

The Visiting Christian Science Nursing Service of New Jersey

1943-2020

Since 1943, the Visiting Christian Science Nursing Service of New Jersey has continued to serve Christian Scientists here in the Garden State. Our mission is to provide Christian Science nursing care to individuals living in New Jersey relying solely on Christian Science for healing. We are always ready to serve you, your family, and friends.



Sheren Alexander, Beatrix von Meier Ince, and Claudia Shaughnessy are trained Journal-listed Christian Science nurses.

Our Christian Science nurses visit and assist individuals in their homes with baths, cleansing and covering, mobility aids, food preparation, cutting toenails, and other necessary personal care. They are also happy to provide friendly visits which may include reading the Weekly Bible Lesson and Christian Science periodicals.

The Christian Science nurses are reachable 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at no charge.

Please call (908) 347-7233 or visit www.csnursenj.org

The First Christian Science Visiting Nursing Service in the World

The inspiring story of the Parkhurst sisters . . .



“Train as a nurse, train as a nurse,” the angel message repeated time and again.

“No, that isn’t for me,” Alice Parkhurst would respond. She had no intention of becoming a Christian Science nurse like her twin sister. But the call persisted, as if waiting for another answer. “Finally,” Alice wrote, “I took the steps necessary, and learned through this experience when turning to God never to question but to obey.”¹

Alice Lucinda Parkhurst Pease, who would eventually follow the gentle bidding and train as a Christian Science nurse, went on to dedicate almost 30 years to this healing ministry. Her sister, Clara Hampson Parkhurst, would serve for over 50 years.² Having that rare gift of utter devotion and dedication, Clara would make a mark on history as the first visiting Christian Science nurse in the world.

Born in the mid-1890s in Verona, New Jersey, the Parkhurst twins had experienced and witnessed remarkable healings since childhood. Measles and mumps had dissipated, whooping cough, appendicitis, and rheumatism had dissolved, blindness and a sense of lack were overcome. All of this, and more, were healed through reliance on Christian Science.³

Serving mankind was a key interest to both sisters from the very beginning. In the 1920s, both Clara and Alice worked for the YWCA, the Young Women’s Christian Association. As a case worker, Alice helped to locate housing for girls and women.⁴ Naturally, when Christian Science nursing was publi-

cized, Clara set her sites for training at the Christian Science Benevolent Association, later renamed the Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association, in Massachusetts. Alice followed in suit several years later.⁵

Training consisted of ten hours a day and lasted three years. Alice described the first year as difficult, the second as when she began to love her work, and the third as when she became wrapped up in her work. “It was really a sacred privilege,” she explained.⁶

“All through those three years I felt exceedingly at home in the great large family of Christian Scientists—a sense of love and compassion and understanding expressed by the staff. You just felt the wholeness, the oneness,” Clara reminisced about the nurses training, adding, “I don’t think there could be two more grateful girls in the United States of America than we.”⁷

After formal training in Boston, Clara and Alice served as Christian Science nurses in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. They handled many childbirth and baby cases—one doctor even commenting, “If every baby who ever came into this world were to be received by [Clara], they would have a very wonderful beginning.” Clara also served for a time at the Pleasant View retirement home in Concord, New Hampshire, and at Arden Wood in San Francisco.⁸ And for two decades, the twins opened their home to guests and visitors as a rest and study.⁹

However, in 1943, a pressing demand arose. Clara described it as “a need which occurred almost spontaneously.” Dorothy Rader, a

Alice (left) and Clara (right) Parkhurst in 1973. Photograph courtesy Tenacre Foundation.

NEWARK—*Parkhurst, Miss Alice L. CS 16 Thomas st Tel Waverly
0450
*Parkhurst, Miss Clara Hampson CS 16 Thomas st Tel Wav. 0450

*1930 Christian Science Journal directory listing Alice and Clara
as Christian Science nurses in Newark, New Jersey.*

Christian Science practitioner, called Clara, asking if she might be willing to visit a patient who needed the expertise of a Christian Science nurse on a regular basis. The practitioner had put out call after call, but no other nurse was available. At the time, Clara was serving on 24-hour duty, but with four hours free, she accepted the call. “Wouldn’t it be fine if we had a visiting nurse?” Ms. Rader asked. Clara must have agreed.¹⁰

That simple question was answered, when members of First Church of Christ, Scientist, East Orange sent a letter to the Board of Directors of The Mother Church inquiring about starting a service.¹¹ Their aim was to contract a Christian Science nurse on a full-time basis to minister to cases where individuals needed nursing care and to enable the Christian Science nurse to service multiple individuals. The Board looked forward to hearing about how the new project would come along.¹²

Later that year, the “Nursing Service for Christian Scientists”—the very first visiting Christian Science nursing service in the world—was established to serve Essex County, a 30-mile radius that encompasses such towns as East and West Orange, Newark, Maplewood, Livingston, Caldwell, Fairfield, Cedar Grove, and Montclair. Clara Parkhurst would dedicate the next 17 years of her life

to work as the visiting Christian Science nurse for the service.

Over the next two decades, visiting nurse services multiplied in New Jersey and beyond. In the Garden State, nursing services were established in Bergen and Hudson counties, as well as at Monmouth, Asbury Park, and other parts of the north shore.¹³ Eventually, all services merged into one, and cast a wider net by servicing the entire state of New Jersey.¹⁴ Today, the Visiting Christian Science Nursing Service of New Jersey is one of many visiting Christian Science nurse services in the world.

The Parkhurst sisters deserve a lifetime achievement award if ever there was one. Clara Parkhurst, who was questioned in her 79th year if she had retired, responded emphatically, “I do not ever expect to retire!” “We may not be on full-time call,” Alice chimed in, “but we love our work, we love our fellow man, and most of all we love to serve God, and we love Christian Science.”¹⁵

Clara had often been asked why she stayed in Christian Science nursing for so long. Her response was straightforward and delightful. “Having once begun, we wanted it to continue forever.”¹⁶

Dorothy Rader, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher from East Orange, New Jersey, who was instrumental in organizing the very first Christian Science Visiting Nursing Service, published an insightful article titled “Meeting our Brother’s Need” in the July 1965 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*. An excerpt from her article, reads:

All the parables of Jesus hold important lessons for us, but that of the good Samaritan applies particularly to our meeting the needs of humanity through the Christian Science Visiting Nurse Services. . . . The “strong demands on love” are met with Christlike humanity as nurses go to patients who are alone in their homes, often unable to care for themselves, but knowing the truth steadfastly as they have been taught to do in Christian Science to effect their own healing. Reports of many grand achievements effected through the nursing service prove it to be a Christlike activity of vast worth to the Cause of Christian Science in helping Scientists to make a quick recovery and a normal adjustment. The Christian Science visiting nurse fulfills the requirements of the following Scripture: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me (Matt. 25:35, 36).



Visiting Christian Science
Nursing Service of New Jersey

since 1943

ENDNOTES:

1. Interview with Clara Parkhurst and Alice Parkhurst Pease, October 15, 1973, audio files 1337-1338, Tenacre Foundation. Alice L. Parkhurst, "Testimonies of Healing," *The Christian Science Journal* 50 (May 1932): 112-114.
2. Clara was a *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse from 1928 to 1983, living in a variety of towns, including Newark, Caldwell, Montclair, Asbury Park, and Toms River. Alice, who took her name out of the *Journal* during her marriage and when she opened her home to Christian Scientists as a rest and study, was listed sporadically between 1930 and 1980.
3. "Through these difficulties," Alice wrote, "we were comforted, strengthened, sustained, and blessed." Ibid. The Parkhurst's were introduced to Christian Science about the year 1900, when a family member was healed after physicians had pronounced the case incurable.
4. Interview with Clara Parkhurst and Alice Parkhurst Pease, Tenacre Foundation. 1920 Federal Census. YWCA is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.
5. An editorial written by the Christian Science Board of Directors and published in the church periodicals caught Clara's eye. See "The Christian Science Benevolent Association," *Christian Science Sentinel* 19 (October 7, 1916): 110. In the editorial, the Board quoted letters written by Mary Baker Eddy which explained her wish that the Board establish a sanatorium. This was just the sort of guidance and evidence that Clara and her family needed to pursue Christian Science nursing. Clara duly entered Christian Science nurses training in 1923 and graduated in 1926. Alice entered the program in 1926 and graduated in 1929.
6. Interview with Clara Parkhurst and Alice Parkhurst Pease, Tenacre Foundation.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. Beginning in 1933, Clara served at Pleasant View for nine consecutive summers (an eight-month period from April to November). "We considered it a blessing to work there," she shared. From 1939 to 1941 Clara worked at Arden Wood.
9. The Parkhurst's had permanent guests stay in their home as well as sojourners who were in town to attend Christian Science Primary class instruction or to attend an Association. Their home ultimately became a sanctuary for healing. "Our home was so large, that if there was a need, it was a privilege and opportunity to offer my home for that purpose," Alice said. "There were many varied healings at that time. . . . That was a most happy experience all the way through." Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. In addition to Dorothy Rader and First Church, East Orange, a handful of other practitioners helped to see this idea through. Dorothy S. Rader, "Meeting our Brother's Need," *The Christian Science Journal* 83 (July 1965): 365-366.
12. Christian Science Board of Directors to First Church of Christ, Scientist, East Orange, New Jersey, October 4, 1943, The Mary Baker Eddy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.
13. In 1951, the "Bergen-Hudson Nursing Service for Christian Scientists" was established. Soon after, Christian Scientists in Asbury Park and along the shore wanted to start a visiting nurse service, and invited Clara to serve as the visiting nurse. (Clara had moved to Asbury Park by that time and had taken some time off from the visiting nurse service serving Essex County.) In 1963, Monmouth Ocean nursing service was organized, and Clara became its visiting nurse, serving for ten more years.
14. In 2002, the three Mid-Jersey and Northern New Jersey services merged and became the "Nursing Service for Christian Scientists, Inc., Serving New Jersey." On July 21, 2016, the organization's name changed to the "Visiting Christian Science Nursing Service of New Jersey, Inc."
15. Interview with Clara Parkhurst and Alice Parkhurst Pease, Tenacre Foundation.
16. Ibid.