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Becoming a Deaconess

I wanted to be a nurse; in fact, I attended the University of Santo Thomas School of Nursing with my older sister. However, at the end of my first semester, mom had me find another course to take that was not as expensive as nursing, perhaps Commerce or Education. I was quite devastated as I had my heart set on becoming a nurse.

An inspiration came to mind as I thought of Miss Imelda Andres, our deaconess at that time, who I admired and respected. She was kind, friendly, approachable, a good teacher, a true leader. She made every person she met feel very special. She was loving and caring, and one could talk to about anything. On top of that she had true passion in nurturing the children and young people's spiritual lives. Silently, back in my mind and heart, I wanted to be like her and decided to follow her footsteps.

Having found an alternative career, I picked up my courage and told mom I want to be a deaconess. Considering I grew up in a Methodist family in Alcala, Pangasinan, with a grandfather minister, I considered myself quite familiar with the church work and church activities. I entered Harris in 1977 with the help of Mrs. Remedios Velasco, who got me settled in the world of Harris Memorial College academia and in the communal living in the school dormitories full semester at a time.

A young student deaconess goes through a lot of challenges in preparation to becoming a deaconess, I discovered. The curriculum was intense and rigorous in courses like kindergarten education, music – choir and organ/piano, choral conducting, bible, church history, philosophy, psychology, curriculum writing, homiletics, plus all the government accredited courses to attain a bachelor's degree in education. On top of that, there were the Sunday church assignments and the summer appointments. With the help of God, I graduated in 1981 with a Bachelor in Kindergarten Education!

Summer Appointments – April to mid-May

Harris Memorial College and the Church Districts had partnership in the continuing education program for Harris students. How was this done? Upon returning home for summer breaks mid-March of each year, Harris students would spend a week with their families. The following week was spent with all deaconesses for district planning and preparing for the Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS) Teachers' Training. Beginning of April, we headed to our summer appointment where we met our pastors and the congregation, and met our potential DVBS teachers.



The churches sent its delegate teachers to the District Teachers' Training where the deaconesses served as staff. This was where the DVBS course materials was studied, accompanying music/songs were learned, visual aids prepared, simplified child psychology discussed, as well as simplified methods of teaching – interacting with children, how to get their attention, how to take care of disruptive pupils among other items. The staff conducted demonstration classes observed by the delegates. In turn, the delegates had their chance to prepare and teach a song, a bible story, lead group games, bible drills, and arts and crafts. Class evaluations were conducted and discussed on how to improve in the different areas for better teaching skills.

From this Teachers' Training, my delegates and I went back to our church. With the help of our pastor(s) and members, we planned and scheduled our DVBS classes in church and in the adjacent barrios. Our pupils were the children of the church as well as their non-Methodist friends. As the deaconess, I was the head teacher, and handled my own class usually the junior class and supervised the whole DVBS program. In collaboration with the teachers, we held Closing Programs. The following were my summer church appointments in Pangasinan: 1st year 1998 – Santa Maria UMC, a barrio of Tayug; 2nd year 1999- Binalonan UMC and its adjacent barrio Linmansangan; 3rd year 1980 – Rosales UMC and its barrio Tocama. The only means of transportation I used between assignments were jeepneys, tricycles, and buses.

My other responsibilities as a local church deaconess included:

- Managing the Sunday school program, and teaching a Sunday school class
- Church organist
- Regular visitation to members in the company of my pastor and at times with the lay members
- Prayer Meetings - with my pastor and lay members
- Home celebration services – birthdays, anniversaries, memorials
- Assisting in Evangelistic services

Harris - Weekend Appointments

Harris curriculum provides practice teaching programs for the 1st and 2nd year students. We were given specific church assignments on Sundays to teach Sunday school. We were accompanied by an Adviser, who supervised, monitored, and evaluated/critiqued our teachings. We wrote reports and reflections on our Sunday experiences; these evaluations were discussed in the "Methods of Teaching" class the following week. Eventually, we were partnered with another student and continued practice teaching, participated in church choirs, and in youth group programs in the afternoons. By Sunday evenings we headed back to Harris. I remember an incident when my co-student deaconess and I got caught in the heavy storm on our way back to School. The flood made the road unpassable for jeepneys so we had to walk for miles and miles in heavy rain drenched. We were so frustrated with the seemingly endless walk in the rain that I could only cry to soothe myself. We would eventually find rides back to Harris College.

Migration to USA – 1981

I have been living in California in the last 40 years with my husband, Paul, our two children, and two grandbabies. I did not become a nurse, but my deaconess background has been utilized in the 32 years of my employments in various medical facilities that whenever the opportunity came, I found myself in quiet witness for the Lord. For example, at a convalescent hospital, I often visited patients, singing to them with my ukulele. I prayed for them, which they totally loved and appreciated. I continue to teach Sunday school and do fundraising for mission. Thanks be to God!



My growing family!