



To: Margaret Allan  
12 Ridge Road  
Wantirna South 3152 Vic

Re: Thanksgiving Service, Catherine Ritchie House

Dear Margaret,

On behalf of the Diakonia of the UCA (DUCA), I wish to express gratitude for the life of Catherine Ritchie, and for the Catherine Ritchie House, Mt Martha, and all it has meant over the years to the many Deacons and Deaconesses who have been blessed to use the facilities (and many others who have used the house for retreats).

Catherine Ritchie's legacy has been significant. The clear priority that shaped her diaconal ministry was to identify ways to resource women in different cultural contexts. In 1937 she was posted to Masan in Korea. In 1944, in the midst of a war zone, she travelled to the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), exploring opportunities for ministry with women in the Pacific. She showed a particular kind of courage, conviction and determination. Her pioneering leadership role developed further when she was Principal at Rolland House, the deaconess training centre in Carlton (1945 to 1968). She was a bold leader long before work place equality for women, and she rose to the challenge of being a lone female voice amidst the predominantly male leadership of the Presbyterian church at that time. Catherine Ritchie was committed to training that developed both mind and character, and theological education that formed belief and spirituality. The deaconess students were asked to reflect on what it meant to respond to the 'insistent challenge' - a question that demands a response from us today. Her book, *Not to be ministered unto: the story of Presbyterian deaconesses trained in Melbourne* (1998), is a precious reminder of this rich history.

Today, the service of thanksgiving remembers the house that was acquired as a result of her generous legacy, and which carried the memory of Catherine Ritchie's diaconal ministry. The house has been sold, and that may bring sadness and regret for the loss of the physical property, and perhaps some relief and joy that the house has released funding for new avenues for diaconal ministry in the 21st century. The bricks of the house provided shelter and refuge for many Deacons and Deaconesses, and built a sense of community, but the sale of the property will now enable shelter and refuge and community to be expressed in new ways, including pastoral assistance to those in need. And in its own way respond to the 'insistent challenge' of our time and place.

While I would love to have been able to attend the service of thanksgiving, today is also the DUCA national business meeting for Deacons and Deacon candidates in the UCA, in Sydney, followed by a 2 day Deacons Conference and the Deacon Intensive for candidates.

I send my greetings and prayers to you on this significant occasion, which marks a time of transition for diaconal ministry which honours the past and welcomes the opportunities for new expressions of diaconal ministry.

Grace and peace

Rev Sandy Boyce  
DUCA  
President, DIAKONIA World Federation

**Deacons of the Uniting Church in Australia**