



The Laymen's Club

welcomes you to the

Madeleine L'Engle Library

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This is also available online at www.thelaymensclub.org

Madeleine L'Engle Library, a Literary Landmark

The Cathedral's library is named for Madeleine L'Engle, acclaimed author of over sixty books for children and adults, most notably the Newberry Medal-winner *A Wrinkle in Time*. L'Engle served as the Cathedral's librarian and was a member of the Cathedral community for over forty years. Much of her writing occurred in the library, with its windows looking out over the Cathedral Close. L'Engle was awarded a National Humanities Medal in 2004, and was named a member of the New York State Writers Hall of Fame in 2011.



Madeleine L'Engle
Photo courtesy Crosswicks, Ltd.

L'Engle's writings were grounded in her strong belief in the power of imagination, and that of good over evil, while also incorporating her interest in contemporary politics and science. While some of her books are considered "young adult" classics, L'Engle did not design them for a particular audience. Rather, she believed that "you have to write the book that wants to be written. And if the book will be too difficult for grown-ups, then you write it for children."

After her death in 2007, L'Engle was memorialized at the Cathedral. In the fall of 2012, the library where she worked and wrote for so many years was designated a Literary Landmark by the American Library Association. The official plaque can be found on the outer wall of Diocesan House, near the building's east entrance.

“YOUR BIBLE WILL NOT BREAK”*

HISTORY AND IMPORT OF THE LIBRARY AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

The library at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine has a history nearly as rich as that of the Cathedral itself. And despite an inconsistent level of interest and support from its patrons, the library has amassed a collection and a presence not only of great theological and scholarly import, but of historical and social significance as well.

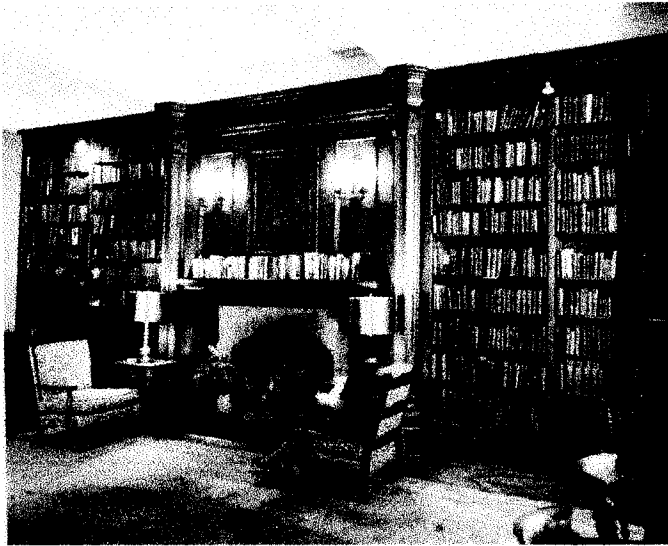
ST. FAITH’S HOUSE AND WILLIAM R. HUNTINGTON: THE BEGINNINGS OF A CATHEDRAL LIBRARY

The library began its life not as the intellectual and archival center of the Cathedral, but as that of an affiliated academic institution. Diocesan house, the building in which the library resides, was originally built to house the New York Training School for Deaconesses. The building was originally called St. Faith’s House and was built using a fund given by the Rev. Dr. C.C. Tiffany, Archdeacon of New York, in his will for that purpose, in memory of his wife Julia Wheeler Tiffany (who, ironically, was still alive at the time of its construction). In an agreement with the Cathedral, the building was erected on the Cathedral’s grounds with the stipulation that, with one year’s notice, the Cathedral could reclaim the building as its own. The cornerstone was laid on May of 1909 and the school moved in January of 1911. The school used the space until 1947 when the cathedral appropriated the building for use as Diocesan offices. Throughout this period, though the library was specifically that of the school, the Cathedral and the diocese still acquired a vast and varied array of books, which would end up in the collection when the library was officially opened as the Cathedral Library. But the library’s collection really begins with William R. Huntington, the founder of the New York Training School for Deaconesses.

The ghost of William R. Huntington looms large over the library. The space itself is dedicated to his memory and his bookplate adorns the mantle above the fireplace, a

*John Wallace Suter, *Life and Letters of William Reed Huntington: A Champion of Unity* (New York: The Century Co., 1925, 6. Part of a quote from a five year-old Huntington when presented with a Bible. In its entirety: “Is this God’s Bible? Mother told me God put it into the hearts of men and they printed it. . . Uncle sent me a transparent slate and pencil, and I broke the glass the same day. . . Your bible will not break.”

fitting and poignant reminder of both the values of the room's namesake and the scholarly intentions to which the space was dedicated. In addition to founding the School for Deaconesses in 1889, Huntington was a parish priest and trustee of the Cathedral



from 1887 until his death in 1909.

It is also worth noting that Huntington had a hand in designing St. Faith's house, which is said to be one of his life's last great joys. Upon his death, his personal library was donated to the School for Deaconesses and, since he died so near to the completion of St. Faith's House, his books

were the library's first major acquisition. In 1918, the Cathedral consecrated St. Ansgar's chapel "... in loving memory of William Reed Huntington for 25 years Rector of Grace Church, and for 22 years Trustee of this Cathedral."* Books containing his bookplate or inscription still comprise a sizable portion of the library's collection.

THE LIBRARY'S MID-CENTURY RE-OPENING

After the Cathedral's appropriation of the building in 1947, St. Faith's House became Diocesan House, and the library became the responsibility of the Canon Theologian, then Reverend Howard Johnson. The Cathedral's Constitution and Statutes from 1954 make special mention of the Canon Theologian and the library, requiring the Cathedral to maintain itself "as a center of intellectual light and leading in the spirit of Jesus Christ," a phrase repeated in the most recent charter. Under Johnson's stewardship the library took up this quest and the doors of the library officially opened to the public in 1957, beginning its life as the Library of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Johnson encouraged the clergy to will the library their personal books and papers, as many Bishops, Deans, Canons, and Deacons had done in the past, and the library's catalogue continued to grow.

* inscribed on the west wall of the chapel

A very important collection was acquired in 1955 when the National Church chose the library as the home for its books on church architecture. The choice was a natural one given Canon Edward West's connection to the library. Canon West maintained his office in the room adjacent to the library, which had originally served as a chapel for the School for Deaconesses. Canon West was a leading ecclesiologist. Among his designs in the symbol for the Worldwide Anglican Communion, the Compass Rose. The Compass Rose is now set in marble into the floor of the Cathedral and Canon West's ashes have been placed underneath it. The Compass Rose also appears in Canterbury Cathedral. West's appreciation of church architecture and the library's existing prestige made the National Church's decision obvious. Canon West's collection of books, including those that assisted in the development of his architectural and design reputation, remain part of the library.

In the early sixties, Madeleine L'Engle, author of requisite children's books and a lay theologian, and began her tenure as volunteer librarian and scholar-in-residence. For the past four decades, L'Engle's nourishment of the library as a space for community and quiet reflection has kept it afloat.



REVELATIONS OF CATALOGUING

Thanks to the efforts of the current guardians of the collection's fate, cataloguing has separated the wheat from the chaff and returned to light many valuable possessions of the library. Cataloguing also allows us to see the origins of much of the collection. A preliminary count, by bookplate or inscription, of some of the most important individual collections follows:

William R. Huntington: 507 titles
Bishop Henry Codman Potter[↓]: 115 titles

[↓] Henry Codman Potter was acting Bishop from 1883 to 1887, acting in the stead of his uncle, Horatio Potter. He became Bishop in 1887 until his death in 1908, presiding over, and perhaps responsible for what some have referred to as "the Golden Age of Episcopalianism."

Dean William Mercer Grosvenor[‡]: 127 titles
The New York Training School for Deaconesses: 122 titles
St. Faith's House^{*}: 133 titles
Bishop William Thomas Manning[†]: 44 titles
The Diocesan Library: 70 titles

There have also been approximately 1525 books catalogued damaged, a poignant if distressing reminder of the importance of diligent stewardship of the library. In addition to these prestigious collections, the library also houses many more rare and historically significant books and artifacts. For example, the library possesses a first-year printing of Gone With the Wind. There is a lithograph edition of a collection of letters written by Episcopalian bishops on the eve of the Civil War. The library has a beautiful copy of Harlem Renaissance author James Weldon Johnson's God's Trombones. This title is, of course, of particular significance given the Cathedral's location and the community that it serves. Bishop Potter left behind a three volume collection entitled La Spiritualite et Imortalite De L'Ame (Spirituality and Immortality of the Soul) by R.P. Hubert Hayer, dated 1757. Several of Huntington's books date from the eighteenth century including A Form of Prayer, the subtitle of which reads, "to be used by his majesty's special command, London 1776." Brian Hannon gave his collection, including handwritten manuscripts and correspondence, to the library mostly, as his marginalia suggests, to spite Columbia University. One of the most historically significant artifacts is the book Flowers of the Holyland, covered in olive wood, and presented to Bishop Darlington in 1923 by the patriarch of Jerusalem¹.

[‡] William Mercer Grosvenor was Dean of the Cathedral from 1911 until his death in 1916. Previous to his Deanship, Grosvenor served on the Cathedral's Committee of the Fabric, and succeeded W.R. Huntington as chairman following Huntington's death. Grosvenor's Deanship has been characterized as exhilaratingly active and involved

^{*} Presumably, the distinction between the New York Training School for Deaconesses and St. Faith's House arises from a difference in bookplate arrived at through a separation of the school's text books and other books in the schools possession

[†] William Thomas Manning was Bishop from 1921 to 1946. His intense convictions and imposing presence (despite his small stature) earned him both deep respect and reverence while rendering him, to some, intimidating and inaccessible

¹ This book is in possession of the Diocese; in fact many volumes are shared by the Cathedral and the Diocese, and adds weight to the argument for a joint project. See following section.



Of course, beyond artifacts and collections of historical note, the library also has a thorough collection of reference books, including concordances, encyclopedias and dictionaries. There are Latin volumes and a vast

collection of scholarship on St. Paul, the life of Jesus, biblical exegeses, all of which make for a well-rounded and very important catalogue.

In addition to the preceding literary items of rarity, beauty, and scholarship, there also exists a large, if deteriorating collection of audiocassettes and reel-to-reel tapes. These audio archives contain thousands of hours of sermons and services from the past four decades; among many that have been tragically lost are tapes of Martin Luther King Jr. With the proper care, these audio archives could become a compelling documentation of the ideas and personalities, events and conversations that have passed through and become part of the history and life of the Cathedral.

CONCLUSIONS: LIBRARY AS HEARTH AND HISTORY

As a cursory examination of the library's catalogue reveals, the contents of the Cathedral Library are very important in several different ways. On the one hand, the books and artifacts represent a thorough and valuable source of ecclesiastical education, theological, philosophical, and spiritual thought. But at the same time, they are firmly rooted in the history and tradition of *this* Cathedral. The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine has been the spiritual home of some of the most important Episcopalian thinkers of the past century. The library houses their legacies, the history and vitality of the Episcopalian church and of the Cathedral itself.

More than a museum, more than a book depository, this space has the all the prerequisites of a veritable *dulce domum* of religious thought and community. Madeleine L'Engle had a vision of the library as a haven for the community, a warm, quiet space where one could sit and reflect, commune with one's faith in a setting more intimate than, but still connected to, the grandeur of the Cathedral itself.

This library has the potential to be a modern leader in the long tradition of cathedral libraries, serving several important functions in the life of the Cathedral, the diocese, and the community that they both serve. The most recent Charter of the Cathedral states that the Chapter is to “exemplify and encourage sound learning.” Dedication to the preservation of artifacts and ideas dear to the Episcopal Church, and the encouragement of theological scholarship and community which finds unique nourishment in the peace and warmth of library walls could be the hallmarks of the Cathedral through this library.

Her vision of the library is elucidated in a paper she wrote in the mid-70’s: “. . . that, really, is my dream for the library—to have it be a place where people feel free to be themselves. . . . Anyhow—books, that the obvious thing to think of when considering a library. But books to be read in a place where they can be talked about and discussed over a cup of coffee or tea. . . . We need a place, and people, and books, to minister to the lacks of faith in all of us; the library helps me, and I think it helps others, too.”

Edward Jones

Cathedral Library Collection Summary

The history and collection of the Cathedral Library at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine begins with The New York Training School for Deaconesses. The school's founder, William Reed Huntington, donated his personal library to the school, and currently 1,007 of the catalogued volumes have been attributed to this first major acquisition. The collections maintained by St. Faith's House (books not a part of the school's library but owned by the school) and the New York Training School for Deaconesses added another 342 books to the library's holdings.

The Cathedral appropriated St. Faith's House in 1947, renaming it Diocesan House, and the library came under the direction of the Canon Theologian Reverend Howard Johnson. The library officially opened to the public in 1957, and under the stewardship of Reverend Johnson, the library acquired the personal collections of several Deans and Bishops. In 1955 the library was chosen as the home for the national church's books on ecclesiastical art and architecture, forming a second major acquisition for the collection. These volumes are complemented by the 438 books given by Canon Edward West, giving the Cathedral Library a core of books in the arts. A quick look at the now static collection is as follows:

| TOTAL VOLUMES | | 20,048 |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Donor (bookplate and/or signature) | | Number of Volumes |
| William R. Huntington | Founder: NY Training School for Deaconesses | 1,007 |
| Bishop Henry Codman Potter | 7 th Bishop of New York 1887-1908 | 341 |
| Dean William Mercer Grosvenor | 1 st Dean of the Cathedral 1911-1917 | 347 |
| Bishop William Thomas Manning | 10 th Bishop of New York 1920-1947 | 103 |
| Pre-1799 | | 107 |
| Not in other libraries | | 672 |

The recent cataloguing project shows the collection numbering approximately 16,265 titles and 20,048 volumes. Approximately 70% are classed in the Library of Congress classification that covers religious and philosophical works. The next largest classification grouping is in language and literature with 1,285 volumes, or somewhat less than 7% of the collection.

Among the books housed in the Cathedral Library, there are a number of rare and historically significant volumes. The oldest is an **illuminated manuscript dated around 1450-60**. Hand-painted with gold and covered in purple velvet, this volume also contains 28 miniatures. **One hundred seven books in the catalogue are older than 1799**, and 672 volumes were not found in the catalogues of other libraries that make their cataloging data public.

All but a select few of the books are housed in the Library's three storage areas: the Main Library, the Basement, and the Annex (Don Lundquist's office) (780 are in the Diocesan Archives). Roughly 3,200 volumes are shelved in the Annex section; the Main Library room holds about 6,730 volumes, and **the Basement currently houses nearly 13,270 volumes**. It is these Basement volumes that are of the greatest concern because of the risk of environmental damage (moisture, excessive warmth, dust, etc.). Already, **2,949 of the books are catalogued as damaged**.

The cataloging project took 3 years and cost approximately \$50,000. We now have a permanent record of the volumes that have made up the Cathedral library for the past 100 years. The catalogue allows us to search and sort on any number of fields, has circulation desk capabilities, and all volumes have barcodes for ease of organizing. Currently, Diocesan Archivist Wayne Kempton uses the catalog and the library frequently to respond to requests for information.

In the spirit of good stewardship that has always been central to the Cathedral, we need to take steps to ensure the protection and utilization of the volumes and the space. In order to care for this important collection of books, the volumes currently housed in the 5,589 cubic foot Basement must be moved. With consultation from an Advisory Board made up of concerned librarians, historians, scholars, and community members, we should plan what books should remain part of the Cathedral Library's permanent collection, and which should be de-accessioned. Things to consider in de-accessioning are physical shape (mold), specific historical significance to the Cathedral and the New York Episcopal Diocese, whether there is a more appropriate home for subject areas, and sustainability. After de-accessioning, the remaining collection must be re-shelved in the main space of the Library. At the same time, it is necessary to define the purpose the books in this space should serve, for the Cathedral Close and the larger community.

Appendices:

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