On September 17th, the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia will host Fearless Faith, Boundless Love, a revival in the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia. The revival, which includes a recognition of the life and ministry of Deaconess Anna Alexander, will be a day of celebration, joy, and renewal, as the Church goes out to do the work God has given us to do.

Anna Ellison Butler Alexander was born in 1865 to recently emancipated slaves on Butler Plantation in McIntosh County, Georgia. She would become the first black deaconess in the Episcopal Church. In a calling of more than 60 years, her indomitable spirit and fierce devotion to God still illuminates our understanding of ministry.

Deaconess Alexander’s call was to serve the people of Pennick and Darien, Georgia. She founded Good Shepherd Church in rural Glynn County’s Pennick community, where she taught children to read—by tradition, from the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible—in a one-room schoolhouse. The school was later expanded to two rooms with a loft where she lived. In addition to her ministry at Good Shepherd, she traveled on foot
for 15 miles and rowed a small boat on the Altamaha River to serve St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church in Darien. Her tireless work was to teach her pupils about the world and Christian responsibility to all peoples.

This is not to say that Deaconess Alexander served in easy times. The diocese segregated her congregations in 1907 and African American congregations were not invited to another diocesan convention until 1947. Similarly, it was only in the 1950s, after her death, that a woman set aside as a deaconess was recognized as being in deacon’s orders. However, her witness – wearing the distinctive dress of a deaconess, traveling by foot from Brunswick through Darien to Pennick, showing care and love for all she met—represents the best in Christian witness.

Selected portions of Fearless Faith, Boundless Love, including Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry’s sermon, will be live-streamed on the Episcopal Church’s Facebook page. For more information on Episcopal revivals, including future locations and events, please visit http://bit.ly/episcopalrevivals.

A Collect for Deaconess Alexander

O God, you called Anna Alexander as a deaconess in your Church, and sent her as teacher and evangelist to the people of Georgia: Grant us the humility to go wherever you send us, and the wisdom to teach the word of Christ to whoever we meet, that all may come to the enlightenment which you intend for your people; through Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior. Amen.