

## Our New Companion Community

In the Diocese of Karagwe, Tanzania, deaconesses are part of that church's "**Department of Diaconia.**" The Diocese is composed of 8 deaneries and 35 parishes, 60 male and 3 female pastors and 209 evangelists.

The aim of the Department of Diaconia is to "serve the most needy people in Karagwe Diocese by following the example of Christ." About half of the population lives on less than \$1 per day. There are few, if any, governmental social security programs. While families attempt to help, little surplus is available for others.

This department sets up "diaconal groups" in congregations. So far 14 groups have been formed with about 100 participants. These diaconal groups, together with "pastors, evangelists, Lutheran sisters and others" regularly visit the poorest of the poor, offering good advice and support to enable them to help themselves.



The Diaconia office is also open two days a week, when the poor and the sick come to receive help with hospital fees, school fees, and orphaned babies. The department also offers workshops and seminars – Bible study, self-reliance, nutrition, and advocacy. Sister Editha Sylivester (pictured above) is the head of this office, along with Sister Restuta Venant.

**Tumushubire Nkwenda Mother House** is a "congregation of 12 deaconesses committed to serve the Almighty Lord for their whole life," writes Sister Florence Gatege, the Mother General. The center was established by members of the Kassel Motherhouse in Germany, along with others from the Netherlands. The building was completed in 1992; however, in 2000, due to financial and managerial problems, they had to stop training deaconess students and turned to training pre-school teachers.

Good news – the Diocese itself has seen the need to revive the training school for deaconesses, to provide them with the needed skills to serve effectively in Tanzania. After receiving diaconal training,



they will be trained as nurses, social workers, psychologists, etc. The Diocese is intent on helping to create a Christ centered society that is joyful, peaceful and holistically empowered, committed to advocacy and the provision of accessible and affordable social services.

Check out Karagwe Diocese's website: [www.karagwe-dioocese.org](http://www.karagwe-dioocese.org) Click on "Head Office", then on "Diaconia". We hope we can meet with Sister Florence and others in Atlanta!