



MINUTE FOR MISSION

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El Porvenir: The Future of the Spanish Evangelical Church

Doña Elfriede Fliedner was ninety years old in March 2003. She was born in Germany in May 1836 and symbolizes the permanent significance of the female deaconate movement. Her great-grandfather, Theodor Fliedner, renewed the New Testament deaconate and gave it a form of a permanent fellowship of faith, life, and service in “mother houses” for women and “brother houses” for men. Florence Nightingale was his best-known pupil. He helped to meet the great needs of the day, and at the same time provided many thousands of single women with opportunities for satisfying and responsible activities. He was ahead of his times in dealing, in a very practical way, with women’s place in society—long before it became an issue of awareness in the church and society.



Doña Elfriede Fliedner provides a continued witness that this minority community still has a safe place to begin anew.

The Spanish Evangelical Church (Iglesia Evangélica Española) received the strength of this movement from its beginnings in the nineteenth century. Don Federico Fliedner, son of Theodor, was a missionary to Spain, working as an evangelist founding schools and homes for orphans.

Elfriede and other members of the family continued the Fliedner work in Spain. Today, Elfriede continues as head of the Fliedner Foundation. It is due in part to Elfriede's continued witness, along with all the members of her extended church family, that this minority community still has a safe place to begin anew. The diaconal understanding forms a deep part of this minority church, which houses two refugee centers for political refugees, runs two Protestant schools, and struggles to rebuild institutions, such as our seminary, which were closed by the Franco regime.

The Iglesia Evangélica Española still gives hospitality to "the stranger," feeds the poor, and the widows, such as Elfriede, who give us the strength to have patience. God's future is in "El Porvenir," the name of the school, which still survives in the center of Madrid. God's future is in our seminary, as we prepare new generations for this same kind of commitment to Jesus Christ.

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For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.