry chores.

The Hospitality role for the Women has been an ongoing one, again under various titles, but always rising to the occasion for receptions following all the special events of the Parish (confirmation, arriving or departing clergy, special visiting speakers) and when requested, for simple refreshments following memorial services. Jackie Leonard, Betty Coffelt, Johanna Hill, and many others have been leaders on these occasions, assisted by scores of willing helpers and parishioners who are ever generous with their donations of homemade delicacies. In 1986, a portion of Hospitality’s past role of welcoming newcomers was transferred to a Vestry committee, at the rector’s suggestion.

The format for the Fair in recent years has changed to meet changing times. The Fair now takes place in early December, and is titled “The Christmas Goose Fair.” Outside crafts people may purchase tables, along with our own regular tables, and a cafe style food service is used, which has proven very successful.

The Parish of the Epiphany is fortunate in having a good supply of altar linens, vestments, and other equipment with which to enrich the setting for the services in the Chapel and Church. Through memorial and thanksgiving gifts many have had a share in making flowers and other material things available. The Altar Guild continues to care for these meaningful symbols, working closely with the clergy, and operating on a separate budget. Many women choose this as their way of service to Epiphany, and a number have given countless hours serving as Altar Guild Directress, or leading committees for care of linens and flowers. Deborah Willis, Marian Wright, Ruth Hart, Mrs. Bernard Chapin, Midge Merriam, Florence Jope Smith, Edith Voges Beal, Margaret Hemmingsen, Marilyn Georgis, Ruth Kerr, Charlotte Edgar, and Ellen Browning are some of the leaders, who, along with many helpers, have served in this capacity and adjusted to all the liturgical changes through the years. One very talented member, Nadine Suhrbier, has enriched our worship with her colorful and beautifully handcrafted hangings and banners.

In 1988 those who chose to work with the flowers on the Altar were organized into a separate group, the “Flower Guild” under the leadership of Deborah Broadhurst. This has expanded to offer an enjoyable and creative form of service for those who enjoy working with flowers—within the church, Hadley Hall, the Chapel, and in the Cloister Garden and plantings surrounding the church.

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The care of vestments has been a labor of love by a small number of women, working behind the scenes, who have assured that the vestments of the three choirs and the clergy are always in order. Dither Swanson, Eleanor Banks, Emily Holt, Winnie Bourne, Edna Parks, Stella Gallant and many others have served in this way.

The United Thank Offering Custodians faithfully keep this worthy cause (which began in 1886) before the Women and try to interest all parishioners in using a "Blue Box" in thankfulness for God's blessings. UTO contributions continue to grow. In 1985, the total offering presented at the General Convention was well over two million dollars.

The Worship Chairmen of the Women have helped to plan the corporate worship, make arrangements for Quiet Days or Evenings, and foster the spiritual enrichment of the membership.

The Secretaries, both Recording and Corresponding, have been vital in keeping accurate records of the Council and General Meetings, and in notifying members of meeting times, as well as handling correspondence graciously and efficiently.

The Treasurers have performed with great accuracy and financial acumen, keeping the books of the women in good order and interacting with the Parish Finance Committee. Alison Taber was one who went from serving the women to serving ably for six years as Parish Treasurer.

The Vice Presidents of the Council have usually been in charge of program content for meetings, and what a variety of stimulating topics have been addressed! Interest in many of the causes supported by the Women has been initiated and stimulated by a talk from one intimately involved.

Special tribute should be paid to those who have served as President of the Women, for there is no job description that could possibly cover all the many ways they are called upon to serve. Changing times always bring new challenges, and it is to the leader of the women that the Church turns again and again to organize an event, either planned or unexpected. The structure of the Council provides the core group to which the President can turn for assistance, but it is the President who often gives many extra hours to see that events go smoothly. She truly deserves to wear the "Three Crowns" pin. This custom goes back to a pin originally given to Eva Priskey by a grateful Parish. After her death her daughter, Eleanor Hall, gave the pin to the Women of Epiphany to be worn by the President when in office and passed to her successor.

Lane McGovern painstakingly put together a list of these gracious ladies and their dates in office, and this is included as a part of his *History*.

All through this century the Women have been responsive to the concerns of the whole Parish, but have found the need for a separate women's organization as a framework for service and especially as a means of closer fellow-

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ship. For many women, service on Vestry committees and task forces, while very important, does not provide the same continuing sense of belonging. The recent Parish survey revealed this feeling in exact statistics: 67% of the parishioners felt that the Women of Epiphany definitely should continue as an autonomous women's organization.

With constant emphasis on openness and welcome to all, the Women of Epiphany continue to explore new directions for spiritual enrichment and for service to the Parish, to the community, and to the many needs of the inner city and the world.