

## Deacon Sarah Shrewder Tracy-- R.I.P



NAAD has lost one of its original iconic leaders.

Deacon Sarah Shrewder Tracy, former archdeacon of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana and a leader in the revival of the diaconate, died of a stroke on 18 June 2009.

Born 4 January 1932 in Idaho, she was ordained deacon by the bishop of Idaho on 16 November 1984. Meanwhile, she and her husband Paul, a priest, had moved to Northern Indiana, where she served as deacon at St. James Cathedral in South Bend and other nearby churches. For many years she served as archdeacon of the diocese. She was the founder of St. Margaret's House for women and children. She was president of the North American Association for the Diaconate in 1993-1995. She and Paul were in New York City preparing for a cruise to Scandinavia when she suffered a stroke; they returned to South Bend by air ambulance, where she died a few days later.

In appearance, Sarah seemed the very model of everybody's grandmother, the embodiment of affection and sweet disposition. This picture was incomplete. She liked to confront bishops and make them squirm. At a national meeting of deacons in 1987, she told off the then-Presidenting Bishop, who had made the mistake of bragging about transitional deacons. Sarah rose and countered, "The deacon, the honest-to-God deacon, is trained to be a deacon. The transitional deacon is trained to be a priest, and they are giving diakonia a bad name." Poor Ed Browning was not used to being contradicted. Sarah gave sharp advice to her own bishops, on more than one occasion. In reality, Sarah was an honest-to-God deacon, gentle when gentleness was

called for, earthy in language and blunt when she needed to get someone's attention.

In the late 1980s, Deacon Sarah Tracy recognized that many women and children had no place to go during the day. They spent their time at the library or local downtown fast food restaurants. Some were homeless, others lived in substandard housing. As a joint ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana and the Cathedral Church of St. James, Sarah and her team transformed a building that was once a printing plant into a day center for women and children struggling with poverty. St. Margaret's House opened its doors in June of 1990 as a place where women and their children could come out of the weather to eat, shower, wash their clothes, rest and socialize. In August of that same year, St. Margaret's House began to serve a noonday meal. For the first several years, a part-time director and a staff of 30 volunteers served the 25-35 women and children guests who came each day. In 1995, St. Margaret's House was incorporated as an Indiana not-for-profit corporation.

St. Margaret's House continued to grow until it needed more space to meet the needs of the guests. In 2002, St. Margaret's House broke ground on a capital project that was designed to upgrade the life safety aspects of the structure, provide handicapped accessibility to all areas of the building and to double programming space. In November of 2003, this renovated building was rededicated and the community room on the second floor was dedicated to our founder Sarah Tracy.

Over the years, St. Margaret's House has grown in numbers of women and children served as well as the scope of services and programs offered. Today, St. Margaret's House's professional staff of eight and volunteer staff of over 100 serve 90-100 women and children a day. St. Margaret's House has become recognized as a vital service agency in this area and has been embraced by the whole community.