

The Amazing Story of the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary

In 1918, pioneer city missionary Rev. F.W. Herzberger saw the need for a home that offered long-term care in decent and pleasant surroundings. He appealed to the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society for help. Amazingly, by August 1920, this group of women had raised \$15,000 to buy the Christy Mansion at 4359 Taft Avenue in South St. Louis, a building long unoccupied and in great need of repair. Its plumbing had been stolen, its windows were boarded up, it was filthy, and it badly needed painting. But scores of women (and some of their husbands) set to work in restoring it to its former glory. And so, on October 10, 1920, the building was dedicated as the original Lutheran Convalescent Home. The women of the Auxiliary opened the doors and the Home began its healing ministry.

Not only did these women raise the money to buy, refurbish and open the Home, they also managed to operate it compassionately and successfully by themselves for 47 years! They even managed to stow away \$50,000 in the bank for emergencies or needed additions. By 1933, no longer dependent on help from the City Mission Society, they were granted their own charter and became The Lutheran Convalescent Home Society. Membership in the Society was made up entirely of women, as was its executive board. Some Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod guilds joined the Society, but there were no appeals to the churches and no financial assistance was received from them.

So (again by themselves), the women of the Auxiliary raised the money needed to enlarge the Home. By 1952, the 16-room Herzberger Wing had been added and an elevator and sprinkler system had been installed, all without federal loans.

By this time, a new generation of women had come forward to provide care to the enlarged Homes 56 residents. But in 1967, the introduction of Medicaid, new government nursing requirements, and all sorts of new and overwhelming paperwork requirements became too much for them. So on Monday, April 24, 1967, by unanimous resolution of the Society, Lutheran Charities Association (under whose board Lutheran Hospital was managed) was asked to take over not only the Lutheran Convalescent Home, but also its \$50,000 expansion fund. On that date, without fanfare or ceremony, the group changed its name to The Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary.

The women of the Auxiliary continued to hope for an even more significant ministry, for part of the 1967 transfer agreement required that the facilities of the Convalescent Home be enlarged and its services expanded. So it was that in 1972 the residents were relocated to their new home on the beautiful 64-acre Laclede Groves campus in Webster Groves. Here, generations of other very able and caring Auxiliary women have come forward to continue "to promote and advance the welfare of the Lutheran Convalescent Home through personal service and fundraising projects."

Thanks Be To God!