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Building Bridges: Church Women United and Social Reform Work Across the Mid-Twentieth Century

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BUILDING BRIDGES: CHURCH WOMEN UNITED
AND SOCIAL REFORM WORK
ACROSS THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BUILDING BRIDGES: CHURCH WOMEN UNITED AND SOCIAL REFORM WORK ACROSS THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

Church Women United incorporated in December 1941 as an interdenominational and interracial movement of liberal Protestant women committed to social reform. The one hundred organizers represented ten million Protestant women across the United States. They organized with the express purposes of helping to bring peace on Earth and to develop total equality within all humanity.

Church Women United was the bridge between the First and Second Wave of Feminism and the bridge between the Social Gospel and Social Justice Movements. Additionally they connected laterally with numerous social and religious groups across American society. As such, they exemplify the continuity and matrix of reform in American history. Because they worked to promote international peace, develop positive race relations, and advance women's rights, their campaigns give us a model for how to rectify the social problems of today.

These women used communal prayer, politics, education, and hands-on labor to promote their ideas. They originated in collective prayer and continued this tool, but they added letter writing campaigns, public education forums, and lobbying politicians at all levels including the president to advance their goals. They held massive campaigns to collect needed items for war-torn countries and natural disaster areas as well as acting as counselors to the needy. They raised public awareness of issues facing migrant laborers, inner-city residents, Native Americans, Japanese internment detainees, and then worked hard to ameliorate the worst of these problems. They promoted literacy around the world, as well as new agricultural

techniques to address human conditions that were known to lead to political and social unrest.

This dissertation covers the mid-twentieth century while being predominately focused on the years 1941-1968. This study is built upon multiple archives across the United States and oral histories of movement leaders. It is one of the first interdenominational studies focused on the work of women in social reform work. This dissertation enlarges our knowledge of feminism and social reform work.

Key Words: Church Women United, peace, feminism, civil rights, Social Justice, Social Gospel

BUILDING BRIDGES: CHURCH WOMEN UNITED
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ACROSS THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

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19 May 2015

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DEDICATION

In Honor of Dr. Janice M. Leone

and in Memory of the late

Dr. Thaddeus M. Smith and Dr. Shearer Davis Bowman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first encountered Church Women United while working on my Master's Thesis, "The Integration of Schools in Murfreesboro, Tennessee: A Community Study." At the time I could find nothing written about them on the national scene apart from one line in Hutchinson's *Beyond the Travail*; I was intrigued by this absence due to their very important role in various social issues in this one small southern community. Thus was born my dissertation.

I am deeply indebted to Mabel Head (1950), Gladys Gilkey Calkins (1960), Margaret Shannon (1977), and local unit historians for their in-house histories of these remarkable women. I have found them to be invaluable since they often relied upon contemporary memories that often were not recorded; whenever and wherever possible I have researched elsewhere to substantiate their recordings. Thankfully, in the decade since my thesis, there has been recognition of the need to study religious groups and their reform agendas across the twentieth century. It is my hope

that this dissertation will enlarge our understanding of the importance of these women working through their religious beliefs and of how and why individuals become involved in social reform.

I had the great good fortune to travel across several states visiting archives. Each archive was a pleasant experience of discovery and meeting wonderful archivists who tried to find anything I wanted and suggested other things of which I was unaware. Dale Patterson and Mark Shenise at the United Methodist Archive were exemplary as guides and new friends.

I have had the pleasure of developing a wonderful group of fellow "dissertators" with whom to commiserate. Panera Bread, Cosi', and Starbucks have all been most generous to us lost souls; they have fed us, listened to us when we complained, and cheered us when we celebrated. Jen and Jamie—I would never have made it without you! Karen, Sallie, John, Jamie B., thanks for continuing to give me your faith that it would someday be finished.

Di and Felito, thank you! My children held the conviction even though I sometimes lost it, and I thank them for their faith and all their words of encouragement. And Angel, I owe you everything.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAUW---American Association of University Women
AME---African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMEZ---African Methodist Episcopal Zion
AFSC---American Friends Service Committee
CACA---Committee on Allied Christian Agencies
CIC---Commission on Interracial Cooperation
CORE---Congress of Racial Equality
CWU---Church Women United
CYM---Christian Youth Movement
FCC---Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the United
States of America
KJV---King James Version
LWV---League of Women Voters
MEC---Methodist Episcopal Church
MECS---Methodist Episcopal Church, South
NAACP---National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People
NACW---National Association of Colored Women
NAWSA---National American Woman's Suffrage Association
NCC---National Council of Churches of Christ of the United
States of America
NCCJ---National Conference of Christians and Jews
NCCW---National Committee of Church Women
NCFCW---National Council of Federated Church Women
NCJW---National Council of Jewish Women
NCPCW---National Commission of Protestant Church Women
NOW---National Organization for Women
SCLC---Southern Christian Leadership Conference
UCCW---United Council of Church Women
UCW---United Church Women
UN---United Nations
USDA---United States Department of Agriculture
WCTU---Woman's Christian Temperance Union
WILPF---Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WICS---Women in Community Service
WIM---Wednesdays in Mississippi
WMC---Woman's Missionary Council
WWJD---What Would Jesus Do
YWCA---Young Women's Christian Association

Chapter One

Introduction

On December 11, 1941 – just days after the attack on Pearl Harbor – one hundred women active in Protestant denominations met in Atlantic City, New Jersey. These women were representing dozens of local organizations and also three longstanding organizations—the National Council of Church Women, the Council of Women for Home Missions, and the Committee on Women’s Work of the Foreign Missions Conference. For years, even decades, the women representing these groups had debated the possibilities of merging into a single national interdenominational organization that would unite “the total force of womanhood in Protestant churches.” Eighteen months earlier a Committee on Cooperation had met at Swarthmore College and had agreed to hold a Constituting Convention in December.¹

¹ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women: Church Women in the Interdenominational Movement, A History of the Development of United Work among Women of the Protestant Churches in the United States* (New York: United Church Women, National Council of The Churches of Christ in U.S.A., 1961), quote on 58; and Margaret Shannon, *Just Because* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1977), 2.

The women who met in Atlantic City were hardly well known and outside of their own organizations they were obscure figures. None of them would ever achieve the fame of a Jane Addams, a Florence Kelly, or a Margaret Sanger. If not famous, however, these women were most certainly devoted to the causes they served. They were religiously devout women with deep ties to their mainline Protestant churches. They were also women who believed that faith committed them to build a better world. Most of them had been involved in foreign and home missionary work, the peace movement, and other reform causes for much of their lives. In many cases, they were the daughters and granddaughters of women who had been part of these causes and organizations. They shared, as a result, clear beliefs and deep convictions about womanhood and Christianity and a commitment to social betterment.

These religiously-devout, public-spirited women also shared a longstanding distaste for the narrow denominationalism that characterized much of American Protestantism. Their distaste for doctrinal battles owed in part, as Virginia Brereton has explained, to the fact that

they were insiders and outsiders at the same time.² Many were women of social standing who were college educated and the wives of ministers and businessmen. At the same time, they had been left out of the hierarchies of their own churches and those of male-dominated interdenominational organizations such as the Federal Council of Churches. Hence, instead of waging doctrinal battles, they sought to build institutions that would allow them greater space and autonomy to act as churchwomen free of clerical and non-clerical male control. They had learned long ago that interdenominational organizations offered Protestant women the greatest opportunity to engage in spiritual nurture and to pursue social action.

The campaign to merge the three national organizations and the many smaller local organizations had gained momentum in the latter part of the 1930s. The National Council of Church Women had begun publishing *The Church Woman*, and through this organ had pursued the cause of national consolidation. A series of preliminary meetings

² Virginia Lieson Brereton, "United and Slighted: Women as Subordinated Insiders," in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchinson, in *Cambridge Studies in Religion and American Public Life*, ed. Robin W. Lovin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 147.

and conferences had set the stage for the Atlantic City meeting.

Like the rest of the nation, the delegates had been shocked by the news of Pearl Harbor, and for women who had devoted themselves to the cause of world peace, the entry into the war was a stunning development. Still, they were determined to move ahead. Now more than ever, they reasoned, women of the Protestant denominations needed to be heard. They needed to speak as a powerful voice in their churches and through their churches and through their own organization. Hence, when the Constituting Convention ended two days later, they had formed the United Council of Church Women.

Their opening statement to the nation called upon "the women of the churches to enter with us into the suffering and sacrifices of the human family." The statement specifically enumerated the need to "combat the rising tide of hatred caused by war," and the call to "minister to those suffering from the ravages of war." In a foreshadowing of their future campaigns, the statement called upon women to "continue to [the] fullest degree the ongoing ministry of the church, even to the uttermost parts of the earth." To show their support for their nation and

their military personnel, they pledged "friendship and understanding to the men and women in service for the defense of our country," and to "maintain the integrity of the home." They further pledged to a future built upon their consecration of themselves "to the task of building a democracy at home which recognizes individual worth and strives for justice to all people," and to the dedication of themselves to "the task of demanding of our country that it assumes its full responsibility in the days to come in helping to build a World Order based on love and justice without which there can be no durable peace."³ These statements all foretold the campaigns that would fill the next thirty years of their existence.

At its formation, the United Council of Church Women (UCCW) claimed to speak for ten million women and it represented the mainstream communions of Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Disciples of Christ. It also included Reformed, Unitarian/Universalists, Quakers, and Greek Orthodox women, among others. In fact in 1950, it had 89 communions in 1800 local councils in 48 states. In that year, the UCCW affiliated with the National Council of the Churches of

³ Margaret Shannon, *Just Because*, 21.

Christ (NCC) and changed its name to General Department of United Church Women of the National Council of Churches of Christ. It went through other reorganizations and eventually renamed itself Church Women United in 1968 which severed its affiliation with the NCC.⁴

The organization that emerged out of the Atlantic City meeting was a national body, but it was very much a decentralized organization made of grassroots organizations. The women who took part in these local units held rummage sales and days of prayer, but they also began a remarkable record of political and social activism that they saw as an expression of their religious beliefs. They sent food and clothing to war-torn Europe and Japan; they objected to the internment of the Nisei and Isei during the war; they campaigned for the United Nations; they organized to build parks for African Americans in the South; they spoke out against the evils of lynching and racial segregation; they called in 1946 for the integration of all federal facilities; they pressed for larger roles in their individual denominations; they documented the unequal status of women and pressed for equality. They did all of

⁴ Margaret Shannon, *Just Because*, 57.

this as women who believed that their religious faith demanded that they act publicly.

The UCCW never achieved the kind of visibility for women activists as did the National American Woman Suffrage Association or National Organization for Women. It pressed for racial justice, but it did not organize landmark protests comparable to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Nevertheless, beginning with the start of World War II, it did engage millions of women in a form of faith-based activism that was important and even central to their lives. Its history is a story that deserves to be told.

This dissertation will explore the story of the UCCW and the organizations that followed it across the mid-twentieth century focusing primarily on the years 1941 to 1968. The organization continues to this day as the Church Women United, and remains an example of the commitment to social betterment by churchwomen in the United States and the world.⁵ The years 1941 to 1968, however, mark a distinct

⁵ Church Women United is the current name for the organization. The women, as this dissertation shows, underwent numerous attempts to organize and hence there are a variety of names throughout the first seven decades of the century: Committee on Allied Christian Agencies (1924), The National Commission of Protestant Church Women (1928), National Council of Federated Church Women (1930), National Committee of Church Women (1938), United Council of Church Women (1941), General Department of United Church Women of the National Council of the Churches of Christ (1950), United Church Women (1966), and Church Women United (1968). My usage of the name will shift throughout the dissertation to mirror their contemporary identity except in the

period in the organization's history. In part this is because in 1968 the organization dissolved its alliance with the NCC, but these years also mark a distinct period in the history of twentieth century women and reform.

* * * * *

The years between 1921 and 1968 are sometimes referred to as the "doldrums of women's activism," or the period in between the eras of first wave feminism and second wave feminism.⁶ Historians who study the history of American women and feminism have come to realize that many women were involved in forms of activism before the 1960s, but they have generally slighted faith-based activism. Studying the story of the women who formed UCCW and the organizations that followed adds an important chapter to our understanding of activist women before the rise of NOW.

Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor's groundbreaking study, *Survival in the Doldrums*, led the way in detailing women's activism for the period 1945 to the 1960s, others followed

Introduction and Conclusion where I will chiefly use the contemporary Church Women United.

⁶ Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

suit. Susan Hartmann examined women in the political sphere during the sixties, and Joanne Meyerowitz followed with an important collection that challenged the prevailing stereotypes.⁷ Though each of these continued the traditional political and labor historical emphasis; none of them discussed faith-based activism or the UCCW.

However, most of the historians writing about social reform overlooked women working from a religious imperative. For many years, the only historical studies of UCCW were official histories written by women with close ties to the organization. These included studies by Mabel Head, Gladys Gilkey Caulkins, and Margaret Shannon.⁸ These works are indispensable to understanding the formation of UCCW and its early history, but they tend to be descriptive and celebratory. More recently, religious historians and historians of women's activism and feminism have begun to explain the importance of UCCW.

⁷ Susan M. Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream: American Women and Politics since 1960* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); and Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, in *Critical Perspectives on the Past*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

⁸ Mabel Head, *Forward Together—An Historical Sketch of Women's Interdenominational Work and the UCCW* (NY: The United Council of Church Women, 1950), Church Women United Records, United Methodist Church Archives—General Commission on Archives and History, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey (hereafter referred to as CWU-GCAH-UMC); Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*; and Margaret Shannon, *Just Because*.

It took a while for these religious women to be "discovered" by social historians but new scholarship has emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century to include activities of women. Moreover historians gradually started exploring the role of religion in American women's lives and the role of women in American church life. Initially nineteenth century women garnered much of the historian's attention.⁹

During the late 1970s and 1980s the work transitioned; early authors examined the role of religion in women's lives but the new wave looked at the role of women in American religious life. Instead of women's lives being changed by religion, these new histories showed how women were actively changing their churches' and their country's history. Sara Evans' important *Personal Politics: The Roots of the Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and*

⁹ Barbara Welter introduced this new topic in her pioneering essay, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," published in 1966. Her examination of the nineteenth-century perception of the "natural" relationship between women and religion opened the subject to investigation. Women's historians Kathryn Kish Sklar and Nancy Cott followed in the mid-1970s with their insightful monographs of New England women's awareness of the role of religion in their lives. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (2)(Summer 1966): 151-174; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher*; and Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). See also, Barbara Welter, *Dimitry Convictions: The American Woman in the 19th Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976); Janet Wilson James, ed., *Women in American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

the New Left bridged this transition in 1979 with her examination of how religion inspired many female activists, especially those involved in the Methodist Youth Movement, and in turn how those same activists changed the Methodist Church.¹⁰

John Patrick McDowell followed with *The Social Gospel in the South: The Women's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939*. McDowell clearly delineated the efforts of Southern Methodist women and their awareness at the turn of the twentieth century that they were doing important work that men could not, or would not, do in southern society, especially in race relations. Likewise, Cynthia Grant Tucker and Susan Lynn each explored the lives of Unitarian and Universalist female ministers at the turn of the twentieth century and, respectively, the YWCA and the American Friends Service Committee at mid-twentieth century.¹¹ These early studies explicitly showed the differences between women's

¹⁰ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

¹¹ John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South: The Women's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Cynthia Grant Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women of the Frontier, 1880-1930* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990); and Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

"ministry" and male ministers, and they encouraged further investigations of individual denominational women's groups.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's detailed examination of women's work at social uplift within the National Baptist Convention expanded this research across racial lines. Her deft exploration of women's efforts to maintain their independence within the church while also maintaining their voice in its policy-making broke new terrain for historians. It was echoed by Susan M. Yohn's examination of Presbyterian women's push to become missionaries in the United States Southwest and how their missionary work developed far beyond that of men's prior labors. Alice G. Knotts' compelling monograph on Southern Methodist women's hard work to improve race relations and their attempts to ameliorate the worst of the Jim Crow conditions opened the field to many other studies of Methodism and Methodist women. Nancy Robertson's fine examination of the YWCA's struggles with racism, Judith Weisenfeld's work on African American YWCA Christian activism, Robert A. Orsi's Catholic women's efforts to build and maintain a niche for themselves within a patriarchal structure, Cheryl Gilkes' development of the Womanist theology of African American women, and Martha S. Jones' work on the African American

Methodist women's work for ordination are a few more.¹² Even though these authors, except for Jones, do not explicitly acknowledge their subjects' feminism, each of these histories delves deeply into the religious underpinnings for the respective women's groups out of which emerged feminist theologies and their efforts to substantiate their actions in the face of universal male hierarchical opposition.

Dana L. Robert broke this denominational mold with her *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice, 1792-1992*, though R. Pierce Beaver had foreshadowed her massive work with his slim introduction to missiology in 1968, and the expanded version in 1980. Robert's study crossed denominational lines to look at the theology and feminist thought

¹² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Susan M. Yohn, *A Contest of Faiths: Missionary Women and Pluralism in the American Southwest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love*; Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-45* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Cheryl Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't for the Women": Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); and Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture, ed. Waldo E. Martin, Jr. and Patricia Sullivan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007).

undergirding missionary work across two hundred years of American history.¹³

In the first collection of scholarly essays that followed upon Robert's work, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton theorized that women were more apt to use interdenominational bodies than men because of their historic exclusion from the church hierarchy of power. Susan Hartmann's essay in that collection explores the work of women within the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC) during the 1960s. Hartman asserts that using the lens of religion to view feminism moves its inception from the late 1960s to the early 1960s, and that religious feminism included African American women in leadership roles unlike its later secular form.¹⁴ Ann Braude concurs in her essay in Catherine A. Brekus' recent collection. Braude asks historians to examine more carefully the early second-wave

¹³ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice, The Modern Mission Era, 1792-1992, An Appraisal*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996); R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), originally published as *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968). Beaver's initial work is a straightforward retelling of various church missionary efforts; his revised edition begins to show the interdenominational work and the feminist theory in his additional last chapter.

¹⁴ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Brereton, "Introduction," and Susan M. Hartmann, "Expanding Feminism's Field and Focus: Activism in the National Council of Churches in the 1960s and 1970s," in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, ed. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Brereton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

feminists by briefly mentioning the role of these same women in the NCC and their role in the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Braude's essay detailing the involvement of religion and feminism in the 1960s and 1970s is an extension of her earlier work on feminism and religion in the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Historians such as Virginia Brereton, Susan Hartmann, Caryn Neuman, Ann Braude, and R. Marie Griffith have provided excellent essays and articles that either examine the organization itself or the much neglected role of women as faith-based activists.¹⁶

Sara M. Evans and Ann Braude also recently collected essays on various individuals' work in a feminist vein. Evans' volume is more useful in this context as she produces snapshots of three generations of women, from the 1950s through the 1970s, involved in the Christian Youth Movement (CYM) and their resultant lives. Taken together

¹⁵ Ann Braude, "Faith, Feminism, and History," in *Reimagining the Past: The Religious History of American Women*, ed. Catherine A. Brekus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 232-252.

¹⁶ Caryn E. Neumann, "Enabled by the Holy Spirit: Church Women United and the Development of Ecumenical Christian Feminism," in *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, ed. Stephanie Gilmore, with a foreword by Sara M. Evans, in *Women in American History*, ed. Anne Firor Scott, Susan Armitage, Susan K. Cahn, and Deborah Gray White (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); and R. Marie Griffith, "The Generous Side of Christian Faith: The Successes and Challenges of Mainline Women's Groups," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestants*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

they provide a much more complex picture of religion in the United States and women's role therein.¹⁷ Both of these texts enlarge our understanding of how women used religion to expand their feminist stance on the world while simultaneously using feminism to reinforce their religious beliefs.

The above mentioned books, essays, and articles examine the organization itself or the much neglected role of women as faith-based activists. In doing so, they have begun to reveal important dimensions of feminist thought and of the connection between religion and feminism from the 1940s to the present. Many of these scholarly works, however, touch only briefly on the pre-1967 history of the UCCW and its successor organizations.

* * * * *

Church Women United members believed that they could make a difference in this world and set out to prove it. Their social reform actions were important in a variety of arenas. By describing the work of CWU activists, this

¹⁷ Sara M. Evans, ed., *Journeys That Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); and Ann Braude, *Transforming the Faiths of Our Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

dissertation will document the little studied role of Protestant women who became social activists across the mid-twentieth century. In doing so, it will fill a hole in the historical narrative. Using archival materials from the CWU national office, and state and local documents from Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Tennessee, and North Carolina, this dissertation inserts the CWU story into the history of social reform projected by newspapers and government units.

This dissertation explores how these liberal Protestant women worked to fulfill their commitments by focusing on three areas of special concern during the mid-twentieth century. Councils, across the nation in large and small towns and rural areas, worked on a variety of issues affecting the quality of life in their communities—alcohol, gambling, prostitution, movie quality, moral representations, etcetera—issues important to the everyday morals of a community but they are not the focus of this study. This investigation delves into the triumvirate that consumed the majority of their time and effort—peace, race relations, and feminism.

These deeply religious women believed they had a larger role in society than simply being mothers and wives. Repeatedly, leaders invoked the words of Jesus found in the

New Testament: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹⁸ They saw their mission as alleviating pain and suffering on earth and used UCCW/CWU to establish a larger public role for women everywhere. They also saw the need to elevate women's status in all areas, for they believed that Christ had often used women to tell universal truths. Operating at a time when women had few public options, they used their familial roles as moral instructors to implement a far-ranging agenda.

Chapter One examines the background and origins of UCCW/CWU. The women who met in Atlantic City in 1941 had long been active in foreign and home missionary societies. This commitment was vital in bringing together their faith and their social activism. In this chapter, I will show how the women developed their theology and their ideology of "women working with women" which built an understanding of the universality of issues facing women around the globe.

Chapter Two examines UCCW's work for international peace in the 1940s and 1950s. UCCW/CWU was deeply committed to a progressive internationalism, which was idealistic and profoundly reformist for the time. UCCW focused on

¹⁸ Holy Bible (KJV), Matthew 25:40 as found in numerous state and national communications of CWU.

alleviating the plight of women and children around the globe. This chapter will highlight important issues they attacked and issues they promoted to advance world peace.

Chapter Three examines UCCW's commitment to improving American race relations across the mid-century decades. Building on the missionary experience, the women of the UCCW/CWU were inclined to embrace the belief that in God's eyes all peoples of all races deserved to be treated with humanity and decency. Thus, this chapter draws attention to important actions undertaken by these women to correct racial inequalities.

Chapter Four examines UCCW/CWU's relationship to feminism. Having endured marginalization by male-dominated church hierarchies, many of the women who were active in UCCW wanted to develop and protect institutional space for women's activism. But in the 1950s, in the face of Cold War pressures for conformity, the challenge of the Catholic Church, and the secularism of the modern media, they faced powerful pressures to accept a more highly gendered set of cultural norms. These pressures were one reason for the affiliation in 1950 with the National Council of Churches. In time, however, many UCCW/CWU members found these compromises unsatisfactory and stifling. These tensions

reflected the emergence of a more self-consciously feminist attitude on the part of many members.

Much can be learned by studying Church Women United. By examining one organization that implicitly and explicitly challenged social norms because of religious beliefs, historians gain an appreciation for the complexity of our national history and discover another method of social change. This history expands our appreciation for the role of women and the role of religion in changing our social structures.

Chapter Two
Historical Background to Interdenominational Social
Reform Work

The formation of the United Council of Church Women in 1941 marked an important milestone in the history of liberal Protestant women and faith-based activism.¹ The formation of UCCW, however, built on decades of prior theological and organizational developments. The women who took the lead in forming UCCW were acutely aware of the long struggle by Protestant church women on behalf of interdenominational faith-based activism. For many women active in UCCW, the new organization marked the culmination of the scrimping and saving by women of faith to fund missions and faith-based initiatives. It is important to understand this earlier history in order to understand how and why UCCW emerged in 1941, and ultimately led to the present coalition known as Church Women United.

¹ The movement known today as Church Women United is a culmination of many organizational attempts and names. See Appendix A for a complete listing of names used by this movement during the twentieth century.

* * * * *

The roots of women's activism in the areas of internationalism/peace, race, and gender equality go far back. The creation of the United Council of Church Women was rooted in important developments within American Protestantism. Some of these reached back to the nineteenth century while others had emerged in more recent years. These developments included the rise of liberal or modern Protestantism, the emergence of the Social Gospel, the growing commitment to interdenominational forms of organization, and the continued importance for Protestant women of home and foreign mission organizations.

Protestant churches experienced strong pulls in various directions during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The sharp rise in immigration brought cultural conflicts as well as questions concerning the prominence of the Protestant faith. Rapidly increasing numbers of Catholics and Jews called into question the Protestants' image of America as a "Christian Nation." Immigration, industrialization, and burgeoning slums in large cities begged for new responses from Protestantism.

Protestants responded with new emphases on service and interdenominational cooperation to withstand these assaults.

Protestant Liberalism, according to the historian William Hutchinson, "emphasized the immanence of God in nature and human nature," and "tended toward a general humanistic optimism." Valuing "good works" over "professions and confessions," Liberalism focused on the "Incarnation, which signified and ratified the actual presence of God in humanity." This new understanding led to the Modernist movement of the period 1870-1930. Hutchinson defines this as "the conscious, intended adaptation of religious ideas to modern culture," and the "belief that society is moving toward realization (even though it may never attain the reality) of the Kingdom of God."² Thus, Protestants were reacting to the increasing pluralism and secularism by making their faith more responsive to the needs of the new Americans.

Closely tied to the rise of modernist Protestantism was the emergence of the Social Gospel in the latter third of the nineteenth century. The Social Gospel message expanded the Christian emphasis on personal salvation to include remediation of social ills by enacting the lessons

² William R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 4, 2.

of the New Testament. Liberal Protestants came to believe that the power of Jesus could and should be used to change society. They believed that God had chosen American Protestants to be the instruments of salvation.³

By the latter years of the century, Christian Socialist thought from Europe arrived in the United States. The socialists' believed that sin and salvation were social as well as personal; therefore, the structure of society needed to be changed as well as individuals. At the same time, the New Theologians called for a new emphasis on love and commitment to bringing Heaven to Earth.⁴ Each of these movements emphasized the possibility of progress, and the belief that Protestants could achieve a more caring society and improve the human condition in this world.

The Social Gospel male leaders all had experience working in inner city slums and saw the devastation of lives that resulted from precarious living conditions. Washington Gladden worked in Brooklyn and later served as a councilman in Columbus, Ohio. Walter Rauschenbusch worked

³ For greater explication of the Social Gospel, see Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches in Industrial America*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915*, *Yale Studies in Religious Education*, vol. 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Donald B. Meyer, *The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); and Ronald C. White, Jr. and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America, with an essay by John C. Bennett* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

⁴ Ronald C. White, Jr. and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*.

in Hell's Kitchen in New York City from 1886 to 1897. Graham Taylor worked in the inner industrial area of Chicago. Samuel M. "Golden Rule" Jones, close friend of Washington Gladden, served as mayor of Toledo, Ohio, and founded the Society of Applied Christianity.⁵

Charles Sheldon's literary work carried his ideas much further than could his sermons. His 1899 novel, *In His Steps*, set out the popular theme of "What Would Jesus Do?" This followed his less succinct plea in the novel, *His Brother's Keeper, or, Christian Stewardship*, in which he examined the atrocious working conditions in the iron mines of Michigan.⁶ That catchy phrase, "WWJD," was copied and used to exhort reform (and commercialized) in the 1890s nearly as much as it was in the 1990s. Putting Jesus into the central questions of society was a new twist and an enlargement of Christianity into the marketplace.

Gladden, Rauschenbusch, and Sheldon were major Social Gospel theologians who called on religious believers to employ the lessons of Christ in their daily lives.⁷ This new

⁵ Ronald C. White, Jr. and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*.

⁶ Charles M. Sheldon, *His Brother's Keeper, or, Christian Stewardship* (London: Ward, Lock, 1896), and *In His Steps* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1899).

⁷ Washington Gladden foreshadowed Sheldon's ideas in *Burning Questions of The Life That Now Is, and That Which Is to Come* (N.P.: Century, 1890), and *Who Wrote the Bible* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1891); and Walter Rauschenbusch furthered this direction in *Christianity and the Social Crises* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), and *The Social Principles of Jesus* (New York: Association Press, 1916).

understanding led to increasing efforts to cross denominational lines. The emerging emphasis on interdenominational efforts acknowledged that social reform needed precedence over theology in order to acculturate the new immigrants and address the emerging issues of slums and cultural discord.

Protestant church women had been moving beyond the private sphere for much of the nineteenth century. Historian Nancy Cott has argued that women used Protestantism for self-affirmation and political empowerment: "Religious identity allowed women to assert themselves, both in private and in public ways. It enabled them to rely on an authority beyond the world of men and provided a crucial support to those who stepped beyond accepted bounds—reformers, for example."⁸ The Protestant theology of individual redemption allowed women to feel, act, and demand to be treated as equals.

The Social Gospel also justified women's social reform work while reinforcing the role of the clergy as their spiritual leaders and the church male laity-leaders as decision-makers.⁹ As early as 1800, women reached across

⁸ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 139-140.

⁹ Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Introduction: Restoring Women and Reclaiming Gender in Social Gospel Studies," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann

denominational lines to accomplish what they could not do alone. In October of that year, Miss Mary Webb gathered fourteen elite, white women from the local Baptist and Congregational churches to form the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes. Though confined to a wheelchair, this dynamic woman started a movement that led to two centuries of women's missionary efforts and eventually to the formation of Church Women United. The Cent Society followed soon after, in 1802. At a dinner party a guest mused that the wine probably cost a penny a glass, and exclaimed, "Just think! If we would each forgo one glass tonight the sum saved would buy several gospels or more tracts. Should we and our friends do without some little thing each week and save a cent?" Everyone at the table agreed, and the evening's hostess, Mehitable Simpkins, agreed to be the collector. The penny was particularly attractive as a collection token because it harkened back to Jesus' parable of the widow and her two mites in the New Testament.¹⁰ The idea of women quietly giving the "least

Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 1-17.

¹⁰ R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: A History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 13-14; and Mabel Head, *Forward Together: An Historical Sketch of Interdenominational Women's Work and the UCCW* (N.P.: The United Council of Church Women, 1950), 1, CWU-GCAH-UMC. The quote is from Beaver, 13. The Parable of "The Widow and Her Two Mites" is found in Holy Bible (KJV), Matthew 12:42, Mark 12:38-44, and Luke 20:45-47 and 21:1-4.

coin" of the realm for the Lord's work was appealing as they were not allowed to be personally involved with mission work.

A few years later, Methodist women formed the Female Missionary Society of New York in 1809. And the Boston Female Society sent an invitation to "female friends of Zion" throughout the Northeast, in their 1812 issue of the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, for each locale to "meet for concerted prayer on the first Monday of each month," thereby replicating Jesus' request at the Garden of Gethsemane for his disciples to pray in fellowship with Him.¹¹ By 1814 there were forty societies across New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio praying in unison; by 1818 that number had grown to ninety-seven.

Since that time, women in these interdenominational associations have attacked specific problems by focusing first on concentrated prayer and then moving forward with action. Their methods of collective prayer and collection of pennies provided Christian literature for settlers on the frontier, Native Americans, and overseas missions. They set the agenda for the next two centuries; Church Women United still hosts the World Day of Prayer and the Least Coin Society.

¹¹ Holy Bible (KJV), Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; and Luke 22:40-46.

Though today, some historians view mission work as cultural imperialism, for Americans of the time mission work was a vital part of their religious beliefs. Mission work, both domestic and foreign, was vital to enlarging the role of women in nineteenth century Protestantism. Their earliest experiences were as wives of missionaries; as such they were only allowed to talk with the women of the community. However, the mission supporters shared their letters and gradually realized the subservient role of women around the world.¹² By the latter third of the century women were allowed to go into the mission fields on their own and their experiences served to reinforce this female sublimation to male authority across the globe. In the field of mission work, "the unity among married and single women, prominent and ordinary women, missionary and

¹² Those interested in exploring criticisms of white women involved in missions in the Far East should consult: Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, eds., *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Historians of missiology, Lisa Joy Pruitt and Dana L. Robert propose that these religious reformers were perhaps the first feminists due to their encountering the idea of "other" as missionary women. Their work resulted in them examining their own lives through the "looking-glass" of how women were treated in other countries. See: Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 1-7; and Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice, The Modern Mission Era, 1792-1992*, An Appraisal, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 133.

homeside women, and women of different Protestant traditions" encouraged women to assume larger roles in their communities.¹³

As mission efforts expanded, churchwomen's groups increasingly sponsored foreign missionaries who operated independently of the official church mission boards. For instance, Methodist women established the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1869. Presbyterian women followed suit in 1870; the American Baptist women followed shortly thereafter as did the Free Baptists and Disciples of Christ women who formed organizations in 1873. By the turn of the century, there were separate women's mission organizations in more than forty denominations involving three million women.¹⁴

By expanding their religious and secular activities, these women were also engaged in the larger discussion of the public role for women. As the *Boston Transcript* (a leading newspaper of the era) noted disapprovingly, "Woman is straying from her sphere."¹⁵ According to historians Wendy Edwards and Carolyn Gifford, by the late 1880s, ministers and theologians were scrambling to bring home and

¹³ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 129.

¹⁴ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 129.

¹⁵ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), 34.

foreign mission efforts back under the guidance of the male-dominated churches.

Finally, moving to coordinate some of their actions, in 1887, women from various Protestant denominations began formalizing communal prayer days to support home missions and foreign missions. These collective prayers ultimately led to the development of the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions in 1901 and the Council of Home Missions in 1903. These efforts foreshadowed the World Day of Prayer which would become an important touchstone for Church Women United in all its various configurations.¹⁶

Liberal Protestant women's commitment to internationalism (and eventually the peace movement) can be seen in June of 1888, when the women's meeting held in conjunction with the General Missionary Conference in London developed an umbrella organization to coordinate the various denominational women's mission boards.¹⁷ This World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women would

¹⁶Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women: Church Women in the Interdenominational Movement, A History of the Development of United Work among Women of the Protestant Churches in the United States* (New York: United Church Women, National Council of The Churches of Christ in U.S.A., 1961), 10-11.

¹⁷ Historians of missiology Lisa Joy Pruitt and Dana L. Robert propose that these religious reformers were perhaps the first feminists due to their encountering the idea of "other" as missionary women. Their work resulted in them examining their own lives through the "looking-glass" of how women were treated in other countries. See: Lisa Joy Pruitt, "A Looking-Glass for Ladies": *American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 1-7; and Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 133.

organize, "1, For special prayer; 2, For united effort for other objects: as, for example, the legal relief of the twenty million of widows in India; 3, For the arrangement of any general conference that may be deemed desirable." Each member society was to send yearly reports to the World Committee of its mission work.¹⁸ By combining home and foreign missions and working with women missionary societies around the world, the WMCCW created a new understanding of the field of missions and of the role of women in supporting mission work.

The committee's first major initiative was to ask members to pray every Sunday evening for an hour. Rooted in the early communal prayer groups of missionary units around the country, this was a powerful method for connecting women, and out of it eventually emerged the World Day of Prayer, a major initiative that CWU still oversees today.¹⁹ Communal prayers, the women believed, would bolster their efforts to improve the lives of women and children around the world.

¹⁸ Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., "Historical Material: World Day of Prayer and Women's Work," NCC Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. (Hereafter referred to as NCC-PHS.)

¹⁹ Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., "Historical Material: World Day of Prayer and Women's Work," NCC-PHS. As World Day of Prayer grew, it encompassed nations around the world and thousands of localities within the United States. Nations alternated who wrote and prepared the service. All locations use the same prayer service, the same Bible readings, and collect offerings for agreed upon international missionary projects.

The World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women was instrumental in organizing programs for the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. It also planned the Interdenominational Conference on Foreign Missions in New York City in 1900 which led to the development of the interdenominational Central Committee on United Study of Foreign Missions for the production of study literature for foreign and home missions. National Protestant leaders developed regional schools of missions in 1907 which brought women from several denominations together to study important issues around the nation and the world.²⁰ Moreover, on the local level, interdenominational women's groups formed as early as 1889 in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1897 in Springfield, Missouri, in 1898 in St. Louis, Missouri, and in 1908 in Kansas City, Kansas.²¹

Interdenominational organizations became increasingly important to liberal Protestantism after 1900. One example, of course, was the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (FCC) which was established in 1908. The goal of the FCC was to bring church policy more closely in line with the

²⁰ "Constitution Woman's Interdenominational Missionary Council," TMS, Des Moines Scrapbook, Church Women United of the Des Moines Area Collection, Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, IA. (Hereafter referred to as CWU-SHSI.); Gladys Gilkey Calkins, "Follow Those Women," 8-11; and R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission*, 145-149.

²¹ "Constitution Woman's Interdenominational Missionary Council," Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI; and Margaret Sonnenday, "Church Women United—Historical Overview" TMS, 1, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

Christian view of life. To do this, the FCC adopted a revised version of the Methodist Social Creed as part of its constitution, and set off a controversy that still reverberates a hundred years later.²² The FCC made its principal effort not theology but public action to combat slums, poverty, and labor abuse. It pursued the abolition of child labor, regulation of women's labor, living wages, and old age pensions, many issues that women had worked on for the past century.²³

The work Protestant women had been doing within their denominational mission societies and especially their interdenominational work were direct outgrowths of these new understanding of God. The public pronouncements of the Social Gospel and the Federal Council of Churches were male constructs to explain these actions to the general public.

The fiftieth anniversary of interdenominational missionary work was a crucial event in interdenominational organizing.²⁴ The planning of the Golden Jubilee for 1910-1911 became perhaps the capstone of the women's early

²² The Methodist Social Creed and the 1908 Social Creed can be found in Appendix B and C, respectively.

²³ As found at: <http://archives.umc.org>; and as found at <http://liberalslikechrist.org/about/socialcreed.html>.

²⁴ The organizers decided to promote the 1861 Union Missionary Society as the origin of interdenominational efforts, though as we have seen there were earlier attempts. Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women* (New York: The United Council of Church Women, 1944), pamphlet, 6-7, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

events and the impetus for the first formal national organization of interdenominational women. The Golden Jubilee celebrated fifty years of women working across denominational lines in the foreign mission field.²⁵ Lucy W. Peabody and Helen Barrett Montgomery, leaders of the 1900 Interdenominational Foreign Mission Conference and well known for pronouncing that "missions [are] not a by-product or side-issue of Christianity, but as its very essence and its central challenge," organized the Jubilee celebration.²⁶ Montgomery's *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, 1910, an historical analysis of foreign mission work, was the preparatory textbook for the various conferences held in each state. These study and prayer events brought women from liberal Protestant churches together to discuss women's needs around the world. This event, which ended with a large "love offering" of over \$1 million, inspired women from across the country to express their enjoyment of working with women of other faiths. Inspired by this success, the organizers built on it with more such special events.²⁷

²⁵ Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women*, 6-7, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

²⁶ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 12.

²⁷ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline of Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1911); Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and

Women active in the missionary movement continued to organize in an effort to strengthen their place within early twentieth century Protestantism. Peabody and Montgomery and officers from denominational boards met in Philadelphia in 1912 to launch an experimental organization known as the Federation of Women's Boards of Foreign Missions. Composed of representatives from Canada and the United States, it worked with representatives of all Women's Foreign Missions Boards and the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions. Its purpose was "to promote unity, Christian fellowship and cooperation among women's Boards; to encourage and disseminate the best methods of work and to collectively plead for the outpouring of the spirit of God upon the Church of Christ." Thirty-seven boards affiliated with it including eleven Methodist Episcopal Church boards, six Presbyterian Boards, and three area Congregational Boards.²⁸ This new Federation set out to develop specific tasks for women to pursue through interdenominational efforts.

In 1914, the Federation organized itself on a more formal basis with nineteen denominational boards, a number

Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women*, 6-7, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

²⁸ Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women*, 7, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

that grew to thirty-three by 1933. The Federation organized a Committee on Christian Literature for Women and Children to produce magazines, books, and leaflets in Asian languages for the education of women and children in the mission fields, sponsored the World Day of Prayer, and formed the Women's Christian Colleges in the Orient Committee to oversee the development and continuation of women's colleges to be funded by money raised during the Jubilee and the subsequent World Day of Prayer programs.²⁹

The Golden Jubilee led many women to value the camaraderie of interdenominational work and sense of self-worth that this avenue of leadership provided. After they had raised \$1 million for the Jubilee, women continued the tradition of sending "love offerings" to support women's colleges in Asia. In 1921, the second official observance, the offering totaled \$2 million for housing and faculty that was matched with a \$1 million grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund to establish more colleges in Pacific island countries.³⁰ By 1927, World Day of Prayer (as it was now known) was an international event as countries around the world participated and the donations collected

²⁹ Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women*, 7-9, CWU-GCAH-UMC; Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 12-20; and Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission*, 153-170.

³⁰ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 19-21.

were divided evenly between foreign and home missions. As Gladys Calkins wrote, "It was the symbol, dynamic and deeply cherished, of the common faith and the common task that unites in one bond all women who profess to follow Christ, whatever their race, creed, or nation."³¹ Such women modeled themselves on the Parable of the Mustard Seed in the New Testament; this story became an emblem of their faith as it posited that the seemingly unending list of needs on this Earth was overwhelming compared to their meager efforts, save for the fact they had the Lord helping them.³² Thus they remained deeply committed to their faith and the ability to transfer that faith to action.

* * * * *

As the women of the various liberal Protestant denominations had slowly learned to work together, so too did the races. The transitional years of 1880 to 1920 were instrumental in this process for these years saw increased home and foreign missionary work by both black and white women. Bettye Collier-Thomas has explained how African American women "utilize[ed] the language of evangelical

³¹ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 20.

³² Holy Bible (KJV), Matthew 17: 20. This parable was prominently displayed on many local and state communications.

Christianity to argue for both gender equality in the church and community and racial equality and social change in white-dominated organizations and the American body politic."³³ The new theology of universal equality learned from a century of mission work around the country and the world finally led some Protestant women to apply it to race relations within the United States.

Amid the raw mix of increasing racial hostilities of Jim Crow and women's campaigns for suffrage and prohibition, organizations based on religious principles such as the National Association of Colored Women, and the Young Women's Christian Association, and religious groups such as the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the National Baptist Convention of the United States of America worked together to push for interracial meetings where women could share common concerns and look for common solutions. Strategic and charismatic leadership was essential in this movement and each of these organizations was an incubator for such

³³ Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xix, in pages 24-29 she expanded on this theory while accentuating the role of the Methodist beliefs as particularly conducive to women's freedom.

leadership. Singularly or in-tandem they tackled issues of discrimination in housing, dining, and employment.³⁴

The biennial conference of the NACW in July 1920 seemed the perfect opportunity for leaders to push a little further. Leaders invited Carrie Johnson and Sara Haskins, white Methodist missionary leaders, to attend the meetings; NACW organizers arranged segregated housing and dining facilities at Tuskegee but otherwise gave them no preferential treatment. The eight hundred African American women in attendance were troubled by the appearance of the white women and distrustful of their motives, fearing they only wanted new information on domestic help. However, as the meeting wore on eyes were opened on both sides of the color line as the African American women talked honestly about their concerns for the black community and the necessity for the white women to treat them more humanely.³⁵

³⁴ Detailed descriptions of their work can be found in Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Donald G. Nieman, *Church and Community among Black Southerners, 1865-1900* (New York: Garland, 1994); Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996); Marcia Riggs, *Can I get a witness?: Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); Thomas Dublin, Franchesca Arias, and Debora Carreras, *What Gender Perspectives Shaped the Emergence of the National Association of Colored Women, 1895-1920?* (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York, 2000); Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love; and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³⁵ Arnold M. Shankman, "Civil Rights, 1920-1970: Three Southern Methodist Women," in *Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition:*

In response, Johnson and Haskin organized a meeting of white Protestant leaders from across the nation for the following October and invited some of these black women to attend in order to continue the dialogue. However, to maintain the necessary low profile in this time of increased racial violence, the women chose the Memphis YWCA as the location for this conversation, an agency in which black and white women were actively involved, religiously and socially. Johnson and Haskin invited leaders from the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Disciples of Christ, YWCA, and state women's groups. The ninety-two white women, sixty-eight of whom were Methodist, were just as impressed by these black women and horrified of their tales of abuse and discrimination as Johnson and Haskins had been in Tuskegee.³⁶

Carrie Johnson set the mood when she opened the meeting with, "We're here for some frank talk. . . . In your own way tell us your story and try to enlighten us. You probably think we're pretty ignorant, and we are, but we're willing to learn." The first two African American women, speaking on the topic "What It Means To Be a Negro,"

Women in New Worlds, Volume Two, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller, Louise L. Queen, and Hilah F. Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 213-214.

³⁶ "Southern Women and Race Cooperation: A Story of the Memphis Conference, October Sixth and Seventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty," Electronic Edition, Commission on Interracial Cooperation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001.

were well received and non-controversial; however, when Charlotte Hawkins Brown rose to speak the atmosphere changed.³⁷

Brown had been evicted from her Pullman berth on her trip to Memphis and she was still incensed. She recounted her latest experience with racist bigotry and went on to tell the white audience, "All Negro women feel that you can control your men. . . . So far as lynching is concerned, if the white women would take hold of the situation, lynching would be stopped, mob violence stamped out, and yet the guilty would have justice meted out in due course by law and would be punished accordingly."³⁸ The resulting conversation was open and honest; finally, the white audience was beginning to understand the fear, embarrassment, and daily harassment of living as a black woman in the United States, especially in the South.

After much discussion, the bi-racial group decided that they needed to have an on-going conversation and so they established a Continuation Committee to affiliate with the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and focus on

³⁷ "Southern Women and Race Cooperation: A Story of the Memphis Conference, October Sixth and Seventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty," Electronic Edition, Commission on Interracial Cooperation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001.

³⁸ "Southern Women and Race Cooperation: A Story of the Memphis Conference, October Sixth and Seventh, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty," Electronic Edition, Commission on Interracial Cooperation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001.

interracial work. The major outgrowth of this meeting was a new understanding of their church work; they reworked their motto of "Women Working For Women," to the more inclusive "Women Working With Women."³⁹ This new sensitivity was but another level of the understanding of equality of women around the world that had begun to develop with the missionaries' wives nearly one hundred years before. (The incidents recounted in the previous pages highlight some of the work being accomplished by women who went on to help lead the new organization in 1941.)

* * * * *

At the start of the 1920s, Protestant churchwomen had established an impressive network of interdenominational organizations. A survey of churches conducted by the FCC in 1924 found 1,200 local women's councils across the nation.⁴⁰ This growth was tied to the "desire" of churchwomen to be

³⁹ This is one more of those examples that historians Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford used to build their argument that women experienced discrimination and therefore worked harder to eradicate it than did the general church; Alice G. Knotts is explicit in her portrayal of Methodist women's theology arising from this background, see Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love*, 18-21.

⁴⁰ "Historical Material: World Day of Prayer and Women's Work," NCC-PHS.

included in "all phases of the church program as well as to reach out into newly opened channels of service."⁴¹

Yet if women had a larger role in church and missionary councils, it was still often a confined role. A 1921 FCC survey of ministers found that "women were used for visiting, social service, survey of motion picture, raising money, civic action, but most of them thought organizations of women's groups neither essential nor advisable."⁴² Very often, it seemed, ministers and church leaders benefitted from the funds raised by women while rebuking them for overstepping their place. Some ministers spoke out against the growing women's sphere. One wrote an editorial that asked: "Some of the most thoughtful minds are beginning to ask what is to become of this Woman movement in the church?" His advice was: "Let them alone, - - all through our history like movements have started. Do not oppose them, and it will die out."⁴³ Some fundamentalist ministers justified limiting women's role by invoking St. Paul's admonitions against women preaching or teaching in mixed sex assemblies.⁴⁴ And with the onset of the Great

⁴¹ Katharine V. Silverthorn, "Historical Background of the Formation of the National Committee of Church Women," TMs, 1938, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁴² Mabel Head, *Forward Together*, 4, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁴³ R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission*, 107.

⁴⁴ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, ed. George M. Marsden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Holy Bible (KJV), I Corinthians 14:34, and I Timothy 2:11.

Depression, some male church leaders sought to take control over the funds raised by churchwomen.⁴⁵

From the early years, the fact that this movement was so decentralized allowed the women to continue to focus part of their efforts on their local situations as well as promote the greater vision of "Heaven on Earth." Women conducted Surveys of Need in their communities to lead local councils in their adoption of issues that directly affected their communities: working with migrant labor in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Iowa; Indian Boarding Schools around the nation; and sharecroppers in the South and West.⁴⁶ The San Diego women raised funds for a new jail, improvements in the Children's and Tubercular wards of the local hospital, and helped build a church and dormitory for the local Chinese community during the 1920s. In the 1930s, Rochester, New York women canvassed churches looking for jobs for the unemployed, organized family visits to those whose family members were working in a Work Relief Project, and still continued to push for World Day

⁴⁵ R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission*, 180-181.

⁴⁶ Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, Mrs. E. H. Goedeke, eds., *The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women*, 13-14, CWU-GCAH-UMC; and Mrs. C.A. Tenny, "History of the Interdenominational Missionary Council, from 1921-1929," CWU-SHSI.

of Prayer offerings to meet their perceived obligations to their missionary projects.⁴⁷

National coalitions struggled during the 1920s and 1930s. There were leadership tensions between individual missionary councils and those promoting a cooperative system; there were ownership tensions over who exercised authority among the various umbrella organizations. For instance, the Federation of Women's Boards of the Foreign Mission Conference wanted to retain the World Day of Prayer and the Council of Church Women wanted to maintain their seven areas of study which had been the domain of the Council of Religious Education.⁴⁸

In the face of these challenges with the male hierarchy and conflict between women's groups, the women still continued to organize. Another national attempt at organizing occurred in 1924 when the Conference on Organized Women's Work in Federations and Councils of Churches formed an umbrella organization to serve as a clearinghouse. The founding conference, which was held in Pittsburgh, discussed several studies of women's social reform endeavors at home and abroad. The organization encouraged church women to work with their community and

⁴⁷ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 22, 39.

⁴⁸ Myrta Ross, interview by Hilda Lee Dail, undated, transcript, 2, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

government institutions, and to keep the newly constituted Committee on Allied Christian Agencies informed of their actions.⁴⁹

At the same time, women at the local level were building a grassroots network of Protestant women committed to faith and to activism. In 1923 in Sioux City, Iowa, women involved in Day of Prayer activities formed the Women's Church and Missionary Federation, to meet the need for raising funds "to support the Union Christian Colleges for Women in the Orient." They quickly added other projects such as, "World Friendship Among Children, leper work, international relations and world peace, race relations, marriage and the home, Christian citizenship, motion pictures, Christmas Cheer for shut-ins, the County Home, and the Florence Crittenden Home vespers." During the 1920s and 1930s, they produced annual schools of missions to teach lay-leaders and young people about their social activism; they used the textbooks of The Missionary Education Movement for these classes.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Grace Coleman Lathrop, "Findings—Conference on Organized Women's Work in Federations and Councils of Churches," TMs, Pittsburgh, PA, 1924, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁵⁰ Mrs. C. W. Britten and Mrs. W. A. Dutton, "Summary of the Work of the Iowa Council of Church Women, from 1933 to 1945," TMs, Church Women United in Iowa Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa. (Hereafter referred to as CWU-IWA-UIL.)

Eventually, the Iowa group asked, "Why point the need, unless we are prepared to follow through?" Their fundraising and educating of locals needed some guidance and connection to the larger global community. Leaders then contacted the Day of Prayer headquarters and learned of the recently organized national federation, whereupon the Sioux City Federation voted to cooperate, and in March 1931 sent "an affiliation fee of \$5.00." Later that same year, the local president accepted the offer to work on the national board. She then began "writing to Day of Prayer groups in Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, to ask each to begin the formation of a state federation." Working with former members of the Sioux City Federation of Church Women, and women from the Dubuque federation, she spent two years travelling across the state visiting with church women's groups to eventually form the Iowa State Council of Federated Church Women in 1935 at the Iowa Sunday School Convention.⁵¹ The stage was set for a permanent umbrella force to coordinate these efforts.

⁵¹ Mrs. C. W. Britten and Mrs. W. A. Dutton, "Summary of the work of the Iowa Council of Church Women, from 1933 to 1945," 4-6, CWU-IWA-UIL, and further information in Edith K. Gannon (Mrs. B. O.), "Historical Summary: Iowa Council of Church Women, 1945-1951," TMs, 2-3, CWU-IWA-UIL. Gannon further elaborates that the Iowa group simplified their name in 1938 to Iowa Council of Church Women. In the opposite corner of Iowa, Fort Madison women have a similar history having formed with the World Day of Prayer in 1920 and then moved through the various stages of organization and restructuring.

Women continued to work to organize at the national level. Three organizations emerged during the interwar years. They were the Cooperative Committee of the National Council of Federated Church Women, the Council of Women for Home Missions, and the Committee on Women's Work of the Foreign Missions Conference. These interdenominational umbrella organizations began meeting to discuss the "overwhelming opportunities and needs for cooperation and clearance in the common concerns of the three parent organizations." They formed in 1928 the National Commission of Protestant Church Women. Two years later in 1930 they created the National Council of Federated Church Women. Finally in 1938 they established the National Committee of Church Women, which was to coordinate all three original umbrella groups.⁵² Their particular activities and interests included international relations, World Day of Prayer, May Day luncheon, and initiating *The Councillor* magazine. Additionally, they sought to develop field relations with the International Council of Religious Education and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.⁵³

In the 1930s when they were still configured as the National Council of Federated Church Women (NCFCW), they

⁵² Katharine V. Silverthorn, "Historical Background of the Formation of the National Committee of Church Women," CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁵³ Katharine V. Silverthorn, "Historical Background of the Formation of the National Committee of Church Women," CWU-GCAH-UMC.

focused nationally on improving morals in motion pictures, promoting peace and international cultural studies, as well as pushing for coordination and reduction of duplication among member councils.⁵⁴ In January of 1938, representatives from the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the Council of Women for Home Missions, the Committee on Women's Work of the Foreign Missions Religious Education, the Missionary Education Movement, and the Councils and Federations of Churches reached an agreement for cooperation centered around World Day of Prayer, May Day Luncheon, and the newly instituted magazine, *The Councillor*.⁵⁵

This magazine, which began as a newsletter, became the primary tool for communication and coordination. The new organization renamed the newsletter *The Church Woman* and expanded it to ten issues a year. Editors envisioned that it would become the "Reader's Digest of religious things the church woman active in interdenominational affairs ought to be conversant with."⁵⁶ It would carry information on "books, articles, and special addresses that are of interest to church women and publish gleanings from

⁵⁴ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 44-48.

⁵⁵ Katharine V. Silverthorne, "Historical Background of the Formation of the National Committee of Church Women, GCAH-UMC-CWU.

⁵⁶ Susannah Crowe, letter to Mrs. LeGrand, 18 June 1948, GCAH-UMC-CWU.

interdenominational and denominational publications."⁵⁷ Therefore, it was to be small in size, no advertising, and have only short concise articles. This "easy-to-carry-in-your-purse" magazine was the only tool needed, beside *The Holy Bible*, for women to move into the community and world and make them more hospitable environs for all their inhabitants.

The editors were willing to take controversial stands. Harriet Harmon Dexter's self-described high point as editor came in 1938, soon after Japan invaded China and Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, when she had Muriel Lester write an article urging "that as Christian women should continue to love our 'enemies of war and advocated the feeding of women and children during the war period.'" Dexter related that leading churchmen begged her not to print the article, "since to do so would sever the unity of the church." Her editorial committee declared "that [peace] was a Christian principle and we dare not be false to it." After much pressure, the committee compromised and wrote an opposing piece to run alongside the initial column urging women to follow the Church line of supporting the country in its war efforts. Letters poured in from women around the country

⁵⁷ "The Church Woman," *The Church Woman*, September 1937, inside cover, GCAH-UMC-CWU. *The Church Woman* is still their communication organ; it currently has forty pages instead of the initial twenty but still holds the same format.

applauding *The Church Woman's* stand and pledging further subscriptions for having the courage to take a "stand for the right."⁵⁸ This "scoop," as Dexter described it, was only the beginning of the women's efforts to be true to their principles and to take on the clerical establishment, and peace was an early area of contention.

A persistent lack of funds, duplication of efforts, and uncertainties concerning the question of missionaries and colonialism led to increasing difficulties for each of the original organizations. As a result, in 1937, the National Council of Church Women formed a Committee on Cooperation and charged it with writing a constitution for one body to finally combine these myriad efforts. Daisy Trout, Katharine Silverthorn, and Mary Smith reported their efforts to a representative body at Swarthmore College in 1940. After much deliberation the body advocated the development of a new umbrella that would replace the three constituting bodies that had cooperated over the past fifty years.⁵⁹

Thus, on 11 December 1941, one hundred women met for a Constituting Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Half

⁵⁸ Readers can access the articles in *the Church Woman*, fall issues, 1937; and Dexter's reminiscences of the situation appear in this letter: Susannah Crowe, letter to Mrs. LeGrand, 18 June 1948, GCAH-UMC-CWU.

⁵⁹ Margaret Shannon, *Just Because: The Story of the National Movement of Church Women United in the U.S.A., 1941-1975* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1977), 3.

of the women were "representatives of local interdenominational organizations and the others appointed in equal proportion by the Council of Women for Home Missions and the Committee on Women's Work of the Foreign Missions Conference." All of these women were accustomed to working interdenominationally and were committed to their "dreams of a movement of Christ's women working together to the glory of God."⁶⁰ The second report given on that first Thursday evening was the report from the Race Relations Committee, highlighting its importance with this group of women. Friday morning they began deliberations on the proposed constitution and continued through the evening. Saturday morning was committed to ratification, election of officers, and celebration as they organized the establishment of the new movement, the United Council of Church Women.⁶¹

The new organization represented ten million Protestant women of seventy communions.⁶² Amy Welcher, the new president, was ready to work, as she encouraged everyone present to simply adopt her motto: "if in doubt

⁶⁰ Margaret Shannon, *Just Because*, 4-5.

⁶¹ "Minutes of Constituting Convention," TMs, 11-13 December 1941, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁶² Bennett, "The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations among Protestant Church Women," 22-23, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

accelerate!"⁶³ The officers, following adjournment, went to New York City to establish the new office, hire office staff, and begin work on new program materials.

* * * * *

In conclusion, the first four decades of the twentieth century were much more contentious than might seem from the progress of women's church organizations, within both the church and society at large. Denominations were jealous of women's efforts and dollars going to interdenominational work. Women activists justified their interdenominational activities by showing that the problems they addressed crossed denominational lines. Therefore, when movement leaders finally incorporated the United Council of Church Women (UCCW) in 1941, most of the controversy over control was behind them for they had moved on without Church structures.

Still, the inauspicious starting point was perhaps an ironic sign for the necessity of this new organization, that is, the United Council of Church Women was a movement formed just days after the United States entered into another world war. By the early 1940s, the members of the

⁶³ Amy Ogden Welcher, oral history, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

newly-constituted United Council of Church Women faced the war-torn world with a clear vision. Their self-imposed purpose of bringing heaven to earth by promoting equality and peace among all humans was a task they willingly accepted. In the words of the Des Moines, Iowa, council president, Mrs. B. L. Tesdel,

As we look forward to our work of the coming year none of us can over estimate the importance of our task as Christian people. On every side we are faced with human problems which seem to grow more difficult day by day. If we are convinced that the only lasting solutions to these problems are those based on Christian principles, we have a responsibility to study these problems and to think deeply about the meaning of the Christian message for our day.⁶⁴

Their work was structured through the previously established World Day of Prayer and May Fellowship Day, and the newly created World Community Day. Prayer, Friendship, and Peace were the touchstones for this movement.

The women realized they would have to build bridges across their communities to enable them to complete the avenues of hope around the world, for they saw themselves "as the channel for the Power of 10,000,000 Protestant Women working together on a local, state and national level to do those things that no single denominational group of

⁶⁴ "Des Moines Women's Interdenominational Missionary Council," 1 September 1943, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

women [could] do alone."⁶⁵ They built bridges back to their ancestors and raised their names in respect, while at the same time they looked forward to the day of universal peace on Earth. "Building Bridges" became a program slogan for Church Women United in its later years just as it was a guiding principle—denominationally, generationally, racially, financially, and internationally—from its inception.

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⁶⁵ "Million Woman Registry," CWU-GCAH-UMC.

Chapter Three

Seeking Peace in a Stressful World

The early members of Church Women United (CWU) were organizing members of the peace movement of the first decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, they were deeply involved with the missionary efforts of the past century and understood human beings' equality in the eyes of God. Thus, either by personal faith or by learned experience, these women were genuinely committed to peace in the name of God. They viewed war as a man-made effort to eradicate God's gifts on earth, and believed instead in the power of prayer and love of one's enemies. Such notable peace activists as Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Jeannette Rankin, Mary E. Woolley, and Eleanor Roosevelt were regularly invited to speak at meetings and write in *The Church Woman*.¹ Their leadership efforts internationally were acknowledged when Jane Addams received the Nobel Peace

¹ I have not been able to ascertain whether they actually belonged to any of the constituting organizations, though it is certainly conceivable that they were at the local level. Each of these women was involved in a relationship with the UCCW through actions and publicizing each other's activities.

Prize in 1931, and when President Hoover nominated Mary E. Woolley, long-time peace activist and President of Mount Holyoke College from 1901-1937, to be the only female delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference of 1932, two important firsts for women.²

However, movement leaders did more than speak out against war. This chapter will address four areas where the women worked on their concern for internationalism and world peace. First, the early CWU members developed a magazine that regularly informed women of issues and events and how to get involved. Second, although the United States Congress had refused to join the League of Nations, these women believed in the concept of internationalism and pushed for a new international instrument of peace which eventually became the United Nations. Third, as a movement, they went beyond anti-war efforts and worked on the immediate concerns of those embroiled in the day-to-day living of war. Working hard to enlighten the nation as to the underlying conditions that led to war, they then turned to ameliorating those problems. And finally, they endeavored to educate and build an international understanding of common humanity around the globe.

² Mount Holyoke College, www.mtholyoke.edu, accessed 7 October 2008.

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The peace efforts became significantly more important as conditions in Europe and Asia continued to deteriorate. Not only were the nations coping with a global depression but Germany was also dealing with the humiliating aftereffects from the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. As early as September 1937, *The Church Woman* ran articles admonishing the government and imploring members to write letters and collect petitions on issues concerning war and peace.³ In October of that year a column urged the "Application of the Neutrality Law," Congressional imposition of national isolation, and explained what it meant to human beings in the United States and in China and Japan. Readers were encouraged to write the president, local newspapers, church leaders, and Congressmen to express their support for, and implementation of, the Neutrality Law, and thereby the reduction of weapons of war. The article went on to list new pamphlets that were available for women to read and share with others. A companion article the next month urged, "We need a woman in every church to form a group of persons, no matter how

³ The CWU-GCAH-UMC collection does not have earlier copies of the magazine when it was still just a four-page newsletter, 1934-1937. After the expansion of the magazine, articles speaking out for internationalism and peace had a continuous presence.

small, who will meet regularly to read, study and discuss the causes of war and then do something about correcting them. Cooperate with other like-minded groups in your own community." Likewise, a notice and encouragement for women to attend the "Thirteenth Conference on the Cause and Cure of War," to be held in Washington, D.C. in January 1938, was accompanied by seven more articles about war and peace in the December issue of 1937.⁴ And so the coverage continued. Finally in January 1939, the National Council of Federated Church Women (NCFCW) published "The Church Woman's Decalogue of Peace: A Statement of Principles" which was revised and re-released in 1943 by the newly constituted United Council of Church Women (UCCW) as the ten-point "Program for Church Women in a World at War."⁵

The Decalogue and the ten-point Program each called for the establishment of Armistice Day as a special Peace Day, alignment with the idea of the United Nations (UN), and a signed personal pledge from members to work for

⁴ "Application of the Neutrality Law," *The Church Woman*, October 1937, 15; Nellie I. Fender, "Work for Peace," *The Church Woman*, November 1937, 20; "Call to the Thirteenth Conference on the Cause and Cure of War," *The Church Woman*, December 1937, 4. CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁵ "The Church Woman's Decalogue of Peace," *The Church Woman*, January 1939, 22; and Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women: Church Women in the Interdenominational Movement, A History of the Development of United Work among Women of the Protestant Churches in the United States* (New York: United Church Women, National Council of The Churches of Christ in U.S.A., 1961), 63. See Appendix D for the Creeds.

peace.⁶ Because the member response was so large the Peace Day became the third special annual observance called World Community Day, which is still observed internationally on the first Friday of November. The peace pledge stated:

I do solemnly promise, in the presence of God, to work and pray for the establishment of a just and durable peace. I do this both for the sake of the future peace and prosperity of the United States of America, and for justice and liberty for the people of all nations. Unto this task I commit my will and my prayers.⁷

Along with this public vow, the women teamed-up with five more national religious groups to sponsor and promote one hundred seminars in thirty-nine states, called "The Christian Mission on World Order," to help local individuals learn their responsibilities for procuring a "just and durable Christian peace."⁸ More than seventy-five national authorities, male and female, in the fields of religion, education, government, and law traveled across the nation speaking and leading discussions.

Des Moines, Iowa was one of the chosen cities. The local UCCW cooperated with the Ministerial Association, the Polk County Council of Religious Education, the Y.W.C.A.,

⁶ This is similar to the British Peace Pledge of the 1930s. The pledge was a follow-up to the groups formed during World War I: the No-Conscription Fellowship, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation where women held prominent positions.

⁷ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 63-64.

⁸ "The Christian Mission on World Order, November 1 to 20, 1943," newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

Drake University, Kiwanis Club, Woman's Chamber of Commerce, Business and Professional Women's Club, Iowa Council of Christian Education, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Women's Rotary Club, Quota Club, Soroptimist Club, and Altrusa Club to sponsor the seminar.

The Purpose of the Mission was:

- Emphasize the bearing of the Christian gospel on the problem of world order.
- Show how the faith of the Christian can be translated into his acts as a citizen.
- Demonstrate the church's concern that solid foundations—spiritual, moral, political, racial and economic—be laid NOW for post war world.
- Call the church to a scrutiny of its own program and practices as they relate to the issues involved in a Christian world order.
- Stimulate every church and community to inaugurate an effective program of study and action on these issues.
- Bring to general knowledge the studies of world order which have been made by Christian groups throughout the world.
- Develop now a body of public opinions which will assure full American participation, with other nations, in establishing and maintaining world order.⁹

These alliances were invaluable in building UCCW's status as peacekeepers and social reformers. As their reputation for developing successful working solutions grew they were called on for more assistance by other reform groups and by government agencies.

⁹ Jane Boulware, "World Peace Mission to Be at Central Church, Nov. 2," newspaper clipping, 23 October 1943, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

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Alongside work toward peace treaties the women continued their involvement with promoting an international government and treaty enforcer, such as the League of Nations. The 1943 member survey reported, "58 to 1 in favor of U.S. participation in some form of world organization to build a new world order." That overwhelming endorsement allowed the leadership to push hard for further involvement in the United Nations, thus UCCW pledged a letter campaign to Congress to support ratification of the United Nations.¹⁰ The women further pledged action to develop positive attitudes in their home communities to support an "international machinery" and involvement with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.¹¹

In 1946, the State Department named Mabel Head, vice-president of UCCW, as a "liaison representative at the United Nations, known as the Official Observer" setting in motion an action committee for the UCCW for the next

¹⁰ "World Community Day," *The Church Woman*, November 1943, 34; and Myrta Ross, "World Community Day," *The Church Woman*, December 1943, 3, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

¹¹ Mabel Head, *Forward Together—An Historical Sketch of Women's Interdenominational Work and the UCCW* (New York: The United Council of Church Women, 1950), 12-14, and Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 68.

century.¹² The UN further recognized the value of UCCW when they allocated office space to the women in the new United Nations Assembly Building in New York City.

Besides movement statements, UCCW members also made personal commitments to the push for peace. The national board developed a pledge card for each of the women in America to commit themselves to the furtherance of peace:

ACT NOW
MOBILIZE FOR PEACE
1948

Commitment

The time has come when the united voice of Christian women should be raised in behalf of lasting peace.

Surely human minds, under God, can devise ways to establish good will and justice among peoples and nations.

As a Christian woman, I re-dedicate myself to Christ. I pledge to join with other women in a great crusade for peace.

- I will pray more and work harder for my church and the Church throughout the world.
- I will give courageous, intelligent, prayerful support to the United Nations and to Christian movements for World Order.
- I will seek to establish civil rights and brotherhood in my own community.
- I will work for the extension of human rights and economic justice around the world.
- I will pray that women of all countries may soon join in this crusade.¹³

¹² Mabel Head, *Forward Together*, 12-14, and Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow those Women*, 68.

¹³ United Council of Church Women, "Act Now," 1948, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

This pledge card came with a detachable portion to sign and send to the national office for tabulation. Campaigns such as this were important to keep the issue in the forefront, and to keep the movement in the national line of vision.

The Peace Initiatives of previous years led to a state-wide workshop on "The Church and World Peace," in January 1956. With more than 300 people attending, participants listened to pastors from around the country, including Dr. Samuel G. Nichols, pastor of Collegiate Methodist Church in Ames, Iowa; Dr. Burt Bouwman, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Dr. Barton Hunter, executive secretary of the United Christian Missionary Society's social welfare department, Indianapolis, Indiana. Iowa ministers and members of the various Iowa UCW councils led workshop discussions in the follow-up sessions.¹⁴

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However, the war itself was not the only problem the women encountered during these dark years, there were tangential issues to deal with at the same time: racial prejudice exhibited by internment camps for Nisei and Isei

¹⁴ "Set Church 'Peace' Talks," *Des Moines Tribune*, 24 December 1955, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

and general mistreatment of Jews and African Americans across the nation, and the displaced persons in war-ravaged countries. The list of concerns seemed endless but the women of UCCW moved with communal prayer and action to improve what they could.

The various conferences held in collaboration with other peace organizations, and participation in the numerous annual meetings of the National Conference on a Just and Durable Peace kept the women involved and current on issues facing the nation and the world. These efforts informed the women's labors to help war refugees in Europe and Asia, Japanese Americans across the nation, and migrants and African Americans dealing with literacy and poverty issues.¹⁵ In recognition of this important work UCCW leaders were invited to a conference, "How Women May Share in Post-War Policy Making," at the White House in June 1944, sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁶

Throughout the decade of the 1940s, pictures of war-ravaged Europe and Asia brought a rapid response from UCCW local councils across the nation as they held yearly clothing and money drives to send overseas. Women organized the collection of necessities for Europeans struggling to

¹⁵ Race issues will be examined in-depth in the next chapter.

¹⁶ Mabel Head, *Forward Together*, 10-11; and Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 62-64.

maintain life. Amy Welcher, national president from 1941-1944, led one such campaign—the collection of one million diapers for France during the occupation in World War Two.¹⁷ The *Des Moines Register* and *Tribune* had numerous articles regarding clothing drives as early as 1943, and lasting throughout the next two decades.¹⁸ Many of the early drives were open to any and all donations, for instance the 1943 and 1944 drives called for used clothing and shoes. Later the drives became more specific; Des Moines area women sent 500 dozen diapers in early 1946 as well as used clothing and shoes.

World Community Day offering for 1945 sent a million diapers and thousands of layettes to war-ravaged Europe and Asia. World Community Day of 1946, organized around "The Price of Enduring Peace," acknowledged the bountiful contributions of the past and asked for an additional 500,000 "Kiddie-Kits" to be sent to Europe and Asia. These kits were specifically targeting the needs of children aged one to four. Suggestions included suits or dresses, underwear or diapers, socks, nightclothes and slippers, sweaters, mittens and caps, and towels. The poignant question centered in each of these pleas was: "Can we

¹⁷ "Statement from Amy Ogden Welcher," CWU-GCAH-UMC.

¹⁸ "A Clothing Collection for Overseas Jan. 9," *Des Moines Tribune*, 27 December 1943, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

worship the Father in spirit and in truth—Can we pray for His continued bounty and blessings for ourselves—while we ignore the cries of His little ones?"¹⁹

The 1947 World Community Day shifted the focus once again to address the needs of six to twelve year-old children and collected a half-million "Boxes and Bundles" structured around school needs; the bundles were sets of clothing and the boxes were school supplies. Des Moines area church women displayed these donations for the newspaper photographers as concrete evidence of the "response of American church women to the needs of suffering children around the world, and our determination that never again shall children pay the price of the madness of war."²⁰ The *Des Moines Register* coverage of the collection showed the gaily wrapped boxes and packages ready to be shipped overseas. The article reported that Protestant church women representing seventy-five area churches had taken part in the drive. Together this one community had raised 187 boxes and 168 bundles, along with \$112 in cash to be sent to the UCCW office in New York

¹⁹ World Community Day, No. 3, 1 November 1946, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²⁰ "World Community Day—Nov. 7, 1947," Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

City-half to be used to buy canned milk to be sent overseas and half to promote world peace.²¹

Having focused on toddlers and school-age youth the past two years, the focus for 1948 was teenagers in displaced persons camps in Europe and teens in Asia. "Pack-A-Towel" should include dress or pants material, toiletries, socks, handkerchiefs, sewing equipment, hair ornaments, ties or necklaces "wrapped inside a washcloth and bath towel and pinned with a dozen safety pins."²² Again, the goal was a half million bundles, a goal that had easily been reached and surpassed the previous three years.

1949 saw a change in focus; no longer were the women asking for clothing for Europe; instead, they were acknowledging the need for European women to once again return to their creative life. UCCW women collected "Pieces for Peace," bundles of material, needles, and thread so the European women could once again produce beautiful hand-made garments and accessories for their families. These packages would help with a concrete need for clothing but they would also feed an emotional hunger to create for their families. Des Moines gathered 225 bundles and offered \$110 to aid

²¹ "Gifts Assembled for Europe's Children," *Des Moines Register*, 11 November 1947, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²² United Council of Church Women, "Pack-A-Towel;" "Pack-a-Towel Drive Nov. 8," 25 September 1948; "Church Council Will Observe Community Day," 7 November 1948; and "Bundles for Displaced Persons," 9 November 1948, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

with the adoption of "displaced" orphans to American homes.²³

Of course, this involvement in individual lives around the globe was a continuation of women's nineteenth century practical mission efforts and a concrete example of their Social Gospel beliefs. Individuals needed to have basic human needs met in order to be emotionally available for further growth. The Des Moines Council of Church Women held yearly mission conferences every September since 1914; the focus in 1948 was "Now Is the Hour." Films, books, and lectures concerning Alaska, China, and civil and human rights in Des Moines filled the program, as well as promotion of that year's World Community Day observance.²⁴

Politically, protests to peace-time conscription began as soon as President Franklin Roosevelt mentioned it in late 1944. The Des Moines women sent letters early in January 1945 to their representatives in Congress, Paul Cunningham and Andrew J. May, to oppose this action should it occur.²⁵ Their protest was centered on their belief that history showed that nations having routine conscription

²³ United Council of Church Women, "World Community Day—November 4, 1949;" and "Clothing for Europe's Needy," 15 November 1949, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²⁴ "Church Council to Have Conference Here Monday," 12 September 1948; and "Morning Worship," 13 September 1948, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI. See Appendix E for a complete book and film listing.

²⁵ House of Representative, 13 January 1945, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

were instigators in war. Since these women were pushing for instruments of world peace it made perfect sense to them to oppose conscription. Georgiana Sibley, President of the United Council of Church Women, wrote to President Harry S Truman, 25 October 1945, opposing the compulsory military training as "contrary to the principles of Christianity and of Democracy." She went on to encourage Truman to work for the "international abolition of conscription and the rapid development of the strength of world government and of its police force." She further exhorted the president to show "moral leadership," and to "keep faith with those principles of world organization to which we pledged ourselves at San Francisco and through our Senate." Copies of the letter were sent to local councils with encouragement for them to pursue the matter locally.²⁶

The development of atomic weaponry further pushed the women to work aggressively to stop the militaristic march of the twentieth century. By 1949 the UCCW was actively involved in the anti-atomic, and later anti-nuclear, war movement. Their first effort that year was mobilizing a letter-writing campaign calling for civilian control of the atomic energy commission. The women quickly realized the value of removing military control of atomic energy; they

²⁶ Georgiana Sibley, "Copy of Letter Sent to President Harry S Truman," 25, October 1945, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

believed that civilian control would ensure that the disaster and devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would never happen again.²⁷

* * * * *

In an effort to eradicate the scourge of war, especially atomic or nuclear war, the women spent time studying the underlying causes of war and worked to alleviate them. One such issue was illiteracy. In November 1945, the Des Moines council invited Dr. Frank C. Laubach, educational missionary in Asia, to address the community concerning alternatives to continued warfare. His address, "Bonds of Friendship: The Only Answer to the Atomic Bomb," given at the Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines, pronounced that the world was headed for more bloodshed and obliteration, especially in Asia, unless Christians in the United States stood up for security. This was not the security *of* atomic bombs; rather it was security *from* atomic bombs. He challenged the audience with the following statement:

That with the atomic bomb another war would mean our destruction; That henceforth we cannot get rid of enemies by killing them, and that our only

²⁷ "Urge Women: Use Influence," 5 October 1949, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

safety lies in changing enemies to friends by Christ-like service in this hour of tragic need; That Christ can save our age if men and women like myself send His ambassadors to the areas where the next war is breeding, and so change despair to hope, hunger to abundance, disease to health, stagnation to progress, resentment to gratitude, and hate to love; American churches alone are in a position to be the world's good Samaritan.²⁸

Laubach encouraged people to transfer one of their twenty-five dollar government war bonds to the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, "for use in educating and assisting the illiterate, half-starved millions of Asia and Africa." He encouraged Americans to join together to raise one billion dollars to forestall more bombs by "sending technicians and agricultural experts to teach the natives how to grow enough food and to raise their standards of living by their own industries." But according to Laubach, before they could do that "they must be taught to read."²⁹ Thus the women began their involvement in the literacy campaign. They raised money, sent teachers overseas, and realized the additional needs at home. Clearly mission work was no longer centered on evangelism; it was now focused on "good works."

²⁸ Frank C. Laubach, "Bonds of Friendship," newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²⁹ "Safety from War 'Priced' at a Billion," 12 November 1945, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

In 1951, they again listened to Dr. Frank C. Laubach, missionary for thirty-five years in eighty-five countries, lecture on his experiences in Asia and Africa. His explanation that helping desperate peoples to help themselves as the cure for the inexorable march to worldwide domination by communism rang true to these women. Laubach's belief that literacy training was a simple yet profound weapon in this battle fell on eager ears. His yearly whirlwind tour around the United States to promote his literacy programs in Asia never failed to encourage new commitment of funds for his program.³⁰

The World Day of Prayer programs across the 1950s were truly international. Local voices of countries all around the world were involved in the writing of the programs. Michi Kawai of Japan, Mrs. Martin Niemoller and Mrs. Hildegard Shrader of Germany, Sarah Chakko of India, Reverend Jorgelina Lozada of Argentina, Cook Christian Training School in Phoenix, Arizona, Serena Vasady of Hungary, and a committee from Australia wrote programs for the yearly celebrations in the 1950s, along with collections of personal stories from Migrant/Sharecroppers/Native Americans in the United States

³⁰ "Win Friends to Beat Reds, Laubach Says," *Des Moines Register*, 12 October 1951; and "Tells Great Missionary Need in Asia," *Des Moines Tribune*, 12 October 1951, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

and women of Africa.³¹ This enlarged representation of internationalism broadened everyone's understanding of humanity around the world; an understanding that simultaneously reinforced the interest in the United Nations and promoted support for it.

However the women went well beyond prayer and support for the United Nations and literacy programs to promote world peace. Council members embarked on letter-writing campaigns to influence government officials. The Iowa Council of Church Women called for action in the fall of 1951 to record their "continuing opposition to permanent universal military training." Congress was to discuss new legislation pending the national security committee's report and the women wanted to be ready with their response.³²

To augment these prayers and funds, local, state, and national councils continued their collection of needed goods for Europe and Asia. The fall of 1951 saw the collection of blankets during the World Community Day festivities; the next year women collected packets of children's clothing up to age six and money for medicines and vitamins; in 1953 it was linens of all sorts for

³¹ World Day of Prayer folder, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

³² "Church Women Hit UMT Plan," *Des Moines Tribune*, 10 October 1951, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

refugee camps, orphanages, children's homes, and youth hostels and hospitals; bundles of clothing for children were again gathered for war and earthquake refugees in 1954.³³ The "Parcels for Peace" in 1955 focused on providing clothing for those fleeing from repression in the Soviet Union, as well as money to enhance education on the United Nations and the issues of race relations and foreign policy in the U.S.A.³⁴ In November 1957, packets of clothing and linens were collected for refugees in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. With the "Bread, Freedom and Dignity" program, women expanded their efforts from simple collection of goods to the specific collection of monetary donations for the establishment of three new programs.³⁵

Foreshadowing the micro-financing of the Grameen Bank and President Kennedy's Peace Corps, UCW programs directly changed life for those less fortunate around the world. The Kenya Christian Council needed economic help for the development of their cooperative community, as did the new councils being developed in Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana.

³³ "Blankets for Distribution Overseas," *Des Moines Tribune*, 1 November 1951; "Give Packets for Peace," UCW program flyer, 1952; "World Community Day," UCW program flyer, 1953; "Let the Children Come to Me: Parcels for Peace and your World Community Day Offering," UCW program flyer, 1954; and *Des Moines Register*, 9 October and 9 November 1954, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³⁴ "Help for Needy," *Des Moines Tribune*, 17 November 1955, newspaper clipping, and "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread," UCW program flyer, 1955, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³⁵ "Bread, Freedom and Dignity," UCW program flyer, 1957, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

Small self-help loans were being dispersed in Jericho, Jerusalem, Samaria, East Jordan, and Beirut, Lebanon along with vocational training. And lastly, money was being channeled into rural redevelopment programs to support rural cooperatives and agricultural experiments to increase food production in India and Pakistan as they dealt with the aftermath of flood, famine, and earthquake emergencies. Eighty-four duffle-bags and five suitcases filled with 2800 pounds of clothing were collected in Des Moines and sent to New York for dispersal, along with an offering of \$349.74, representing 250 women in attendance.³⁶

To further this multiracial understanding of humanity, members across the nation started working with international students residing in their college and university communities during these critical years. The Des Moines council held such a forum in January 1948 where three Drake University students from Jamaica, Panama, and Hawaii spoke to the women's meeting billed as "Privilege of Working Together Interracially." The students addressed Americans' commonly held misconceptions of their home countries and reiterated some ways of improving communication, while lauding the women for making a strong

³⁶ "Des Moines Council of United Church Women," 9 December 1957; and "Des Moines Council of United Church Women Annual Committee Reports," 2 June 1958, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

first step.³⁷ World Day of Prayer that February also focused on that enlargement of the world vision with "Peace with Justice and a Time of Brotherhood." Along with the prayer booklet women received study sheets from countries around the world detailing mission work in each location.³⁸

In other action concerning international relations, the Des Moines Council and the Iowa Council continued in their support of the Christian World Relations effort to host the Foreign Student Weekend in February 1956. The December newsletter of the Des Moines chapter asked for hostesses for "students from other lands who are in Iowa colleges and universities" as they assembly in Des Moines, as an effort to improve international understanding. This activity was seen as an important investment of time and effort.³⁹ A total of 665 people were fed and 500 housed in the Foreign Student Weekend in 1958 in Iowa.⁴⁰ These annual gatherings of international students and community members were an important opportunity for UCW members to educate

³⁷ "Mr. Berrier to Conduct Panel Discussion Monday," 11 January 1948; and "4 Plea for Understanding," 13 January 1948, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI. According to other state and local newsletters around the country these gatherings were a common occurrence across the nation throughout these decades.

³⁸ United Council of Church Women, "World Day of Prayer," 13 February 1948 newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³⁹ "Des Moines Council of Church Women" newsletter, 12 December 1955. Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴⁰ "Des Moines Council of United Church Women Annual Committee Reports, 2 June 1958, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

themselves and the public about international issues and commonalities across nations.

The women's involvement applied this same dedication to understanding and assisting youth with the Interdenominational Student Conference on the Christian World Mission. The promotion of a conference dedicated to helping "3000 graduate and undergraduate students, half of the representatives from seventy nations who are now studying in North America. . . . The conference will discuss the meaning and significance of the reconciling Gospel of Christ and the church's mission in a world of revolution."⁴¹ This conference held over the semester break of 1955-56 could be a "mountaintop" moment for young people's spiritual growth, and these women wanted to help with that in any way possible. The UCW continued to hold these conferences throughout the 1950s and 1960s as they were an efficient way to reach a large number of youth with their message of Social Gospel love and world relations.⁴² These conferences allowed UCW members to educate young people on the value of helping others and encouraging a global understanding of humanity.

⁴¹ "Revolution and Reconciliation: An Interdenominational Student Conference on the Christian World Mission," program flyer, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴² See state newsletters and *The Church Woman* for many examples of this conference.

At the same time that UCW was actively involved in more international thinking, right wing forces were pushing the nation against internationalism. It seemed to some Americans that their way of life was in question: the Soviet Union detonated an atomic bomb in August 1949, and China fell to communist forces in October 1949. And then, in February 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy accused President Truman of harboring communists within his administration. The totality of these seeming affronts to America sent tremors throughout government and society. UCW president Wyker and other voices for peace, like leading civil rights leaders, were often accused of being communists simply because they advocated for the United Nations and pacifism. The John Birch Society was particularly virulent in its attacks against the United Nations, and any of its subsidiary organizations, such as the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). The United Church Women would have many instances to fight against such hysteria. Therefore, the importance of these workshops and programs focused on internationalism cannot be ignored. The growing stature of Senator McCarthy, the Congressional hearings, and the right-wing extremists

across the United States were attacking the United Nations and their perceived communist leanings.⁴³

While educating the community and the youth, the women also embraced opportunities to educate themselves. The Iowa Council of Church Women unanimously accepted participation in the Christian Women's Action Program for World Peace, an initiative of the national board of the United Church Women, at the Seventh Annual Convention meeting at Grand View College in Des Moines, on the 13th of June 1951. The five-point program focused on grass-roots efforts:

- 1) organization of small prayer groups in communities
- 2) the 'everyday living of democracy'
- 3) study and discussion groups to promote understanding of the United Nations
- 4) family and neighborly study of the 'issues of peace'
- 5) every woman to be an interpreter of peace.

The Iowa state council president, Florence Zeller, encouraged the participants to change their thinking, and to realize the need to work within their own communities for world peace, because "it has to start at home and in

⁴³ For a more thorough examination of this Cold War culture, see: Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2006); and Stepehn J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2d ed., *The American Moment*, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

people's own communities; it is a change of heart that is needed to achieve world peace."⁴⁴

National president, Mossie Allman Wyker, went on to empathize with the attendees on the difficulty of doing this close to home as compared to the relative ease of campaigning for peace abroad; she acknowledged that "personal relationships are so much more sensitive, but that is what Jesus calls them to do. That is the way the Kingdom comes," she said, "one-on-one quiet talks rather than flashy national slogans and brochures." Moreover, "it is not enough to pray for peace—people must work for it." However, this is not just "a pacific peace, but a militant peace that means higher living standards for the world's millions." This can be accomplished, for example, through the dispatch of technicians to help small farmers rather than shipping war materials. It may be "a man's world," Wyker contended, however, "a united group of church women can do a lot to bring about that sort of peace." She cited the recent letter and telegram "bombardment" of Congress by church women supporting the bill to send wheat to India that helped ensure passage of the aid. One action the national leaders undertook pursuant to the new Five-Point Plan was to call upon President Truman. The women asked the

⁴⁴ "'Grass Roots' World Peace Plan Is Voted," *Des Moines Tribune*, 14 June 1951, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

president to reaffirm an earlier statement that "the United States never will be an aggressor nation in war." Wyker continued that the United States needed to change from a "psychology of war" and embrace universal peace without the fear of "being called Communists. God pity the church under those circumstances!" The church and women especially needed to focus on raising a new generation with a new attitude, according to Wyker, regardless of McCarthyism.⁴⁵

In one example of the direct relationship between local and international politics, the Iowa Council of Church Women sponsored a two-day training workshop in Des Moines, in 1952, to help local councils with issues of publicity, radio, films and motion pictures. One of the main speakers, Mrs. Darby, promoted the U.N. radio programs and the necessity of enlarging their listenership, saying "an understanding of international problems must begin at the local level." Having attended an earlier training at the United Nations headquarters Darby exhorted her audience, "know how the United Nations works—then be patient." She went on to say,

The United Nations is our only hope for peace. Don't discredit the U.N. from heresay. It can't accomplish everything in a few short months, or even years. . . . Underlying all the discussions

⁴⁵ "'Grass Roots' World Peace Plan Is Voted," *Des Moines Tribune*, 14 June 1951; and "Attend Meeting of Church Women," *Des Moines Register*, 14 June 1951, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

was the realization that only increased education and information plus the continued explanation of U.N.E.S.C.O. objectives could keep the public at large alive to world issues and combat opposition to the U.N.⁴⁶

The local councils could use their energies to see that media outlets at home were addressing important issues on both the local and international levels.

A much more significant event, at least on the national level, was recognition by Eleanor Roosevelt. Her nationally syndicated newspaper column on 6 June 1952 was devoted to the recent actions of "the board of managers of the General Department of the United Church Women, which is a section of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America." Roosevelt then proceeded to reprint the entire resolution recently adopted at their meeting in Wisconsin.

It read:

Believing that next to the church the United Nations is our best hope for world peace and because of the growing opposition on the part of certain groups to the United Nations and its agencies, which, if allowed to continue, will jeopardize the United Nations, be it resolved that:

1. The General Department of the United Church Women renew its efforts to mobilize intelligent opinion and constructive support among church women for the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights, and
2. That Women should be encouraged to study the facts and to discover in their own communities

⁴⁶ "Church Women's Council Plans Workshop Here," *Des Moines Register*, 23 March 1952, and "Urges Patience in Judging U.N.," *Des Moines Register*, 1 April 1952, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

the forces which seek to undermine the United Nations, and

3. That the United Church Women take a courageous and positive stand in upholding their belief in the United Nations, and
4. That the Committee on World Relations seek ways to reach women of the churches with information and practical suggestions for carrying out this resolution.

[Roosevelt added,] These are very thoughtful, hard-working women who try to live their Christian principles. All of us know if we lived up to these principles we would probably not have half the trouble that we have in the world today, and it is good to mobilize these women behind the United Nations and its good purposes.⁴⁷

The national exposure of their ideas and the value of Eleanor Roosevelt's backing were inestimable, as she was the most respected woman in America.

Other issues that UCW members were interested in were freedom of speech in contrast to the contemporary loyalty investigations in Congress, eradication of slums, improvement of life in migrant labor camps, development of day care and nurseries for working mothers, and social work systems for the underprivileged, as well as advocating for open and progressive government. These problems were holding back the advance of world peace, and were detrimental to the image of the country as the Soviet Union used them to publicize the failings of the United States and its democratic system. The 1952 program specifically

⁴⁷ "Eleanor Roosevelt," 6 June 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

encouraged women to become politically involved, not a new development but rather a new emphasis. The literature outlined the three focus areas for UCW as individual and collective prayer, education concerning the United Nations, and action. The action section for the first time expressly spelled-out

living personal lives and rearing children in the creed of truth, justice and honor. One of its main phases is active citizenship, careful study of the issues, regular use of the ballot, writing letters to government officials supporting what the citizen believes in, working to get trustworthy capable citizens to run for office and supporting them when they do.⁴⁸

As Myrta P. Ross, UCW Director of Leadership Training, said, "it takes hard work to clean up community sore spots. Experience has shown us how effective church women can be in this kind of work. We believe church women can be equally effective for good government."⁴⁹

Mossie Allman Wyker, the national president, related one example: "In Dearborn, Michigan, when a local radio commentator implied that a Methodist minister in town had communist leanings, indignant church women consulted a lawyer, began a telephone campaign, marched on the radio

⁴⁸ "Church Women Set Drive: Seek Better Government," *Des Moines Tribune*, 20 September 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴⁹ "Church Women Set Drive: Seek Better Government," *Des Moines Tribune*, 20 September 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

station and achieved a retraction and apology."⁵⁰ This new intensity of working within the political system was an immediate response to the dangers the women saw in McCarthyism, and the United States House and Senate investigations of people's private lives.

They believed that innocent lives were being unnecessarily destroyed by innuendo and the only recourse was for the citizenry to become more educated and more involved. Mrs. C. C. Cowin, chair of Christian World Relations, sent a letter to members throughout the country as the new program was being released at the various regional conferences. That letter itemized how women could turn around the paranoia that was developing as a result of House and Senate hearings.⁵¹

Cowin urged readers to avoid the "people [who] are waving the American flag and shouting patriotic slogans, using this means to promote their pet issue—personal, political, social, or what-have-you." She went on, "isolationism, discrimination, and other forms of human selfishness are 'rearing their ugly heads' in a frightening manner, disguised as freedom, safety, and even religion." She reminded her members that United Church Women believe

⁵⁰ "Church Women: Active in Politics," 18 September 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁵¹ "Credo for United Church Women," *Des Moines Register*, 14 October 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

in the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as UNESCO, FAO, and UNICEF; that they support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the proposed International Convention on Human Rights, the Convention against Genocide. Church women around the country support the United Nations Technical Assistance Program and United States Point IV, as well as Collective action against aggression and the Universal Disarmament.⁵²

Cowin went on to bemoan the "great danger in name-calling, fear-mongering, and hate-festering campaigns. No responsible church woman can sidestep her duty to use her mind and form her own opinion on the basis of facts. Now is the time to stand up and speak out for the sake of our nation and our world." She strongly encouraged women to study the facts, read *The Church Woman*, "Christian Foundations for Lasting Peace," and "Toward Lasting Peace." Then she admonished the members to "think through what your own conscience tells you in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ and of your church. Form your own opinion." Cowin closed her lengthy post with this concluding belief: "I believe that we United Church Women can change the course of events. We can and must move from negative pessimism and passive indifference into positive action. We

⁵² "Credo for United Church Women," *Des Moines Register*, 14 October 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

can change our world into a Christian world community."⁵³
This new "credo" encouraged women to move from the
background to the public face of social reform. And they
did not stop there.

In May 1953, the national board met in Indiana to
discuss ways they might be of service to their country in
eradicating this scourge of fear. Florence Partridge
chaired a special committee to develop a statement for the
board to issue, which eventually resulted in the design of
a pamphlet of red, white, and blue for immediate and wide
dissemination. The brochure, entitled, "A Christian
Declaration of Loyalty," pledged their dedication "to
maintaining the freedom of all Americans and their
institutions." It stipulated that "no body of citizens is
more alert to the threat of communist thought and
conspiracy both to the Christian faith and to freedom than
the Christian Churches." It stated the position of "the
Board of Managers of United Church Women, [we] view these
threats to American freedom as among the most serious
dangers ever faced by our people." It then listed a pledge
which women were encouraged to take and sign as a public
declaration of loyalty. It further encouraged women to read
carefully, study, pray, and make public stands; only by

⁵³ "Credo for United Church Women," *Des Moines Register*, 14 October
1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

constant observance and communication could the country regain the high road in the political arena.⁵⁴ But speaking their minds was only part of the battle, getting people to listen to them was even more important.

Finally, during the summer of 1953, a UCW delegation was able to converse with President Dwight D. Eisenhower for half an hour in the Oval Office. They showed him their newest brochure, entitled "A Christian Declaration of Loyalty." As Christian women dedicated to peace they were also dedicated to the democratic values of the United States and they felt the demagoguery of Joseph McCarthy and his followers was hurting the country and its ability to act effectively in world affairs. They wanted the president to know of their support and they wished to invite him to speak at their national assembly the following autumn. Eisenhower was impressed with the women's courage to take on the contentious fear-mongering and their commitment to continue to speak-out about American and Christian values. After a lengthy conversation he reciprocated with a pledge to speak at the National Assembly in New Jersey that fall.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "A Statement on Congressional Investigations," *The Church Woman*, May 1953, 19-20; "A Christian Declaration of Loyalty," 15 June 1953; and "Board of Managers Adopts A Christian Declaration of Loyalty," *The Church Woman*, June-July 1953, 38-39, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁵⁵ "President Eisenhower to Attend Biennial Assembly," *The Church Woman*, August-September 1953, 20-21, 34; and Dorothy S. MacLeod, "We Interviewed the President of the United States," *The Church Woman*, August-September 1953, 38-39, CWU-GCAH-UMC. For more information on how

President Eisenhower opened the Assembly in New Jersey with a call "for honor to be restored in the nation." He regretted "the extent to which the United States has become a vast whispering gallery of charges and counter charges is almost unbelievable." He went on to say, "Only through living our democratic faith can we create the free society that such faith envisages. Only as such a free society is achieved can we expect other peoples to be convinced of the validity of democracy." Eisenhower went on to speak additionally of "the waste and devastating contest in producing weapons" which lead to "sudden and mass destruction." He noted that the other course, "a just and durable peace will come only through courage, knowledge, patience, leadership." Specifically, he declared:

We must respond to the legitimate aspirations and hopes of people. We must arrange trade systems that will provide each with the necessities of life and opportunity for self-advancement. We must seek to resolve age-old prejudices, ambitions, and hatreds. These still scar great parts of the whole world. We must provide machinery and techniques to encourage peaceful communication and mutual confidence which alone can lift the burden of arms from us.⁵⁶

Eisenhower specifically used religion in his fight against the Cold War, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, chapter 4.
⁵⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "President Declares American Community Holds Hope for the World," *The Church Woman*, November 1953, 4-6, and 24-25, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

The assembly interrupted numerous times for long applause as the president addressed issues near and dear to the women's hearts.

In the four days following Eisenhower's opening remarks the delegates heard many inspiring words from leading ministers of the day, NCC President and Methodist Bishop William C. Martin, noted author and professor at Vanderbilt Dr. Nels F. S. Ferre', and Ralph W. Sockman of the National Radio Pulpit; listened to soaring choirs and soloist Rosa Page Welch; and attended business meetings.⁵⁷ Highlighting the business events were the resolutions, chief among them the passage of a resolution endorsing the United Nations' call "for a reduction and regulation of armaments," and one urging the American government to "make Point 4 aid to other nations independent of their military or economic commitments to the U.S."⁵⁸ The Assembly was a success and left the women charged with enthusiasm for their new year of work.

Eleanor Roosevelt highlighted that busy political year with her "My Day" column in November, encouraging the

⁵⁷ "A Call to The Sixth National Assembly of United Church Women," 5-8 October 1953; and "Cites Duties of Church Women," 6 October 1953, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI; and *The Church Woman*, November 1953, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁵⁸ George Dugan, "Church Women Hit Racial Ban," 9 October 1953, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI; and "Recommendations and Resolutions of the Sixth National Assembly Atlantic City, New Jersey," *The Church Woman*, November 1953, 40-42, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

people of the nation and the world to duplicate the efforts of UCW as they celebrated World Community Day. Roosevelt explained how the women collected goods to ship to the hundred thousand refugees still in Europe, collected funds to promote their Christian Women's Action Program for Peace, and dedicated the first Friday in November to study international relations and peace efforts. The women's efforts at prayer and education could be an inspiration for others to focus on "building for a more lasting peace."⁵⁹ Between the president's address and the continuing Roosevelt newspaper column coverage the women were getting a great deal of publicity and thus more believers in the Christian alternatives to war.

To go along with the continued exposure nationally, in December 1953, the National Council of Churches announced that an "international team of Protestant women headed by Mossie Allman Wyker of Mount Vernon, Ohio, president of United Church Women, will make a globe-circling tour next February 'to create greater unity in fellowship and prayer among Christian women of the world.'"⁶⁰ This was the beginning of a large program of international travel.

Initially the leaders of UCW traveled to other countries as

⁵⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day," 3 November 1953, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁶⁰ George Dugan, "Protestantism Asked to End Racial Curbs," 2 December 1954, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

part of World Day of Prayer; later the movement hosted teams of women from around the world to travel and stay with women throughout the United States, a pattern that continues today. These trips focused on education and personal talks helped everyone to bridge cultural gaps.

The Peace Initiatives of previous years led to a state-wide workshop on "The Church and World Peace," in January of 1956. With more than 300 people attending, participants listened to pastors from around the country, including Dr. Samuel G. Nichols, pastor of Collegiate Methodist Church in Ames, Iowa; Dr. Burt Bouwman, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Dr. Barton Hunter, executive secretary of the United Christian Missionary Society's social welfare department, Indianapolis, Indiana. Iowa ministers and members of the various Iowa UCW councils led workshop discussions in the follow-up sessions.⁶¹

A brief look at speakers and recommended reading lists of one such conference gives the reader a chance to comprehend the wide span of interests of these women. The 1958 "Des Moines Council of United Church Women School of Missions" listed its theme as: "Mountain Peaks of the Lord." The first speaker of the day, Dr. A. Merritt

⁶¹ "Set Church 'Peace' Talks," *Des Moines Tribune*, 24 December 1955, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

Dietterich, spoke on, "As I Saw the Middle East."

Dietterich told the 400 women that Christianity was "on the defensive in the Moslem countries of the Middle East." He attributed this defensiveness to the "poverty and nationalism" of Arabs trying to build "an Arab way of life" and their resentment of "western influences," even though, according to Dietterich, "the Christian churches in the Middle East are not primarily concerned with converting Moslems, but rather with serving the people."⁶²

The afternoon session centered on North America and the group watched *North American Neighbors*, a twenty-seven minute film showcasing life from Alaska to the Caribbean, followed by a panel discussion of many of the recommended study books for the upcoming year.⁶³ Copies of books for adult, youth, and children were available for purchase, as were audio-visual aids for a small rental fee. Most of these films centered on the issues of basic human rights in relation to migrants, refugees, and segregation in the United States. There was a corresponding list for the

⁶² "Des Moines Council of United Church Women School of Missions," 8 September 1958; and "Says Arabs Resist West," 8 September 1958, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁶³ "Des Moines Council of United Church Women School of Missions," 8 September 1958, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI. For a complete listing of the recommended readings and audio visual aids for this mission year, see Appendix F.

Foreign Mission field.⁶⁴ As noted before, these mission fields were no longer focused on evangelism but rather were areas of work to eradicate physical and social ills.

A recurring question asked of these women at mission schools, council meetings, executive meetings, and triennial conventions was, "Would Jesus ever have left Nazareth if He had cared only for His own?"⁶⁵ This Social Gospel question was always guiding these women in their work. Because of that question the women could not be content with simply educating themselves and their fellow citizens; it was not enough to be educated and involved with guiding public policy; they needed to travel the world themselves. For by traveling they could increase their understanding of the world and its problems, additionally they could increase the world's understanding of the United States. That understanding was sorely needed after the pain of the world wars, and the Korean conflict.

National Chairperson for Church World Relations, Mrs. Fred Patterson, encouraged everyone to read "A New Program for a Decade of Development for Underdeveloped Areas of the World," a government publication explicating the needs and uses of foreign aid. Patterson went on to urge members to

⁶⁴ "Des Moines Council of United Church Women School of Missions," 8 September 1958, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁶⁵ "Annual Meeting," 21-23 June 1959, Iowa Council, CWU-IWA-UIL.

become fully educated about the changes and strengthening of the Disarmament administration within the State Department; the introduction of Senate, S. 2180 and House, H.R. 7936 would establish a United States Disarmament Agency for World Peace and Security that "would be set up to achieve a rule of law in which international adjustments to a changing world are achieved peacefully through dealing with the problems of disarmament."⁶⁶ The November 1961 magazine and state newsletters carried pleas for members to write letters and telegrams to President Kennedy and his cabinet opposing "atmospheric testing of nuclear bombs," and to implore "Mesdames Kennedy and Khrushchev asking them to use whatever influence they have to urge their respective husbands to think seriously in terms of world peace."⁶⁷ Council members at all levels were routinely encouraged to become more knowledgeable about legislation at all levels of the nation and to become engaged in the political process.

United Church Women continued their active involvement with societal issues as exemplified with their national

⁶⁶ "Christian World Relations," in the "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," October 1961, 2, Church Women United in New Jersey, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey. (Hereafter referred to as CWU-SUNJ.)

⁶⁷ A. Frances Nielsen, "A Letter From The President," in "Des Moines Council of United Church Women," November 1961, 1, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

themes for 1958-1961, "Christianity and Freedom," and 1961-1964, "The Church Ecumenical—Its Oneness, Its Mission, Its Ministries."⁶⁸ Each of these themes addressed international as well as domestic issues as the world continued to be embroiled within the struggle between communism and democracy, the unfolding panorama of race relations within the United States, and the emerging public recognition of the women's movement.

The middle decades of the twentieth century saw the United States become embroiled in the Second World War, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. Americans watched more nations fall to communism around the world. Some Americans reacted by withdrawing from the world and by speaking out against the United Nations. Some Americans reacted by finding Communists everywhere in their government and their society.

Meanwhile the women of UCCW/CWU promoted individual and universal rights, literacy, and the value of the United Nations. Members moved into political discussions and letter writing campaigns to influence their government to continue its tradition of peace and aid to foreign countries. Leaders traveled around the world in their

⁶⁸ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women*, 94.

efforts to combat United States' isolationism. They visited with Presidents and counseled women in their communities to continue to reach out to all humanity. They worked on concrete efforts to comfort Japanese-Americans, war refugees in displaced persons' camps, and survivors of natural disasters. One of the over-arching problems they continually encountered was racism; the following chapter will detail a few of their efforts to eradicate that scourge from American society.

Chapter Four

"Women Working With Women"

Believing that the New Testament Jesus expected people of all races to work together, the United Council of Church Women formed as an implicitly integrated movement in 1941. In fact, it was such a fundamental belief of the organizers that they didn't even include it in the original documents, because, of course all women would be eligible for membership regardless of race, class, or creed [as long as they believed that Jesus was their Savior]. The women had continually pushed the issue of desegregation as they met only in desegregated cities and allowed only integrated councils to affiliate, as explicitly spelled out in their constitution.¹ Since they had had their enlightenment moment in Memphis in 1920, they already had twenty years of changing their mindset from "women working for women" to "women working with women." Moreover, they explicitly worked to maintain integrated councils and work groups, as evidenced from all newspaper photos. They tackled the

¹ Martha H. Goedeke, "Minutes of Constituting Convention," TMs, 11-13 December 1941, 4, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

thorny issue of race relations within the United States throughout the mid-century. Again, prayer, education, and implementing correctional actions were their methods.

"Race relations" was a much more inclusive term for Church Women United than for most Americans; because of their missionary origins these women saw all humanity as equal. Therefore Asian, Latino, African, Native and European Americans were all equals in the eyes of God and needed their assistance to ensure that all were treated equally for that was the biblical directive around which they organized. That understanding of equality and the concomitant directive to find solutions caused the infant organization to tackle important issues in American society; this chapter will focus on four of them. The women jumped into the fray when they confronted the government over the issue of Japanese internment, and later led them to assist Japanese-Americans in their relocations and job-searches during and after the war. Second, they worked to further education and economic opportunities within the Native American population. Third, they spent the entire twentieth century assisting migrant workers and attempting to eradicate the worst of the scourges of migrant labor camps. And, the most widespread problem, they worked to ameliorate the conditions that African Americans had to

contend with in the South, and to improve conditions—particularly housing issues—in the North. And they were actively involved with the Civil Rights Movement across the South.

* * * * *

Despite overwhelming public acceptance of the government action immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, UCCW women protested the internment of Japanese Americans early in 1942, just weeks after their constituting convention.² Although the United States government ignored their initial protests, it did value their assistance later in subsidiary roles. Ruth Zietlow, president of the UCCW of Greater Minneapolis, lived near a military intelligence school that employed many Nisei men for their code-breaking skills. Ignoring the hypocrisy of the government using men that it did not trust to live freely in society, Zietlow and her local council accepted the task of finding local housing for the code-breakers'

² "Our Responsibility as Christians Toward the Evacuees From the West Coast," *The Church Woman*, February 1942, 8-9, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

family members who had previously been confined in internment camps.³

Then, in a letter dated 1 December 1942, The Committee on Resettlement contacted the Minneapolis women for help in finding jobs and suitable housing for Japanese internees. As the letter explained, "The evacuation of 112,000 persons, 71,000 of whom are American citizens, having been completed, the War Relocation Authority estimates that there are about 30,000 American-born citizens of Japanese extraction now in the ten Relocation Centers who will be available for private employment outside of the centers." The letter went on to explain that various government departments, including the War Department and the Department of Justice, had concurred that "qualified" evacuees, having been "thoroughly investigated by the F.B.I.," could leave the Relocation Centers.⁴

The government letter goes on to state, "This new policy of dispersal resettlement of evacuees deserves the support of all Christian Americans. The Government has asked the churches to help. We dare not refuse. It is a

³ Ruth Zietlow, "65th ANNIVERSARY JUBILEE, 1922-1987: REFLECTIONS BY PAST PRESIDENTS, CHURCH WOMEN UNITED IN GREATER MINNEAPOLIS," 1, Church Women United in Greater Minneapolis, Special Collections, Minnesota Historical Society Library, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. (Hereafter referred to as CWU-MHS.)

⁴ The Committee on Resettlement, "A Direct Challenge to the Churches: The Resettlement of Japanese Americans," TMs, 1 December 1942, CWU-MHS.

challenge to the churches to take the lead in this resettlement program." UCCW was specifically asked to locate jobs at "Prevailing Wages," find "suitable housing," and "act as counselor or guide to evacuees. They will need sympathetic and understanding fellowship outside of their jobs." The rationale for relocating them in 1942 rather than at the end of the war was explained as simple necessity for the labor during the war and the hardship of finding employment at the same time as returning soldiers if they waited until war's end. The Committee further stated its belief that a community allowing a few Japanese "would soon come to know the new residents and respect them;" as that had "been the case in Colorado, Utah, and Nebraska communities where Japanese have already resettled."⁵

In a follow-up letter the next week, Ruth Zietlow and UCCW were specifically asked to handle the housing and community attitude adjustment issues.⁶ Minneapolis UCCW files show the efforts to find housing and jobs across the city. The combined efforts of several mission boards, church agencies, and UCCW to establish a hostel for twenty

⁵ The Committee on Resettlement, "A Direct Challenge to the Churches: The Resettlement of Japanese Americans," TMs, 1 December 1942, CWU-MHS; and "Our Responsibility as Christians Toward the Evacuees From the West Coast," *The Church Woman*, February 1943, 8-9, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁶ Frank Reese, "Minneapolis Committee on Relocation" letter to Mrs. Carl F. Zietlow, 9 December 1942, CWU-MHS.

single men and women was especially successful; in their first year of operation the hostel assisted seventy young people in transition.⁷

The United States government allowed American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a UCCW institutional member, to inspect internment camps and report to the American public to quiet the disapproval exhibited in some religious communities. J.W. Copithorne, an AFSC field representative in Iowa, inspected all the internment camps early in 1943 and reported in June of that year to the various UCCW councils in Iowa on the conditions he observed.⁸ Meanwhile, UCCW members throughout the West worked as counselors in the camps, and as relocation and employment counselors in communities after the internees were released.⁹

Certainly the Second World War caused many women to examine their conscience regarding how they viewed women of the world and their Christian understandings. Minneapolis women began this enlargement in the 1940s when they began their work with Japanese-Americans and then branched out to encompass Native Americans and migrant workers. Women in

⁷ "September 29, 1943" file report; and Barbara Phillips, "Japanese-Americans Find Haven on 'Road Back' to Normal Living," newspaper clipping, CWU-MHS.

⁸ "Missionary Group to Hear J.W. Copithorne," *Des Moines Register*, 13 June 1943, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁹ Sue Weddell, "Two-Way Profit," *The Church Woman*, April 1943, 23, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

New Jersey and Iowa also began in the 1950s to reach into these new populations.

* * * * *

The place of Native Americans in the United States, civilly and culturally, has always been uneasy. America's long history of dislocating, abusing, and eradicating their ancestors led United Church Women to develop programs to ease their transition more fully into American society.¹⁰ The work with the Native Americans was another extension of their belief in equality and was developed in different ways depending upon the local community.

Because of the large Native American population in Minnesota, women in Minneapolis developed the United Church Committee on Indian Work in 1953. Mrs. M. J. Dauphinais, Josephine White Eagle, and Mrs. Arthur B. Peterson developed a center to ease the transition from reservation

¹⁰ Countless reports have appeared over the last forty years of cultural eradication within boarding schools for Native American children. More recent studies give a more nuanced view of the situation, see: Andrea Smith, "Native Women and State Violence," *Social Justice* (31)(4)(2004): 89-102; Donald A. Grinde, Jr., "Taking the Indian out of the Indian: U.S. Policies of Ethnocide Through Education," *Wicazo Sa Review* (19)(2), Colonization/Decolonization, I (Autumn 2004): 25-32; Karl A. Hoerig, "Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience," *American Anthropologist* (104)(2)(June 2002): 642-646; and Julie Davis, "American Indian Boarding School Experiences: Recent Studies from Native Perspectives," *OAH Magazine of History*, (15)(2) Desegregation (Winter 2001): 20-22.

to city life. Along the way, they facilitated a Sewing Guild to allow the women to raise some funds while they practiced new cultural customs. The Guild, later known as the Service Guild, helped many women overcome the loneliness of life in the city as friendships between white women and Native American women blossomed. Over time a secondary group, called the Broken Arrow Service Guild, formed to meet the needs of Native Americans who were more assimilated into the city culture. Assistance with housing and employment were important aspects of both guilds.¹¹

Having very few Native Americans locally, the New Jersey councils collected Buffalo Nickels to raise funds for scholarships to Cook Training School in Phoenix, Arizona, to educate a new generation of Native American leadership in the church. In the first three years of collection the women contributed \$700, \$350, and \$700 to the scholarship fund. Iowa councils in 1959, imitating the New Jersey efforts of the previous three years, voted to annually fund three scholarships for Native American girls from Iowa to attend St. Mary's Episcopal School for Indian Girls in Springfield, South Dakota and for three boys to

¹¹ Ruth Harvey and Sally Lipp, comp., "Forty Fruitful Years of Cooperation," TMs, 1965, CWU-MHS.

attend a similar male school nearby.¹² Though there is ample evidence of Americans perpetrating cultural abuse while educating Native Americans in the past, these schools were run by Native Americans and dedicated to developing future leaders for their tribes. These were small but important attempts to assist the development of a new educated class of Native Americans to further advance the cause of easing race relations across the nation.

* * * * *

During the Fifties UCW targeted another minority group: migrant laborers. The impetus for this new program directive stemmed from the growing hysteria surrounding "illegal aliens." The Bracero Program that began in 1942 to supply needed agricultural workers during the war was renewed in 1951 and resulted in ever-growing numbers of Mexican workers in the United States. Coupling this growing dependence on foreign workers with WWII Mexican American

¹² "About Your Indian Head Nickels!!!," in "The U.C.W. Newsletter," October 1957; and "Missions," in "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," October 1958, CWU-SUNJ. These notices continue sporadically across the time span of this dissertation for both states. "United Church Women of Iowa, Annual Session, Ames, Iowa, June 24, 25, 26, 1962," CWU-IWA-UIL. As more research is done, I have no doubt that we will find many more accounts of assistance to the Native American population throughout the country.

veterans' demand to more fully integrate themselves into American society caused white pushback to escalate.¹³

First, the Federal District Court in California, 1947, ruled in *Mendez vs. Westminster* that school segregation was unconstitutional. This decision was followed by the increasing strength of the American G.I. Forum in Texas (organizing 500,000 Latinos who served in WWII) in fighting discrimination against Mexican Americans across the country. Whites' concern grew until 1953, when the U.S. Immigration Service instituted "Operation Wetback" and deported 3.8 million people of Mexican heritage.¹⁴

During the same years, Josephina Niggli's book, *Mexican Village*, showed the reality of her life in ten short stories as someone of Mexican and Anglo roots. The film *Salt of the Earth*, in 1954, showed the disturbing reality of life for Mexican Americans who were increasingly distrusted and abused. These works of art plus the history

¹³ *The Border*, PBS, [www.pbs.org/kpbs/the border/history/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/the%20border/history/index.html), accessed 8 October 2014. Between 1942 and 1964, when the Bracero Program ended, more than 4 million farm workers were brought to the United States from Mexico.

¹⁴ *The Border*, PBS, [www.pbs.org/kpbs/the border/history/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/the%20border/history/index.html), accessed 8 October 2014; and Fred L. Koestler, "OPERATION WETBACK," *Handbook of Texas Online*, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pg001, accessed 7 October 2014.

of missionary brotherhood moved UCW to become involved in the Hispanic struggle for equality.¹⁵

In 1958, the Iowa Council of United Church Women announced their expanded annual funding for workers to go into the migrant labor camps surrounding Muscatine; workers would teach literacy and homemaking skills, as well as assist laborers with labor issues.¹⁶ New Jersey women, too, had been involved with local migrant camps since 1953. In order to expand this broader interpretation of race relations in the public, New Jersey members voted to push the state and local school districts to hold summer school for these children, as they had seen "at first hand the lack of schooling and the retardation of these little wanderers." All New Jersey members were encouraged to write the Migrant Labor Board in Trenton, the State Budget

¹⁵ *The Border*, PBS, www.pbs.org/kpbs/the-border/history/index.html, accessed 8 October 2014.

¹⁶ "Brief Historical Items, Iowa Council of Church Women," CWU-IWA-UIL. This was an expansion of migrant aid, as they had previously been involved in Mason City and Davenport. Migrant aid is also followed in the 1960s records of Guion Griffis Johnson, a professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. "Department of United Church Women, 1962," 2, 9-10, 15, 19, Guion Griffis Johnson Papers, #4546, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. (Hereafter referred to as GGJ-UNC.) I am unable to ascertain how early this council was involved as Johnson began her involvement with UCW in the early 1960s and local UCW records are not available. New Jersey and Virginia records show a very early involvement with migrant labor as well. The Minneapolis, Minnesota council has records starting in 1940 and record work in migrant camps. As more records are uncovered, I am sure many more states will show involvement with this important program, as Johnson's state report for 1962 noted the presence of state and national Migrant Committees.

Director, and their legislator asking for funding for the operation of these summer schools, and for an increased "Discretionary Fund to be used by Migrant Ministers to meet emergency situations." The "non-resident status of the seasonal worker made him ineligible for public assistance under New Jersey laws," and thus the chaplains needed help in covering all the emergencies that arose in that community.¹⁷

The New Jersey councils were also encouraged to have a tea or some other event to raise special funds to replace the old Harvester (essentially an altar, office, first-aid station, recreation trunk, and pantry in a station wagon) used in assisting the migrants throughout the state. The Cumberland County unit had a BIACA plan, that is "Brotherhood in Action—Concern and Acceptance," whereby the women used Brotherhood Week in February to host a series of small coffees to raise funds and educate their community about the migrants. Inadvertently highlighting the class difference, the women's annual Migrant Luncheon was held that year at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City with Governors Robert B. Meyner [New Jersey], W. Averell Harriman [New York], and George M. Leader [Pennsylvania] as

¹⁷ Mrs. Richard Zwemer, "New Challenge in Migrant Work: More State Summer Schools for Migrant Children," in "The U. C. W. Newsletter," volume 11, number 2, January 1958, 1, 3, CWU-SUNJ.

key-note speakers.¹⁸ In recognition of the work by UCW members in New Jersey, the State Migrant Labor Board appointed Mrs. R. A. Zwemer to a special committee to study adult education and recreation as lack of education was one of the greatest challenges facing migrant workers and their families.¹⁹

When the Iowa Council of executives met in September of 1958, the migrants and their conditions were high on the list of priorities; after an afternoon of business chores the evening session was devoted to a lengthy discussion of migrant workers and their living conditions. Esther Immer reported,

Over 3000 men, women and children, migrants, work Iowa crops. These children are known to be the most rootless, most uneducated and most unchurched people in the United States. They live in squalor and poverty. Very few of the children ever attend school. Their living quarters are usually small shacks, 10 by 15 feet in area, with no screens, no sewerage and no modern convenience of any kind, all of which makes a tremendous problem of health and disease.

These families and their problems should concern all of us for they represent an important factor in our country's economy. Because of their inability to dress properly and because of language and cultural barriers they seldom attend church. Although 2/3 of them profess Catholicism, the priests do not seek them out nor encourage them in local activities.

¹⁸ Mrs. Richard Zwemer, "New Challenge in Migrant Work: More State Summer Schools for Migrant Children," in "The U. C. W. Newsletter," volume 11, number 2, January 1958, 3-4, CWU-SUNJ.

¹⁹ "State Women Honored with Appointment," in "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

Recent moves have been made to enforce child-labor laws more rigidly, to encourage schooling for all the children and to take precautionary measures against disease. At Muscatine, last year more than 300 women and children were immunized against polio.

Many Texas Spanish-Americans work at Charles City, Hampton, Mason City, Clear Lake, Clinton, Shenandoah and Muscatine harvesting vegetables, sugar beets and potatoes. Still others brought from the Bahamas and Jamaica work in the large nurseries of Iowa. The Crystal Sugar and the Heinz companies do their own recruiting but others are hired out on contract, terms of which must meet certain specifications of the US Bureau of Standards, the US Department of Labor and the Iowa Employment Agencies.²⁰

Several issues are present in this report, chief among them are the tensions between townfolk and the migrants, problems with the employers of migrants, and tensions between Catholics and Protestants as to their responsibility for the migrants.

Florence Eggers then reported of "visiting migrant camps at Muscatine and of efforts being made there to improve living and working conditions of the migrants."

Eggers went on to report,

There are almost two million migrant workers in the United States. They are found in every state. Average wages are \$600 to \$800 per year. About 1/3 of them are English-Americans, 1/3 Spanish-American and 1/3 negro-Americans. Some of the greatest needs are: health kits including comb,

²⁰ Gertrude Rosenkild, "Executive Meeting, Iowa Council of United Church Women," 25 September 1958, CWU-IWA-UIL.

toothbrush and paste, wash cloth and soap, dolls,
toys and books.²¹

Florence Zeller moved and the committee approved the motion to work a "migrant project" and use the Iowa Council of Churches for promotion.

Mrs. Herbert Arthur "restated the resolution made at the June meeting concerning the 'Notice to Deport' law and urged the members to make it known at every opportunity that we are opposed to such a law, and why."²² This active and political involvement was merely an extension of their decades of mission study and deep belief in the Social Gospel, for they were taught to reach out to their fellow human beings as equals in God's eyes.

In another vein, after the UCW National Migrant Advisory Committee met in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, the United States Department of Labor (USDA) designated North Carolina a "pilot program" in its work with migrant laborers in 1962. Noting the increasing usage of machines and the rising level of unemployment among migrant workers led UCW members to push for further government and church assistance.

'Cherry growers in Michigan, New York,
Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have put about 50

²¹ Gertrude Rosenkild, "Executive Meeting, Iowa Council of United Church Women," 25 September 1958, CWU-IWA-UIL.

²² Gertrude Rosenkild, "Executive Meeting, Iowa Council of United Church Women," 25 September 1958, CWU-IWA-UIL.

mechanical tree shakers into use in the last five years. The falling fruit is caught on mobile canvas canopies placed around the trees. One machine does the work of 80 hand pickers. Picking cost is cut to \$20 a ton from about \$60.00.' The same thing is being done with potatoes and other crops. You see, many migrants are or will be out of work. We must educate these workers in other lines of employment. Many of them are anxious to learn, and it is our duty to teach them. We have some adult classes in North Carolina, but we need more, and we need more instructors. Maybe some of our women living in the areas where migrant labor is used could give some time each day or week to help us out. These helpers must not only be able to help the migrant in health and material ways, but must have the Love of God in his heart to pass on to them. If Love is needed in any of our work in our State of North Carolina, it is certainly needed by these migrants.²³

The cooperative working relationship that developed between the USDA, the North Carolina Department of Labor, and the UCW led to an increasing level of literacy and many improvements in the home life of migrant workers. The UCW in other southern states reported migrant work too; Florida's 1963 budget included \$10,000 for work among migrants, in 1962 Texas expended \$4000 for "nurseries, welcome centers, well-baby clinics, and literary programs" for the migrants in their state.²⁴

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²³ Mrs. Raymond Coldren, "Report of the Migrant Committee," in "Department of United Church Women" newsletter, 1962, 9-10, GGJ-UNC.

²⁴ Mrs. Harry Bates, "From Other States," in "United Church Women Newsletter," October 1963, CWU-SUNJ.

Of course, the larger more contentious issue for Americans throughout most of the country over the past one hundred years had centered on black/white issues and issues of faith. Everyday racial or ethnic affronts were harder to dispel. The National Conference of Christians and Jews published the "Pattern for Peace: Catholic, Jewish and Protestant Declaration on World Peace" early in 1943. This statement developed seven basic steps that must be achieved for world peace:

1. The moral law must govern world order
2. The rights of the individual must be assured
3. The rights of oppressed, weak or colonial peoples must be protected
4. The rights of minorities must be secured
5. International institutions to maintain peace with justice must be organized
6. International economic cooperation must be developed
7. A just social order within each state must be achieved.²⁵

UCCW leaders in Des Moines used this document as the text for their Extension Conference in September of that year.

Using this background information, The Reverend Jesse Hawkins, Bishop J. Ralph Magee, Rabbi Monroe Levens, and history professor The Reverend Dr. A. T. DeGroot, all of Des Moines, spoke on the racial issues facing the communities in Iowa. Hawkins, an African American,

²⁵ "PATTERN FOR PEACE: Catholic, Jewish and Protestant Declaration on World Peace," The National Conference of Christians and Jews, Inc., Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

explained that his parishioners had employment, "but that did not solve the feeling in restaurants, hotels, trains, busses, and residential sections." He related, "I am anxious to see the day I can go to the Rock Island [train station in Des Moines] to buy my own ticket without a white man buying it for me." To further emphasize DeGroot's comments, Levens explained that Jews had two essential needs for happiness: "to be understood," and the "restoration of Palestine as a commonwealth." Levens furthered his statement with the insight that Jews needed to have a home for a sense of identity; that other immigrants to the United States had a citizenship to surrender when they arrived here and that eased assimilation as they had that national identity.²⁶

In response to similar issues, the Minneapolis council organized "Building Bridges," a program to encourage visitation among places of Catholic and Jewish worship to broaden understanding of different faiths.²⁷ These issues were not legal issues so much as personal affronts to human dignity, affronts the women believed that the biblical Jesus would never have condoned and thus the women felt

²⁶ "Panel Told of Race Prejudice: Rabbi Pleads for Jewish Homeland," Des Moines Register, 15 September 1943, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²⁷ Ruth Zietlow, "65th ANNIVERSARY JUBILEE, 1922-1987: REFLECTIONS BY PAST PRESIDENTS, CHURCH WOMEN UNITED IN GREATER MINNEAPOLIS," 1, CWU-MHS.

compelled to research and act to correct them. In Iowa, the women continued to push for equality in the workforce. The Des Moines women sent telegrams to Senator Guy Gillette in the summer of 1944 urging his continued support of the Fair Employment Practices bill up for renewal.²⁸

More importantly, starting in 1946, UCCW councils made biennial examinations of their individual communities' efforts for balanced race relations. These questionnaires were detailed evaluations of the workplace, educational system, housing, community spaces, churches, and public services. The reports were then compiled on the national level to assist the national board's programming initiatives to support the women on the local level.²⁹

Moreover, United Council of Church Women cooperated with other groups to address racial imbalances. Yearly Human Relations Conferences were held in conjunction with the National Conference of Christian and Jews (NCCJ) during American Brotherhood Week in February. The *Des Moines Sunday Register* for 22 February 1948 shows Mrs. F.J.

²⁸ Western Union, 19 June 1944, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

²⁹ Des Moines, Iowa results are recorded in "Racial Segregation Questionnaire and Inventory," 15 March 1946; "The World Charter and Your Community," 29 March 1946; "Every Child Is My Child," [1948]; "D. M. Church Women Plan Child Study," [1948]; and "Rediscovering Our City," Summer 1948, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI. Minneapolis, Minnesota results are recorded in "Community Self-Survey of Human Relations, 1 June 1947;" "Summary of the Findings and Recommendations of the Self-Survey;" and 1948 untitled follow-up study and report, CWU-MHS.

Weertz, the local UCCW president, with other NCCJ Women's Division officers preparing for the annual Silver Tea. The women were promoting the upcoming educational conference "To Secure These Rights" being held 22 April 1948 at the Hotel Fort Des Moines. Specifically the workshop participants focused on "The Fight to Secure Civil Rights" through the lens of education, legislation, and community organization.

The 1949 conference was even more pointed; Walter White, the executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was the primary speaker. White addressed the loss of American prestige overseas as a result of racial bigotry at home. First, White explained that German and Japanese governments during World War Two used leaflets detailing American race riots to depict Americans as evil empires wanting only to extend colonial rule around the world. Then at the end of that war, the Soviet Union started using the same rhetoric and pictures to enflame anti-American attitudes in Asia and Africa. He called on church women and church leaders to become involved in the national politics of the issue, as well as simply working to improve the local situations.

Letters were urgently needed to push Congress to move forward on civil rights legislation.³⁰

The 1948 UCCW race-relations poll results were shared with the conference attendees. Returns for Des Moines, Iowa showed that employment, housing, and restaurants were the worst discriminators of the community in their race relations. Education at all levels in the city was open equally, as was nursing education and patient care in hospitals. Employment for the city, state, and federal offices was integrated; however the private industries and businesses had very specific segregation in job offerings.³¹ NCCJ and UCCW cooperated with educational programs for the community promoting racial understanding and elimination of prejudice and intolerance.³²

At the Des Moines Council of Church Women Missions Institute, 10 September 1951, attendees received a report from the Rediscovering Our City Committee. This committee was comprised of:

a representative of each denomination, a leader among Japanese Americans, one among Christian and Jews, the city librarian, a negro Y.W.C.A. staff member, four negro women especially active in

³⁰ "Tells Attacks on U.S. for Apathy on Racial Problems," 29 April 1949, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³¹ "Claim Rights of Negroes Abused Here," 29 April 1949, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³² "Women's Division, Christians', Jews' Conference Plans Programs for American Brotherhood Week," *Des Moines Sunday Register*, 22 February 1948; and "Conference on Human Relations: 'To Secure These Rights,' 22 April 1948, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

local, national and Christian organizations, a Salvation Army executive, and a Girl Scout leader.³³

The committee, using a 1940 U. S. Census Report and the estimated figures for 1950 from the Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with conversations with "all major civic leaders in welfare and labor organizations," found that Des Moines had a population of just over 200,000 with recognizable minority populations of Jewish, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, Italian, and Negro. This committee set to work gathering facts surrounding availability of education, occupation, recreation, and housing as it related to these minority groups. "This was not to be done to boycott any firms, but to gather true and live facts and to prepare the community to see and understand existing conditions." Only the Negro populace, numbering over 16,000 or eight percent of the city's total population, experienced overt discrimination according to their research. The committee's report further stated, "The Call of the Negro" challenges us:

'We are Negroes. We are friends,
Working with you in building America
Into a beautiful and happy land.
We are negroes, teaching and preaching, helping
the sick, discovering new things
For the use of mankind, whether white or black,

³³ Mrs. F. J. Weertz, compiler, "Rediscovering Our City," in Des Moines Council of Church Women Missions Institute, 10 September 1951, TMs, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

We are negroes, singing our songs and dreaming
our dreams
Of a day that is yet to come,
When brotherhood will live from sea to shining
sea.'

(Author Unknown)³⁴

The report compiler followed this poem with,

The statement—'working with you in building
America' burned our very hearts. How could a
community grow when we had closed so many doors
of our city life to the negro and not given them
equal rights as citizens? We must face the truth
and do something about it.

After listing all their findings, Weertz concluded with,
"The time has now come for us to move into the field of
action—to demonstrate our faith in the power of
togetherness, and to prove our courage and consecration in
bringing opportunities to the negro in our city."³⁵

This was but one of the many calls occurring around the
country for concerted effort to eradicate segregation and
increase the full use of America's potential.

The interracial work of UCW in Des Moines did not go
unnoticed. Delta Sigma Theta, a national African American
sorority, applauded the women's work at the local level
with one of the first awards given at their annual

³⁴ Mrs. F. J. Weertz, compiler, "Rediscovering Our City," in Des Moines Council of Church Women Missions Institute, 10 September 1951, TMs, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³⁵ Mrs. F. J. Weertz, compiler, "Rediscovering Our City," in Des Moines Council of Church Women Missions Institute, 10 September 1951, TMS, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

recognition service in 1952. In accepting the award, Mrs. Charles Houser commented,

the King of England has the power to warn, to advise and to encourage. Those three powers, if used would make such a difference in our world, most of all the power to encourage. If we care and live enough to use those three simple powers, we will find we have the power to live together in a rightful way in this world. . . . As a growing people we have the ability to develop our power to live together.³⁶

Further evidence of the influence of UCW was the action of the National Council of Churches. The NCC finally caught up with United Church Women when they adopted a resolution in 1952 calling for a "non-segregated church and a non-segregated society," a stance which UCW had adopted with its initial constitution in 1941.³⁷

The 1953 Assembly of United Council of Church Women, in Atlantic City, New Jersey passed several important resolutions, specifically one calling attention to the five cases before the Supreme Court that would come to be known as *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas, et al.* Originally the resolution called for the women to "acquaint their constituents with the implications of the court decision, whatever it may be." Then a delegate from Virginia added an amendment "calling for an end to

³⁶ "Award to Girl Scouts," 19 May 1952, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

³⁷ "Ask Church Ban on Segregation," 12 June 1952, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

segregated public schools," and sparked a "spirited" debate. The resolution as amended was "overwhelmingly endorsed."³⁸ They finished their convention on a high note, having made a major policy statement for the nation to watch the *Brown v. Board of Education* case as the Supreme Court dealt with the contentious issue of school segregation. Again, the National Council of Churches, in December 1954, followed the actions taken by the United Church Women a year earlier. Meeting at their biennial general assembly in Boston, only two of the four divisions of NCC passed resolutions imploring Christians "to 'demonstrate principles of Christian brotherhood' by combating 'all forms of injustice, discrimination and segregation based on color or race.'" "

In September 1955, the Des Moines Council of Church Women was in the forefront again with the election of Mrs. Norman Olphin as President. Upon taking office, Olphin, an African American woman, stated, "I think the 11 o'clock hour on Sunday morning is the most segregated, separated hour in this country. So many of us recognize the world as God's world—but we don't recognize the world as the brotherhood of man." As a Baptist minister's wife she was firmly committed to inter-denominational work, vowing "I

³⁸ George Dugan, "Church Women Hit Racial Ban," 9 October 1953, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

don't think because I have a certain belief, that I can wave my flag and say 'This is it,' she said. 'We're not going to build a better world as Baptists or as Congregationalists, but as Christians.'"³⁹

On other fronts the Des Moines Council of United Church Women were also leaders. Their early work in surveying businesses, schools, and hospitals in Des Moines as to racial policies was finally picked up by the larger city in 1956. A half-page editorial in the *Des Moines Register* that March urged the city to move ahead in better race relations and referenced the early studies of UCW.⁴⁰ Similarly, the November newsletter of the Des Moines Council of United Church Women ran an article detailing the problem:

57.5% of Des Moines's non-white population lives in 1.6% of the total city area. Much of this area is scheduled to be redeveloped either for the freeway or for urban renewal. Approximately 400 Negro families are to be displaced, or almost a tenth of the whole Negro population. Where will these people go? Strangely in a land known all over the world for its freedom of opportunity these people are not looked upon as individuals seeking a place to live, but as 'intruders.' The doors are usually closed whether they be apartments, houses, or even empty lots. The answer is not in new Negro areas - SEPARATE can never be EQUAL. This is the time for the citizens

³⁹ Jean Sharda, "Pastor's Wife Is President of Church Women's Council," *Des Moines Register*, 9 October 1955, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴⁰ "Des Moines Record on Job Discrimination," *Des Moines Register*, 17 March 1956, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

of Des Moines to accept their responsibilities and set an example for the whole nation in opening up neighborhoods all over the city for all qualified persons.⁴¹

The 20 November 1958 issue of the *Des Moines Tribune* editorial excoriated church leaders for their reluctance to get involved with the housing issues facing the city of Des Moines. The editorial declared the segregated housing was a "moral problem" needing the church's leadership and decried their reluctance to become involved.

The editorial went on to cite the survey work of the past decade: "the Des Moines Council of Church Women has been working quietly to improve opportunities for Negroes in Des Moines." This survey was a baseline of information that the churches needed to use to implement real change. The editorial went on to encourage community members to sign the pledge that the American Friends Service Committee was preparing, stating that they will "welcome into their neighborhoods any residents of good character, regardless of race, color, religion or national origin." This issue was becoming critical with the imminent start of urban renewal and interstate construction that was going to displace "hundreds of Negro families."⁴²

⁴¹ "Des Moines Council of United Church Women," 10 November 1958, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴² "Churches and Race Segregation," *Des Moines Tribune*, 20 November 1958; and "A Discussion by Churches of Housing for Negroes," *Des Moines*

New Jersey women, too, were fully involved with the issues of urban renewal and freeway construction and their resultant displacement of individuals. New Jersey housing authorities presented programs for the UCW May Fellowship Day 1958 concerning the theme, "A Place to Live."

Indicating that a home was

more than four walls, more than a shelter from heat and cold. It means home, a place where families can live in simple comfort and dignity, where they can share loving experiences, where they can develop into whole, well-rounded, non-pressured individuals getting a spiritual richness from life and giving to it their utmost. This we want for everyone.⁴³

They went on to explain how United Church Women had already accomplished much to alleviate the problems of inadequate housing across the state. Local groups had organized See-It-Yourself trips to slum areas in Trenton, Newark and Camden, and visited Concord Park and Greenbelt-pilot projects in integrated housing outside of Philadelphia. Princeton churches had worked with the Open Occupancy Covenants recommended by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. New Brunswick women had proposed a Public Relations Council with teams to work with tenants. Summit women had cooperatively sponsored a private housing project for

Tribune, 15 November 1958, newspaper clippings, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁴³ "You Can Change Your Community," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

families evicted in a slum clearance move. And, the Teaneck council had continued to evaluate its integrated areas.⁴⁴

The projected East-West Freeway stirred the Oranges to action in planning relocation of families who would be displaced—many of them negro. Church women worked with other civic groups on Housing Codes, notably in Trenton, and began housing for Senior Citizens in East Orange and Hackensack. This was more of the work for migrants and African Americans.⁴⁵

Mrs. Alfred M. Chapman of Washington Crossing, Pa., National U.C.W. chairman for May Fellowship Day advised,

'Look hard at your community. Is Population increasing rapidly? Is it highly mobile? Are there tightly contained, segregated minority groups? Is there a diminishing public housing program? What about your Senior Citizens? What can the churches do? What can you do? If you do not have a problem should you not share in the concerns of your less fortunate neighboring communities?

Mrs. Chapman went on to point out that the nation was pockmarked with some ten million sub-standard dwellings needing replacement.⁴⁶

Miss Esther Stamats, U.C.W. executive for Christian Social Relations, reported that only 23 per cent of farm

⁴⁴ "You Can Change Your Community," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

⁴⁵ "You Can Change Your Community," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

⁴⁶ "You Can Change Your Community," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

dwellings met minimum standards. Both U.C.W. leaders asked councils to do community self-surveys and push for legislation leading to slum clearance, housing for migrants, and neighborhood redevelopment; for the outlawing of informal restrictive covenants which bar certain racial groups, and for an end to segregated housing.⁴⁷

Since the early resolutions and public announcements of United Church Women urging the government and people everywhere to recognize equality among all people had not fully rectified the segregated society within the country, the organization published *This Is How We Did It*.⁴⁸ This small compendium described exactly how some councils had accomplished integration in their localities. Circulating this book throughout the country helped communities by providing successful strategies that women could then use as models for their particular circumstances.

As Mrs. Ralph Holland, of Worcester, Massachusetts and member of the Board of Managers of National United Church Women, speaking at the Iowa Annual Assembly put it, "the color curtain is more dangerous than the iron or the bamboo curtain." Furthermore, the national board developed and led forty-seven Human Rights Workshops across the country

⁴⁷ "You Can Change Your Community," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, October 1959, CWU-SUNJ.

⁴⁸ *This Is How We Did It: 'Next Steps' Taken in Race Relations* (New York: United Church Women, 1955) CWU-GCAH-UMC.

allowing community leaders to brainstorm and develop action plans to deal with their particular racial issues.⁴⁹ This interdenominational leadership was crucial for generating the courage and support needed within communities dealing with this crisis.

One year later, the women overwhelmingly adopted a resolution "supporting human rights among all races," while noting that 1 January 1963 would be the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁵⁰ This resolution was the result of the action by the Board of Managers of the General Department of United Church Women of the National Council of Churches of Christ annual board meeting in Columbus, Ohio, 3 May 1962. The national board's acceptance of "Assignment: Race" with its corresponding pledge:

As one of the countless women across the country convinced that all people are indeed "one family in God" and committed to working more effectively to making this truth a reality in our society, I wish to accept Assignment: Race, and pledge myself to work with others toward the fulfillment of its goals.

The goals are: to help achieve full participation for all people without distinction of race in the local church and denomination; the council of church women; and the community, concentrating in the area of greatest "racial tension and need."⁵¹

⁴⁹ "1961 Annual Assembly, June 21, 22, 23," flyer; "UCW Annual State Meeting," 22 June 1961, newspaper clipping; and "United Church Women of Iowa, 1961-1966," TMs, CWU-IWA-UIL.

⁵⁰ "United Church Women of Iowa, Annual Session, Ames, Iowa, June 24, 25, 26. 1962," CWU-IWA-UIL.

⁵¹ "Resolutions Proposed by UCW," *Tribune* 11 May 1962, CWU-IWA-UIL.

This campaign challenged all units to become involved by studying and working inter-racially to eradicate racism, noting, "The experience of a local group as it takes a clear and honest look at itself and its community inevitably results in motivation and commitment." The national office provided a series of reading materials for local councils to aid them in their implementation.⁵²

Once again, the United Church Women led the way; the rest of the ecumenical movement caught up in January 1963 when the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches, the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the Social Action Commission of the Synagogue Council of America held the first ever National Conference on Religion and Race and produced the resulting *Race: Challenge to Religion*, a compilation of the major addresses given at the conference. Declaring that racial discrimination and prejudice were "moral problems at their roots" the conference declared that segregation was one of the "most crucial problems facing American democracy. Yet organized religion has had limited impact on the problem." The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King closed the conference with a call for "peaceful

⁵² Carrie E. Meares, "Assignment Race," TMs, 29 March 1963, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

and constructive action by all men interested in making their own and their organization's life more truly spiritual."⁵³

Another result of UCW's leadership in the area of race relations was the invitation from the White House to attend a meeting with the president. President John F. Kennedy assembled three hundred women involved in religious groups on 9 July 1963 to discuss Civil Rights. During the meeting in the East Room, Kennedy stressed that the women gathered "represented 50,000,000 women." As such they could really help the government; that "each of the branches of government is doing what it can but that there is a need for individuals to work as individuals in their organizations and in their communities across the nation." He specifically asked the women to work on issues surrounding school drop-outs, participation in bi-racial committees, leadership training courses, civil rights legislation, and "make sure that organizations to which we belong are open to all as far as possible." Vice President Lyndon Johnson called for "compassion on the part of all women;" Attorney General Robert Kennedy reported some progress over the last month, citing statistics of the number of theaters, restaurants, and hotels that had been

⁵³ "Race, Religion and Redress," flyer, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

integrated. After a long day of reports, the women asked to reassemble to form the National Woman's Committee on Civil Rights, with Assistant Secretary of Labor Esther Peterson as the liaison to the government. The group's elected leader, Mildred McAfee Horton, a UCW national leader, Esther Peterson, and a small steering committee would act as a clearinghouse fielding questions and forwarding all items of importance to the members.⁵⁴

And there was plenty of work to be done as one community after another across the nation dealt with the ravages of racism. In July 1963, Des Moines UCW helped sponsor the "Iowa State Conference of Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People called Emergency Civil Rights Rally" on the steps of the state capitol building to rally in protest to the heinous behavior happening in the South. Then in September, Des Moines UCW, in conjunction with several other organizations, held a state-wide race conference at North High School. Modeled after the historic first conference of January, ecumenical leaders spoke and led workshops for community leaders of all ages and faiths to work together to eradicate the scourge of racism. One key-note speaker was Howard Griffin, the author of *Black Like Me*; in his

⁵⁴ Mrs. Harry C. Spencer, "Report of the Meeting with President Kennedy on the Matter of Civil Rights," 9 July 1963, TMs, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

speech he urged each individual to take his experiences living as a black man to heart and to help make the necessary corrections.⁵⁵ New Jersey held a similar conference in January 1964, the New Jersey Interfaith Conference on Religion and Race, with over 400 delegates attending. Meanwhile UCW members around the nation continued their decades-long work with migrant workers throughout their states and began work on "Wednesdays in Mississippi."⁵⁶

Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIM) was an important initiative promoted by the National Council of Negro Women, with participation of women from the National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Catholic Women, United Church Women, League of Women Voters, and American Association of University Women. Each week four integrated teams from around the North flew into Mississippi to spend the day observing and giving "moral support to Freedom Schools, Community Centers and Voter Registration being carried on by students in the Summer Project and men in the Delta Ministry." Additionally, the northern women spent

⁵⁵ "Emergency Civil Rights Rally," program, 27 July 1963; "United Church Women of the Des Moines Area," newsletter, September 1963; and "United Church Women of the Des Moines Area," newsletter, October 1963, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

⁵⁶ Mrs. Harry Bates, "Christian Social Relations," in "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," January 1964; and Mrs. M.F. Eberhart, "From the President's Desk," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," Spring 1964, CWU-SUNJ.

time in "constructive dialogue with southern white women." Writing for the New Jersey newsletter in the fall of 1965, Olive Noble described her reasons for going and her realization of how their actions changed everyone involved, as they each came to "re-examine and re-evaluate themselves in the northern world." She went on to comment that since "no two women out of the 50 who went to Mississippi move in the same social and civic circle each puts a different set of wheels in motion." She finished with: "The ripples will continue long after the waves subside." All participants, North and South, expressed the desire for continuing dialogue across the regions and the races.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Urban Renewal and its resultant dislocation of individuals remained an issue concerning affordable housing. In 1960, United Church Women had begun investigating the issue of integrated housing as a tool to promote racial harmony and deal with this important dilemma.⁵⁸ The national program theme, "Assignment: Race," built on this work with the recognition that integrated housing was key to school integration. The 1964 national

⁵⁷ Olive M. Noble, "Wednesdays in Mississippi," in "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," Fall 1965, CWU-SUNJ. See also the "Interview of Ann Hewitt," by Doris Anne Younger, 15 May 1997, CWU-GCAH-UMC. For more information on WIM, see Debbie Z. Harwell, "Wednesdays in Mississippi: Uniting Women across Regional and Racial Lines, Summer 1964," *Journal of Southern History* 76 (3)(August 2010):617-654.

⁵⁸ Dorothea A. Treadway, "Afternoon Unit," in "Des Moines Council of United Church Women," June 1961, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

theme of "Freedom of Residence and Job Opportunity" for May Fellowship Day encouraged all local units to study the issues in their environs.

Communities across the nation tried different means to achieve this community integration. Des Moines continued to work on the Fair Housing Initiative of the past several years; indeed all UCW councils were encouraged to support Title 4 of the Civil Rights Act of 1966 with letters to their Congressmen and Senators. Title 4 was specifically intended to eradicate the custom of denying the sale or rental of a house because of "race, color, religion, or national origin of the person seeking a place to live."⁵⁹ To promote this, the UCW initiative in Muncie, Indiana, developed a community center in a previously segregated district.⁶⁰

Taking small steps, United Church Women in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, met with the local Ministerial Alliance Association, an all-white social group for ministers in Murfreesboro; as the Murfreesboro UCW was bi-racial in composition, this dinner meeting was the first

⁵⁹ "The Voice of Religion: Statements on Housing and Fair Employment," pamphlet; "City Powers on Fair Housing," *Des Moines Tribune*, 21 October 1963; "The Fair Housing Issue," *The Des Moines Register*, 28 October 1963; and "The Civil Rights Act of 1966 (Under House Bill H.R. 14765), TMs, CWU-IWA-UIL.

⁶⁰ "United Church Women to Meet Here Monday," *The Kansas City Star*, 3 October 1964, CWU-IWA-UIL.

step toward encouraging the men's group to integrate with the local black ministerial association.⁶¹ In 1965 the city school board finally got serious about desegregation and requested the League of Women Voters and United Church Women to assist in interpreting the school integration plan at public meetings such as civic clubs, ministerial associations, and other church groups.⁶² Superintendent John Hobgood understood the community, its values and relationships, and he knew that the women in those groups were highly respected and would be able to convince the public of the necessity of the new steps.

Later, in 1966, after considerable study on the extent and nature of poverty in Murfreesboro, UCW successfully lobbied for City Council passage and implementation of the "Southern Standard Housing Code," a set of minimum standards for housing concerning electricity and plumbing. The other major action Murfreesboro UCW initiated through the City Council was the development of a non-profit housing complex for low-income whites and blacks. The women proposed to put this development on Sulphur Springs Road in a middle-class, white neighborhood thus advancing

⁶¹ Myrtle Glanton Lord, "The History of Church Women United: Murfreesboro, TN," TMs (Murfreesboro, TN, 1995), 2.

⁶² Murfreesboro City School Board, "Freedom of Choice Plan" packet, in the sheet, "Preparation of Pupils, Teachers, State, and Community For Desegregation," 7 May 1965, Murfreesboro City School Board Collection, Murfreesboro City School Board of Education, Murfreesboro, TN.

integrated housing and relieving the congestion of the traditional low-income areas. This produced "considerable debate," but finally died for the lack of a second to Councilman Robert Scales' motion to buy the land for the group.⁶³

Furthermore, the 1964 Iowa UCW Annual Meeting featured the important topics of race and prison reform. Later, Paul Weller, the educational director of the reformatory at Anamosa, Iowa told the delegates, "I do not know where all the school dropouts are going, but 99% of the men in this institution are school dropouts." The delegates responded with a resolution to urge the state,

to provide policies and administrative means to assure the continuation and implementation of programs and services designed to release prisoners to their communities who are motivated and equipped to assume roles of responsible citizenship. To attain this result, both custody and treatment must be given major attention.⁶⁴

⁶³ Murfreesboro City Council, 4 May and 13 July 1967. Unfortunately, two months later Mary Hurt Harrell notified the Council that the federal funding had been reduced and "the project in Murfreesboro would have to be abandoned." She asked for assistance from the Council to get the funding restored and the Council agreed to do what they could. No such housing in the white neighborhood was ever developed by CWU or the government. Similar housing proposals are detailed in both the Des Moines and New Jersey newsletters across the 1960s.

⁶⁴ "Problems of penal reform and race occupy Iowa UCW," Ames, Iowa, Friday, June 26, 1964, and "Church Women Urge Immediate Filling of Correctional Institution Directorship," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 24 June 1964, CWU-IWA-UIL.

Building upon UCW's long interest in prison conditions and literacy, the Iowa women had new ammunition in their program of reform.

The 10th National Assembly of United Church Women met in Kansas City, Missouri, on the 8th and 9th of October 1964. 2,500 delegates, representing 13 million women, in 31 Protestant and Orthodox churches were in attendance. The assembly adopted the new "Assignment: Race, Phase II," then overwhelmingly voted and

went on record yesterday as deploring the actions of all extremist groups, ranging from the John Birch Society to the Communist party. "We deplore the action of all organizations such as the White Citizens Councils, the John Birch Society, the Christian Crusade, the Christian Freedom Foundation, the Church League of America, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Communist party which hold doctrines which breed suspicion, division, and hatred."⁶⁵

Clearly, women at the national level were committed to eradicating racism and each state and local UCW council dealt with racial integration issues at the level their communities could handle.

* * * * *

Liberal Protestant women learned in the nineteenth century that they had much in common with women of the

⁶⁵ "Attending 10th National UCW Assembly," *The Newton Daily News*, 9 October 1964; and "Install President at U.C.W. Meeting," *The Kansas City Times*, Friday, 9 October 1964, CWU-IWA-UIL.

Orient; during the twentieth century they learned to cross color and faith lines in their own country. They recognized they were no longer "women working for women" but in reality "women working with women" and that changed attitudes about many parts of society. Thus, the United Council of Church Women recognized racial issues in multiple places across the nation and adopted plans to remedy those problems.

Newly dedicated to racial equality in the 1920s, the United Council of Church Women accepted that the New Testament commandment expected total equality of all people and thus did not address this issue in the membership portion of their new constitution. They did, however, stipulate that conventions could only be held in communities where all members, regardless of race, could eat and sleep together. They also stipulated that all councils needed to be racially integrated.

Organized as a movement, local councils across the nation could emphasize the work they needed in their individual community. The United Council of Church Women had freedom at the local level to approach the problems in their immediate vicinity with the methods that would work best in that locality. Local councils often took the lead or partnered with other groups to make effective changes in

their communities, Some councils tackled racial problems with surveys, others suggested actual integration projects, and some southern communities approached the issues obliquely through programs such as Migrant Labor. As historian Carolyn Dupont explicated, this was not the consensus of southern churches as a whole for "race work" was a very contentious issue that took years to work through.⁶⁶ These women, however, worked outside of the hierarchy of the church and had a sense of independence in their chosen focus.

This "race work" was important for individual betterment, community peace, and national conscience. This chapter has addressed actions by these women of faith and they were individually important, however World War Two and the Cold War, and the national Civil Rights Movement compounded the importance of these ameliorating actions. The women continued to draw on their faith to be the living example of the New Testament Jesus. The next chapter will address their early attempts to ameliorate issues dealing with gender equality. Much of that work is tied to the development of a national Protestant voice and the chapter will address those strains across the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Copyright © Melinda Marie Johnson 2015

⁶⁶ Carolyn Renee Dupont, "Mississippi Praying: White Religion and Black Equality, 1954-1966" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 2003).

Chapter Five

Struggling with Consensus

At the same time that peace and race relations were consuming the women's efforts and energies, they were also part of a larger ecumenical movement in the United States and the world. Much like their Temperance Movement sisters, the United Council of Church Women organized as a movement of women, locally independent while nationally coordinated. However, as the conflicts of the Cold War spiraled there was pressure within Protestantism to provide a unified front to counter the perceived onslaught of the atheism of the communist world, the one voice of the Catholic Church, and the secularism of the modern media. Therefore, in 1950, the women agreed to align themselves with other Protestant bodies and form the National Council of Churches of Christ.

Ideally this alignment with other Protestant organizations would produce a single united voice of Protestantism to guide the nation, and it did to a certain extent. Unfortunately, the General Department of United Church Women, as the women were then known, immediately

found themselves frustrated with constantly having to defend their budgets and programs. Struggles with male domination across two centuries had nurtured these women's feminism and kept them constantly aware of their position within the patriarchal society, even when the larger society seemed to lose sight of it.

This awareness of discrimination, first encountered in their missionary work and later in their social reform work, encouraged the women to continually seek ways to enlarge women's roles in society and the church. The first half of this chapter will examine UCW/CWU's actions within society. They first worked toward increased educational experiences for women, then worked toward increased political participation, and finally advocated for women's accepted equality. The latter half of this chapter will focus on their work for equality within the church.

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For fifty years denominations were jealous of women's efforts and dollars going to interdenominational work. In the later years of the nineteenth century, several churches moved to control women's missionary efforts more closely by incorporating the women's division into the larger church

and thus putting them under direct male governance. By 1930, most women's missionary boards were once again under the complete control of the church hierarchy. Only the American Baptist and Methodist women were able to retain control of their organizations and budgets during that attack, and that ended in 1955 and 1964, respectively.¹

Thus, when the one hundred women met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, discrimination was a high priority to be addressed during the organizing of what came to be called the United Council of Church Women. When writing their incorporating constitution, their purpose was succinctly stated as:

The purpose shall be to unite church women in their allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ through a program looking to *their integration in the total life and work of the church and to the building of a world Christian community.*²

The United Council of Church Women leaders believed that increased political education and participation were keys to increasing women's role within society. During the war years, travel was severely restricted so this often meant educating their members as to their role within society and

¹ R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980, originally published as *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 184-190.

² Martha H. Goedeke, "Minutes of Constituting Convention," 3, CWU-GCAH-UMC. I have added the italics to highlight the leaders' self-awareness of their subordination.

the future through other avenues; "Women's Place in The New Order," "The Church and the New World Order," Church Women and the Postwar World," "Women Shaping the Peace," "Mothers, Co-Builders of Another Home," and "A Council of Churchwomen in War Time" were all common themes discussed at length within *The Church Woman* on a regular basis.³

In another publication, the officers of the constituting committee of UCCW, in 1944, felt the need to explicate the origins of the organization to the members and the world so that all could understand the movement's basic tenets of belief, especially its feminism. In an attempt to catalog the activities and events that culminated in the establishment of UCCW, the three officers showed their feminism by their word choice. Going back in history they retold the story of Anne Hutchinson in colonial America using phrases like, "a day when women were expected to 'keep silence in the churches.'" They continue to tell her story of being expelled from the colony "presumably because it removed a disturbing female from further activity." They went on to quickly allude to Margaret Fuller, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Fry as "a group of remarkable women." Those women who traveled to

³ These article titles come from *The Church Woman* of November 1943; similar articles are found in all the issues from 1937 until 1946. CWU-GCAH-UMC.

London for the anti-slavery meeting "found, however, that the slavery of men to custom and inherited inhibitions continued to operate and they were refused seats on the floor of the Convention, solely on the ground of their sex." Later that same century, "the same forces that stirred the hearts of women of the early part of the nineteenth century to develop unheard of secular activities had been moving the hearts and minds of the women of the churches and it may not be too far afield to claim that the Woman Movement had its inception there."⁴ And on they went, cataloging many of the same issues addressed in chapter one; each with a feminist spin on the wording and helping a reader to understand the two-pronged mission of the UCCW. Specifically, they addressed the past discrimination within Protestantism's hierarchical structures and the goal of equal representation of UCCW.

Mabel Head, former vice-president of UCCW, writing in 1950, explored the origins of the movement by explicating the names the women chose for the early missionary councils. Head explained how the early groups chose names

⁴ Mrs. Fred S. Bennett, Florence G. Tyler, and Martha H. Goedeke, "The Emergence of Interdenominational Organizations Among Protestant Church Women" (New York: United Council of Church Women, 1944), 3-4, CWU-GCAH-UMC. This same idea is developed in Lisa Joy Pruitt, *"A Looking-Glass for Ladies": American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005); and Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice, The Modern Mission Era, 1792-1992, An Appraisal*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996.)

such as "Female Mite Society," "Female Cent Society," "Dorcas Society," and "Little Prayer Band." According to Head, those groups organized in the nineteenth century claimed significant names. These liberal Protestant women chose "Female, not Women—Mites, not Dollars—Service, not Position—Prayer that could reach their Sisters, near and far." In the Parable of the Widow's Mite, Jesus told of the destitute woman giving the barest amount, the mite or today's cent, eked from poverty and quietly offered to the Lord in contrast to the many dollars loudly given for self-glorification by the wealthy men, thus the women worked quietly to reform social ills. Patterning themselves after Dorcas, a woman in the New Testament known far and wide for her charitable works for the poor, these women valued service over position. And they used prayer, as Jesus had taught them, to help their sisters at home and abroad.⁵ Head was unambiguous in her understanding that her predecessors were knowingly feminist.

Mossie Allman Wyker, president of UCW and an ordained minister by the Disciples of Christ, wrote an excellent exegesis on the rationale for including women more prominently in the church in her book, *Church Women in the*

⁵ Mabel Head, *Forward Together—An Historical Sketch of Women's Interdenominational Work and the UCCW* (NY: The United Council of Church Women, 1950), 1, CWU—GCAH—UMC.

Scheme of Things, in 1953. Wyker detailed the fallacies of holding women back and the benefits of allowing women to attain their full potential inside and outside the Church.⁶ Wyker went on to substantiate Head's understandings and produced the Biblical references to support them.

Then in 1961, Gladys Gilkey Calkins' in-house history laid bare the self-awareness of the members of United Church Women as to their feminism when she explored their investment in developing and sustaining women's colleges across Asia in the 1920s, or when she explicated their involvement with the United Nations and the Commission on the Status of Women.⁷

Each of these writers was aware of the past limitations that men had imposed upon women, some using Bible references to substantiate their actions, and were calling for a more enlightened understanding of the sexes and of the Bible in order to stop the squandering of half the Lord's peoples' abilities. Continually educating their following was an important way to keep the women involved and pushing forward.

⁶ Mossie Allman Wyker, *Church Women in the Scheme of Things* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1953).

⁷ Gladys Gilkey Calkins, *Follow Those Women: Church Women in the Interdenominational Movement, A History of the Development of United Work among Women of the Protestant Churches in the United States* (New York: United Church Women, National Council of The Churches of Christ in U.S.A., 1961), especially the epilogue.

* * * * *

By the mid-forties, the women had realized that though prayer was powerful, they also needed to be involved politically. National, state, and local newsletters often urged members to write their national and state representatives to express their feelings concerning upcoming legislative bills. Ten years later, developing voting guides for state and national elections consumed much of their time. The Social Action Department of the Iowa Council early in 1954, just as it had two years earlier, spent hours developing voting guides for the state elections. These guides contained information concerning the candidates' "church affiliation, community activities, and temperance habits." Local councils were encouraged to produce similar guides for local elections and have all guides distributed before the June primaries.⁸

Chair Mrs. R. B. Atwater emphasized that "the council does not advise church members how to vote, but that it does urge them to be well informed on candidates and on state and national issues, and to write their views to congressmen." Furthermore, in the January meeting the women

⁸ Jane Boulware, "Church Group Backs Voters' Guide for '54," 24 January 1954, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

drafted three letters of appreciation: to President Eisenhower for his "proposal for control and use of atomic energy, and of his general spiritual attitude and reliance on the power of God," the second echoing their temperance roots, to the Federal Communications Commission advising them of the Council's desire for licensing only television stations unwilling to advertise beer or liquor, and lastly, to Iowa Attorney General Leo Hoegh complimenting him on his enforcement of the state liquor laws.⁹

The spirit of cooperation with the political process went both ways. The UCW had set the agenda of involving themselves in politics and the politicians involved themselves in promoting the UCW agenda of prayer and peace. President Eisenhower issued an appeal to "all men of good will" to join the "many millions of people around the world" in the United Church Women's annual World Day of Prayer, set on the first Friday of Lent.¹⁰

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Politics, however, were not the only tool used to advance women throughout this period. They also began to

⁹ Jane Boulware, "Church Group Backs Voters' Guide for '54," 24 January 1954, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

¹⁰ "Ike in Appeal: Prayer for All," 2 March 1954, newspaper clipping, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

effectively work to encourage women and girls to reach their full potential. Building upon their increasing political involvement of the past decade, Mrs. Herbert Arthur, of Ames, Iowa, spoke to 1700 teens at the 4-H Girl's Club Convention. As past state president of the Iowa League of Women Voters and president of the Iowa Council of United Church Women, Arthur told delegates, "Learning to think for yourself is a good place to begin in politics." She stressed the political power that women have. "Politics is government in action. To be a responsible citizen you must be in politics."¹¹ Reaching out to young women was an important opportunity to develop new members as well as new politically active citizens.

UCCW leaders were also concerned with advancing women throughout the professional spectrum. In 1960 and 1961, the New Jersey state assembly voted \$1000 to fund a scholarship for two "women ministers interested in serving as chaplains in state institutions. There are very few women chaplains, so we are pioneers and must make haste, slowly." The 1962 newsletter announced three candidates for the two

¹¹ "Chosen Best of 4-H Girls in Grooming," *Des Moines Register*, 9 June 1961, newspaper clipping, "United Church Women of Iowa, 1961-1966" scrapbook, CWU-IWA-UIL.

scholarships.¹² Clearly this was an opportunity for women moving into the ministry that may have been seen as less threatening to men than serving in the local pulpit, which was still an area of contention for many denominations. Though UCW women had already been pushing for equality for twenty years, they were clearly cognizant of the continuing resistance of some in the male church hierarchy.

This new initiative of New Jersey coincided with the national development of Women in Community Service (WICS). WICS was a cooperative venture of National Catholic Women, National Jewish Women, National Negro Women, and United Church Women working through the auspices of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Women's Job Corps of the federal government. In Des Moines, this new program translated into the "Annual Job Opportunities Clinic for Women;" these clinics were a series of workshops "designed to help the mature woman entering or re-entering the business field."¹³

In 1965, the Des Moines office established the Women's Job Corps Screening Center of WICS, under the auspices of the War on Poverty, and was heavily recruiting young women to positions of employment. Over one hundred UCW women

¹² "State Projects," in "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," October 1961, 2; and "State Projects," in United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," April 1962, 2, CWU-SUNJ.

¹³ "Going Back to Work?" in the "Des Moines Council of United Church Women" newsletter, October 1960, 1, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

volunteered as recruiters and screeners to place eligible women in poverty into successful opportunities, thereby changing their futures.¹⁴ As Mrs. John Bookhart, WICS regional director, put it, "We ask for volunteers to create self-respecting, self-supporting children of God out of girls who think they're not worth bothering about."¹⁵ Eligible young women were sent to training centers around the country where they were housed, fed, and instructed on successful living techniques, as well as enrolled in educational institutions.

In their first year, the Iowa volunteers placed thirty-eight young women in eight centers "from Poland Springs, Maine to Los Angeles, [including] five who were among the first arrivals at the Clinton, Iowa, Center" in June of 1966. The women's biggest obstacle was the lack of funding for the program at the federal government level; due to budgetary constraints the funding for WICS was sporadic in nature. Nevertheless, between funding periods the local women interviewed interested young women, visited homes, and counseled several hundred more girls, including

¹⁴ Virginia Kunzman, "United Church Women," in "Des Moines Area Council of Churches Annual Meeting Bulletin," 7 February 1966, CWU-IWA-UIL; and Mrs. Jack T. Watson, "letter to The Honorable John C. Culver," 19 July 1966, TMs, CWU-SHSI.

¹⁵ "Annual Meeting Highlights," in "Iowa Instigator: United Church Women of Iowa" newsletter, October 1966, "History of Iowa UCW" scrapbook, CWU-IWA-UIL.

375 in the months of April, May, and June alone, and referred them to local agencies willing to help.¹⁶

Moreover, the women cared how these young women were handling these changes; "Being a Real Person" program was a weekly meeting for young women and UCW members to address problems of the newly employed, spiritually and physically.¹⁷ Additionally, the UCW volunteers freely admitted that they had themselves learned a great deal about the problems of poverty, especially as it manifested itself within the state of Iowa. In their letters to their Representative John C. Culver, they continually encouraged him to do all he could to get the funding increased and maintained:

Maybe across the country in the 109 other WICS Screening Centers, women will be finding newer and better ways to help in this challenging task that will not be completed in our generation, and as it is new, we are pleased to be a part of it. Be sure this, or something better, is included in the new law that is written.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Annual Meeting Highlights," in "Iowa Instigator: United Church Women of Iowa" newsletter, October 1966, "History of Iowa UCW" scrapbook, CWU-IWA-UIL.

¹⁷ "Being a Real Person," in "United Church Women of the Des Moines Area" newsletter, February 1963, Des Moines Scrapbook, 1963-1965; and Mrs. Jack T. Watson, "letter to The Honorable John C. Culver," 19 July 1966, TMs, CWU-SHSI. Comparable information is available from the "United Church Women of New Jersey Newsletter," Spring 1965, CWU-SUNJ.

¹⁸ Mrs. Jack T. Watson, "letter to The Honorable John C. Culver," 19 July 1966, TMs, CWU-SHSI.

Here was an opportunity to do more than merely study about the issues of poverty; this was a chance to implement the study theme of "Affluence-Poverty."¹⁹

Building upon UCW's past relationships with American presidents, President Kennedy, and later President Johnson, systematically included UCW leaders in various White House conferences such as the National Conference for Aging, Migrant Study Conference, Conference on Disarmament, Conference on Race Relations, and ultimately Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women. State presidents were regularly included in state commissions on the status of women. Likewise, some cities' commissions included local presidents, just as did the Anti-Poverty and Human Rights Commissions that developed by the mid-1960s all across the country.²⁰

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Kennedy's presidential Commission on the Status of Women was not the first time that UCW had tackled that issue. For the rights of women was an area where they stepped out early and continued to be in the forefront. The

¹⁹ Lois Watson, letter to Carmen Moeckley, 26 July 1966, TMs, CWU-SHSI.

²⁰ *The Church Woman* and multiple state newsletters announced individual women attending such conferences to represent United Church Women throughout this period, starting with Mary E. Woolley in 1933.

quest for ordination began in the mid-nineteenth century and still continues in some denominations. The Church leadership question has been a mixed bag; some churches still refuse women in church leadership positions even today. However, Cynthia Wedel, after serving as president of United Church Women from 1955-1958, served as president of the National Council of Churches from 1969-1972, a fact that many women of the fifties would never have dreamed possible.

The UCW members of the fifties were excited when Mossie Wyker, president of UCW, called for "a study made by United Church Women of the status of women within the communions of the National Council of Churches" to be reported at the 1953 Assembly.²¹ This was an exciting first step for those women who had long chafed at raising the money and yet having no voice in policy-making. The ensuing questionnaire was sent to "the president of women's work and the executive in each of the twenty-nine constituent communions of the National Council." The accompanying letter requested "that committees be composed of the national president of women's work with her executive, three women, three theologians and two male

²¹ "Executive Board Minutes," May 1952, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

administrators." The study focused on "participation of women in policy making and the ordination of women."²²

The committee charged to handle this survey reported back to UCW board of managers in September 1953 and to the UCW General Assembly and NCC executive board in October 1953. The report itemized the standing of women as pertained to the two questions in each of the denominations at the national level. The findings reported that women were at least nominally involved in leadership positions in most of the communions, with most of the women involved in the missionary areas, with one notable exception being the total denial of female leadership roles within the Protestant Episcopal Church. Seven communions reported a policy of no ordination of women; those churches were: Evangelical United Brethren, Augustana Lutheran, United Lutheran, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Protestant Episcopal, and the Reformed Church in America.²³

The General Assembly of United Church Women accepted this report and voted to send copies to the NCC, the denominational boards participating in the NCC, and to the

²² "Report of the General Department of Church Women," 1952, 2; and "Service and Status of Women," 22 September 1953, 1, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

²³ "Service and Status of Women," 22 September 1953, 1; "Status of Women," in "Minutes of Sixth National General Assembly, 1953, 3; and "Executive Board Minutes," 1953, 5, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

women's organizations participating in the UCW. They further recommended that a special committee be established to study the findings as they related to the "life of the church as a whole," and to form recommendations for improvements, specifically in the area of ordination. Finally, they requested that the NCC keep records "as to the status and services of women in the churches," and to keep communication with the World Council of Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and to forward all applicable materials to the appropriate boards.²⁴

The NCC board of managers voted to accept each of the recommendations and urged the women to continue with their study. They further recommended the committee "contact the denominations urging them to include women" at all levels of representation; UCW establish a committee to develop "criteria for the participation of councils of church women in state and local councils of churches;" that "denominational and interdenominational leadership training schools and institutes include guidance for training women to serve on policy making levels;" and "the Committee on the Study of the Status of Women encourage the ordination of women since they have a vital place to fill in meeting the needs of our churches;" that UCW President Wyker's

²⁴ "Status of Women," in "Minutes of Sixth National General Assembly, 1953, 3, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

book, *In the Scheme of Things*, be used for study at "the six interdenominational Missionary Education Summer Conferences" sponsored by the NCC in 1954 with a study guide prepared by the committee; and lastly, that the committee develop a list of "recommended women speakers" available for "local, state and national conference and convention program committees."²⁵ This foray into advocating for women was a successful beginning. The hard work lay ahead.

In March of 1958, the UCW leaders and leaders of the NCC Department of the Church and Economic Life met in Greenwich, Connecticut, to hold a conference on Employed Women and the Church.²⁶ This path-breaking meeting, led by the UCW, informed the church of new sociological studies in the area of employment and the repercussions for women, families, and churches. Elma Greenwood reported some startling statistics: 22,000,000 women were employed outside the home, making up one-third of the labor force. 6,000,000 of these women were single and the remaining 16,000,000 are married women. Thelma Stevens listed reasons why women were working: "1. Basic reason - economic need in

²⁵ "Minutes of Executive Board of the National Council of Churches," 22 October 1953, 5, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

²⁶ Cynthia Wedel, "Implications of the Employed Woman for the Church," paper presented to the Joint Consultation on Employed Women and the Church," 18 March 1958; and "Minutes of Executive Board," 30 April 1958, TMs, 12-13, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

today's world - needs of family. 2. Desire for more income to do extra things and buy extra things. 3. Desire for self-expression. 4. Desire to serve the community. 5. Boredom with household duties. Free time given by labor-saving devices. 6. Disaster motive." Stevens explained the disaster motive by the fact that "5,000,000 of the working married women are sole breadwinners for families," as a result of death and divorce.²⁷

Cynthia Wedel discussed the issues of scheduling conflicts between working women and church events and the resultant implications for the family and Church. Though UCW leaders were college educated and of the upper-middle class, they were cognizant of the fact that most of their membership was middle class and working class and had, therefore, pushed units to hold evening meetings, either to fit around child-care schedules or employment schedules. Des Moines had held evening and afternoon meetings ever since the 1930s, as had units in Minneapolis and New Jersey. The leaders worked hard to contain large assemblies in as few days as possible to encourage larger participation rates. However, the Church as a whole had done little to address working women's schedule problems. This conference was an opportunity to think creatively

²⁷ "Minutes of Executive Board," 30 April 1958, TMs, 12, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

about alternative dates and times for events in order to encourage working women's involvement. Moreover, the whole volunteer leadership corps of the Church was another equally important issue to consider. The majority of churches in America relied heavily upon women to care for the cleaning and dressing of the church, to run Sunday School and Bible School programs, to cook meals and run bazaars. As more women entered the full-time paid workforce, the work was falling on fewer backs.²⁸

From the other perspective, the conference addressed the ways the Church could help women as they entered or re-entered the paid workforce. Esther C. Stamats discussed some difficulties for women seeking employment. Women's education levels were not equal to the job market of the day; training programs were needed across the nation. The Church could offer some adult education classes and help with basic job interview skills, but companies needed to offer training to facilitate this new worker. Child care centers were needed. School schedules needed to be adjusted. Juvenile delinquency was on the rise and how was the Church going to respond? Churches needed to work to support families in all their forms, especially in the case

²⁸ Cynthia Wedel, "Implications of the Employed Woman for the Church," paper presented to the Joint Consultation on Employed Women and the Church," 18 March 1958; and "Minutes of Executive Board," 30 April 1958, TMs, 12-13, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

of divorce. Attitudes needed to be adjusted, at the individual, Church, community, and national level. The ultimate decision was that UCW should hold "another conference on employed persons (men and women) and the Church."²⁹

An additional outcome of that conference was the development of a special program that placed former president, Mossie Wyker, as Special Representative of United Church Women to explore the professional work of women in the Church.³⁰ Wyker met with divinity students at Yale Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and The College of the Bible, in Lexington, Kentucky. Besides traveling around the nation to visit with divinity students, while focusing on Kentucky, Virginia, and Ohio, Wyker was also to be a special liaison with the Southern Office of NCC, and promote attendance at the Assembly of UCW. UCW was trying to reach out to female seminary students to learn about their experiences and promote women moving into the ministry. Those graduating were questioned to learn what their states were telling them as to their possibilities. One respondent stated, "one

²⁹ "Minutes of Executive Board," 30 April 1958, TMs, 12-13, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

³⁰ "Minutes of Executive Board," 4 October 1960, 1-2; Mossie Wyker, "Special Representative," report given to Board of Managers, Appendix J, 1-3 May 1962, 1-2; and "Secretarial Conference," 6 November 1963, 1-2, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

executive suggested that these students should take typing and shorthand during seminary years, start in as a minister's secretary, and work up from there." With this kind of response, Wyker's job gradually moved into also working with women serving as ministers to develop lines of communication with UCW.³¹

In July 1962, NCC General Secretary Roy G. Ross called for another survey of denominational attitudes toward women in leadership. Again very few, seventeen, communions answered the call (there were sixteen responses in the 1952 study) and the results showed little change, except that four more churches had begun ordaining women since the earlier study. Thus Ross, in presenting the results of the study, produced a formal pronouncement on "The Status of Women" which was adopted by the General Board on 7 June 1963. In this statement, the NCC noted that the Christian faith led to an elevation of women's role and status, that the United Nations had "made significant strides" in the direction of women's equality, and that the United States now faced "new opportunities to cooperate with other nations in these matters," therefore the NCC "expresses strong support for prompt presentation to and ratification

³¹ "Minutes of Executive Board," 4 October 1960, 1-2; Mossie Wyker, "Special Representative," report given to Board of Managers, Appendix J, 1-3 May 1962, 1-2; and "Secretarial Conference," 6 November 1963, 1-2, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

by the United States Senate of the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage." Further, the NCC "commends to the churches in our constituency and to their individual members further study and action with regard to the Convention on Consent to Marriage and new initiatives of study and appropriate action on the status of women." The women of UCW had been working on this issue and pushing their Congressmen for years, so it was nice to finally have the NCC backing, though galling at the same time. Just as with their calls for peace in the 1930s and their calls for racial integration and cooperation in the 1940s, the women worked for years promoting issues and then finally the Protestant Establishment caught up and made a grand pronouncement.

More importantly, the women went about promoting their continuing feminism in more ordinary ways, as well. The May Fellowship Day theme for 1963 was "One Family Under God: Genuine and Full Participation." The program was broken into three areas of study: Women in Worship, Women in Work, and Women in Witness.³² In Minneapolis, in preparation for this special day of worship, The Reverend Helen G. MacRobert Galazka wrote a public service announcement wherein she stated the three important trends of the day:

³² Mrs. Graydon Kilborn, "May Fellowship Day," in "United Church Women of Greater Minneapolis: Annual Report, 1963," 2-3, CWU-MHS.

- 1) Less 'busy-ness' and more thoughtful activity. Woman has come out of the Church kitchen into the Study.
- 2) More emphasis on the Social Gospel - on translating religion into action.
- 3) More participation in Church organizations, not as separate entity, but on an equal footing with men. Women are much less concerned with being the mercy makers and more involved in being policy makers.³³

Clearly Galazka and other United Church Women were comfortable with their unheralded feminism even as they were turning the church hierarchy upside down, for this belief was of longstanding in their Social Gospel work.

In the minutes for the January 1962 meeting of the Afternoon Unit of the Des Moines Council of United Church Women, Eileen Rowat, writing about the program given by Alice Meyers, Executive Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. on the establishment of rights in the United States, records, "We, as women, need to be honestly aware of our strengths."³⁴ UCW members had often in the past discussed human rights around the globe for all humanity, now they were contemplating rights as they applied to women in the United States and to themselves specifically. Even in signing her report, this emerging sense of self-confidence shown through, for she signed it "Eileen Rowat (Mrs. Robert)" instead of the usual

³³ Helen G. MacRobert Galazka, "Trends in Women's Work in the Church on the Ecumenical Level," 21 March 1963, CWU-MHS.

³⁴ Eileen Rowat, "Minutes of the Afternoon Unit of the Des Moines Council of United Church Women," 8 January 1962, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

"Mrs. Robert Rowat," as previous secretaries had done.³⁵ Starting in 1960, letters were signed by the woman's given name and married last name while still being typed as Mrs. So-and-So. This transition to the above appellation is interesting. In this case, being part of a multi-racial group may have actually hindered the women's claiming of their given names, for the women were fully cognizant of the disrespect given minority women in the past with the refusal to address them more formally. Yet, one can also make the case that these women were perhaps using their given names in public before the rest of society was willing to make that transition, for newspapers still insisted on referring to women by their husbands' names. These may be mundane issues, but they were important markers in the independence of thought these women were continually developing.

³⁵ Eileen Rowat, "The Afternoon Unit of the Des Moines Council of United Church Women," 8 January 1962, TMs, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI. Rowat's immediate predecessor signed her name "Jo (Mrs. Fred) Kessler. Cecile Wry, new president of the Des Moines Council in 1962, signed her letters in the newsletter as "Cecile Wry." Other offices were mixed in signage: the March newsletter featured "Mrs. Mildred Raffensperger," "Mary Kurtz," "Ethel Bechwith," and Mrs. Ralph Hitz." By the end of 1962 all the articles for the Des Moines newsletter were signed by given names while the articles continued to reference Mrs. So-and-So. Mrs. Carl Bjorklund signed her name "Myrtle E. Bjorklund" of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Church Women on 7 January 1960, though it was typed as "Mrs. Carl Bjorklund." And the women in the New Jersey newsletter of 1960 signed their given names to their articles; however none of the documents from North Carolina carried given names showing perhaps a slower movement to that usage in the South.

Their ever more prominent feminism also affected their faltering relationship with the NCC. Although one of the founding organizations, UCW had always maintained their independence, insisting that within the organizing papers they were to be "affiliated" rather than "within," and yet since the very first meeting in 1950 they had been subsumed under the male leadership of the national council. That position, however, did not stop the women when they believed they were right. Margaret Shannon, former UCW director retold the story of Mossie Wyker and the NCC board in the following exchange:

The Department Board of Managers [of UCW, under the leadership of Mossie Wyker,] had acted on a number of things such as universal military training and the pollution of the Japanese fishing areas by occupation forces. Dr. Roswell Barnes [president of the NCC] was always sympathetic to the women, but dutifully reminded Mrs. Wyker that such public statements were to be cleared through the Council officers. Mrs. Wyker apologized profusely: "The women wouldn't embarrass the Council for anything. We promise not to do it again—well, not unless our conscience tells us to!" She explained carefully that the women felt the Holy Spirit moving through their meeting and were unanimous in their decision. "The men never know what to do or say when we talk about the Holy Spirit!" she told me once with a chuckle.

Shannon goes on to explicate:

Church women knew who they were and what it was they were free to do in their own sphere. They had no property or ecclesiastical tradition to protect. Their destiny was not to bring the world

into the walls of their divided churches, but to bring to bear their Christian convictions in the places where they lived. They were advocates for those persecuted for righteousness sake. They kept the vision of the Kingdom of God on earth; yet in the times in which they lived, they steadily sought to fill the circle of the possible.³⁶

In 1950, the NCC represented councils in 40 states and 875 communities, with delegates from 29 member denominations, and was composed of professionals; the UCW was composed of volunteers who represented councils in all 48 states and 1800 communities, with active membership from 89 different churches, most of whom were not members of the NCC and therefore could not be on official boards. As the voice for all women within the Protestant tradition, the NCC needed the UCW numbers and dollars far more than the UCW needed the NCC. Furthermore, the constant tension of actions followed by apologies, or pleading for permission wore on everyone involved.

By 1966, the position of United Church Women within the National Council of Churches was becoming more difficult to navigate. Therefore, in October of 1966, the women held a National Board of Managers meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, to discuss the continuing conflict. State leaders struggled with their situation for they supported the

³⁶ Margaret Shannon, *Just Because: The Story of the National Movement of Church Women United in the U.S.A., 1941 through 1975* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1977), 59.

ecumenical movement. The women had leant their monetary resources and vast membership to the development of the national council; however they needed their independence to continue the vitality of their movement. The insistence of the male-dominated NCC to have final approval of the women's budget and program was galling to say the least, and downright destructive to the autonomy of the various council levels.

So at their historic meeting in Omaha, the leaders voted to rename themselves to reiterate their sense of movement and autonomy; thus was born Church Women United. Throughout the year of 1967, national, state, and local councils amended their by-laws to reflect the name change, and tellingly to streamline their governing structure. The final break came just one year later when CWU left the NCC and regained their independence; no longer would the women have to justify their actions or their budget to the male hierarchy of the church. Their new sense of identity was proudly proclaimed with their new motto, "On our way together," or as the Iowa CWU Historian enlarged it: "toward a more complete unity and wholeness in Christ. We are now a movement with a mission—our goal to move on toward new dimensions in worship, life, and Christian

witness." ³⁷ Or, as the Minneapolis president stated, "Another key is our present knowledge that the power of love and hope can overcome despair and strife by direct action with people and not merely service for them." ³⁸ Or, more simply as the North Carolina report put it, "Church Women United is a plan of participation."³⁹ This new independence allowed the women to more readily meet the needs of their members and emphasize their heritage of action over study.

One of those areas of disagreement was the inclusion of non-NCC members in CWU activities, such as the inter-faith meeting held for World Day of Prayer in February 1967. The year's theme of "The Ecumenical Woman" encouraged the local councils to reach outside of their usual parameters and include Roman Catholic and Jewish women to join them in special observances. In the newspaper coverage of the occasion a minister explained, "[Prayer] is love acted out to my neighbor who may or may not be a Christian and may or may not be my denomination." Mrs. F. L. Docken, state chairman of World Day of Prayer, considered it "amazing and thrilling" to have the inclusion of groups not

³⁷ "History of Church Women United in Iowa," TMs, circa 1968, CWU-IWA-UIL.

³⁸ Mrs. George A. Forchas, "Church Women United of Greater Minneapolis: Annual Report, 1967," TMs, 1, CWU-MHS.

³⁹ Mrs. Robert J. Kepley, "Program Concern," in "Abridged Minutes, 1967," TMs, 11, GGJ-UNC.

within the NCC.⁴⁰ Though the women had celebrated National Brotherhood Day with Roman Catholic and Jewish women since the early years of the century, this was the first time they opened their doors for one of their religious observances. Again, the NCC was not happy—they did not approve of inclusion beyond the confines of their represented communions.

Likewise, the May Fellowship Day's theme of "How Can All Share?" and the explicit inclusion again of Roman Catholic and Jewish women into their religious celebration of world friendship went against NCC policy of not including non-member organizations. World Community Day's theme of "Who Shall Separate Us?" included a study book of *Church Women United for Peace* and councils held panel discussions entitled: World Peace: A Dialogue on Vietnam. Therefore, it seemed necessary to broaden their congregation and presenters in their effort to make the most inclusive arguments as they articulated their "misgiving [with] the situation in the Middle East," and "the continued suppression of freedom among the so easily forgotten people behind the Iron Curtain in Europe," and "above all, we deplore the prolongation of the war in

⁴⁰ "United Church Women of Iowa," letter from Iowa UCW President to Presidents of Local Councils, TMS, 10 January 1967; and Frances Craig, "A Day of 'Love to My Neighbor,'" *The Des Moines Register*, 3 February 1967, CWU-IWA-UIL.

Vietnam." As in other cities across the nation, 450 women in attendance in Minneapolis signed a petition calling on President Johnson to "work through the United Nations, using every power at his command to negotiate a speedy and honorable peace." They further "urged our members to pray for the President in the loneliness of his office" and "urgently appeal to him so to act, under the guidance of God, in this time of crisis, that America may fulfill her role as a peace-seeking, peace-loving and peace-making nation." As the Minneapolis Chairperson for Legislation, stated in her report, "There are many places where church women can be effective and one of these is in promoting the passage of legislation dealing with social concerns."⁴¹ Just as with race relations, the women were well ahead of the NCC in their anti-war efforts.

Another social concern they tackled head-on dealt with the issue of reproductive choice. By 1966, groups around the country were discussing the need for safe, affordable, legal abortion and CWU was a part of that discussion. Women in Minnesota reported legislative discussion on legalizing abortion, though no action was passed.⁴² Members were

⁴¹ "Resolution," TMs, 3 November 1967; and Mrs. Theodore A. Olson, "Legislation," in "Church Women United of Greater Minneapolis: Annual Report, 1967," TMs, 5-7, CWU-MHS.

⁴² Mrs. Theodore A. Olson, "Legislation," in "Church Women United of Greater Minneapolis: Annual Report, 1967," TMs, CWU-MHS.

acutely aware of the need for alternatives to continuous child-bearing for professional women in terms of their career, and the emotional and economic costs for working women as well as work-at-home women. Their work with the anti-poverty programs, mentally ill, retarded, and minority groups made them sensitive to the issues surrounding reproduction; this was not the eugenics of old, rather it was a genuine belief in women's ability to make their own decisions.

As with most of America at the time, little else was mentioned in the records until the national Board of Managers of Church Women United issued a formal resolution on 19 March 1970. The statement read as follows:

Our Christian concern for the human rights of all persons, whether as individuals or as groups, compels us to support the right of women to make the final decision about termination of an unwanted pregnancy in which a woman has strong reason for not bearing a child. Therefore, we believe the current abortion laws that deny this fundamental right should be repealed.

The statement went on to express the board's opinion that abortion was now a safe procedure and the "current laws force into dangerous situations and discriminate particularly against the poor woman." The board recognized that though there were "a variety of opinions about when life becomes human, laws of the state should not bind all

women to one view." The board further recognized that "a woman does not make a decision for abortion easily or lightly," but the decision must be hers for "she is the one who is required to go through the pregnancy and childbirth and will be expected by society to be primarily responsible for any child that is born." The board "recognizes that within our constituency there are some women who belong to communions who do not agree with this statement, but we believe that our unity is strong enough to contain varied opinions."⁴³

This first resolution on record was followed three years later, shortly after the *Roe v. Wade* decision was announced, by another more detailed announcement. This statement reiterated the complexity of the issue and the respect which various communities of faith have for each other. It also expressed the board's "conviction that no one is really 'pro-abortion' as such." The board then explained that polling data showed the wide variety of opinions across the Christian community, and within the Catholics and Protestants. They went on to explain about the "growing consciousness among some persons of the social evils that cause women to take the drastic step of

⁴³ "Resolution on Abortion," 19 March 1970, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

abortion, and a recognition of the need for more viable alternatives to abortion."⁴⁴

This issue of abortion became important at the same time that the National Council of Catholic Women were in negotiations to join the Church Women United. They had officially participated in WICS and WIM and joined in local activities on an ad hoc basis, but now they were "committing to be wholly of the same cloth."⁴⁵ Obviously, CWU welcomed fellow Christians into the fold, and welcomed the increased numbers, however there were now new wrinkles in the ease of decision-making with this more authoritarian-style communion. At another point in the board meeting there was discussion as to the procedure for issuing statements. "It was pointed out that a Board speaks only for itself and although the policy may reflect a general consensus through the constituency, any official statement should be dated so that it is known in what context the Board makes the official statement."⁴⁶ Clearly the abortion issue was going to cause controversy for the expanded Board.

⁴⁴ "Abortion Statement," 30 November 1973, CWU-GCAH-UCW.

⁴⁵ "Executive Committee Minutes," 30 November-2 December 1973, 9, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

⁴⁶ "Executive Committee Minutes," 30 November-2 December 1973, 10, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

* * * * *

Most Americans believe that women were content with their lives in their nuclear homes prior to the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s; this chapter has shown that some liberal Protestant women worked against that notion for one hundred years before that. The United Council of Church Women organized around the principle of equality in society and church. That organization struggled against consensus for thirty years, under a variety of names and programs. The women in this organization encountered struggles politically and educationally, and within their churches.

In 1948 and 1949 they worked with other Protestant organizations to develop one cohesive voice for Protestantism, the National Council of Churches. However, the alignment was never a happy one for the women. The women's voice was often too "cutting edge" for the predominately male NCC and caused a great deal of tension. Once again, the men wanted to use the women's money but not allow them a voice in decision making. Ultimately, they felt compelled to leave the NCC in 1968 in order to remain true to their theology of total equality and completeness of inclusivity. Copyright © Melinda Marie Johnson 2015

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The philosophy of peace and justice led Church Women United members in the twentieth century to work on social reform in their respective communities, and to study issues and find solutions for problems throughout the world, particularly problems that women, children, and the poor faced, such as acquiring adequate housing and education. While the group formed during an era of proliferating organizations and clubs focused on social reform, the Church Women United differed from other groups in three distinct ways.¹ First, these women organized as liberal Protestant Christians committed to social reform of their communities and women's total integration into the life of the church. Further, these women, believing in the inclusiveness philosophy of Jesus (as they understood it),

¹ Some other national groups with religious underpinnings that attacked social reform issues in the twentieth century included the Young Women's Christian Association(1894), National Association of Colored Women(1896), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People(1909), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom(1915), American Friends Service Committee(1917), Commission on Interracial Cooperation(1919), National Conference of Christians and Jews(1927), Congress of Racial Equality(1942), and Southern Christian Leadership Conference(1957).

organized across denominational lines rather than allow doctrinal differences to retard their important work of remaking the world in the image of heaven.

Second, the organization was racially inclusive. Again, they believed the lessons of the Biblical Jesus were for all human beings. Their founding convention refused to put into writing the obvious fact of their multiracial membership, for according to their understanding of the New Testament Jesus all people are equal, and only addressed the issue when they wrote this basic premise into its constitution noting, "This organization shall hold regular meetings as outlined below, it being understood that such meetings shall be under conditions in which there shall be no racial discrimination."² Their mission work in educating women throughout Asia and Africa, African American women in the South, and Native American women in the West during the previous century had shown these women the equality of all humanity. Furthermore, because of female exclusion from the decision-making hierarchy within their home denominations, these women knew the sting of inequality and exclusion and made sure that this new organization would be fully open at all levels to any Protestant woman.

² Martha H. Goedeke, "Minutes of Constituting Convention," 4, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

And finally, the organization formed, and still exists today, at local, state, and national levels. Although many organizations form in times and places of turmoil to address specific issues and then fade away, Church Women United arose from a century of multiple Christian missionary efforts and from denominational attempts to coordinate them. The leaders were convinced of the need for an interdenominational umbrella group to organize and promote issues as they arose and for the need for flexibility in their actions without denominational and/or theological constraints.

Thus, Church Women United, continuing their mission work of the past century, acted as a bridge between the Social Gospel and the Social Justice Movement and a bridge between the First Wave and Second Wave of Feminism. The organizers and their mothers were members of the former movements, and some organizers and their daughters were members of the latter movements. They continued with the same methods as their predecessors. Their special celebrations of World Day of Prayer, May Fellowship Day, and World Community Day were all devoted to praying for and educating about issues around the nation and the world, and to raising funds to improve conditions for those needy individuals.

Along with the longitudinal bridges across the years, the women also built horizontal bridges. Their work was often done in conjunction with other religious groups, such as American Friends Service Committee, Christian Youth Movement, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, National Catholic Women, National Conference of Christians and Jews, National Council of Churches of Christ of the United States of America, National Jewish Women, Southern Christian Leadership Council, Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Young Women's Christian Association. Moreover, they built bridges across secular lines as well; they aligned with groups such as, American Association of University Women, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Congress of Racial Equality, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Association of Colored Women, National Organization for Women, National Negro Women, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, along with uncounted local groups. These connections were important to strengthen their movement as well as to advance the problems they were trying to address. These connections laid the foundation for the bridges that were (and are) so important in the gradual eradication of inequality in women's lives around the globe.

Church Women United members did much to alleviate the pain and suffering around the world during the hot war days of World War Two, the Korean Conflict, and the war in Viet Nam and the Cold War days of the rest of the century. They assisted war refugees and victims of natural disasters with economic and material assistance. The movement worked hard to assist women in becoming economically independent through literacy programs and micro-lending programs. The women continually pushed for the development of the United Nations. Because of their decades of peace work, CWU leaders were present at the UN's inaugural meeting in San Francisco. The United Nations, recognizing they were the voice of millions of Protestant women in the United States, valued their allegiance to the peace effort and as such recognized the CWU as the first NGO, and allocated them office space within the beautiful new headquarters in New York City. The leaders continued to promote the UN's positive qualities to the nation across the decades of the latter half of the twentieth century, for they believed that only a supra-national organization could ensure peace for the future. They maintained an attitude of peace and worked hard to promote public policies that would build on peace efforts in world affairs.

Their second major initiative, the promotion of human equality, was a time-consuming effort that continues to this day. The fight to move Americans to accept people of color as equals was at times dangerous and always against the societal expectations of "ladies." But these church women, well ahead of their male counterparts in the larger Protestant Church, used their theology of love to move into directions that they believed were the dictate of Jesus of Nazareth. They surveyed communities to find their needs, petitioned governments to rectify those problems, and developed plans of their own to ameliorate the worst conditions. Through their studies and travels they engendered better understanding of humanity universally.

And lastly, they raised the status of women within society and within the Church. They early-on became aware of the need to push politically to change the status quo. Their political work earned the respect of politicians of both political parties and led to their inclusion in many government studies. Long before President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, CWU leaders had been studying those issues within the Church and the greater society. Protestant women's struggles to control their budgets for missions within their own denominations was largely lost by the mid-1930s, and so they moved outside of

the church hierarchy and formed their own interdenominational avenue to pursue their interests without male interference. Their push for church leadership positions and ordination were long struggles lasting over one hundred years, but they ultimately prevailed. Females in leadership positions and in the pulpit are common occurrences within most liberal Protestant churches today. As with the greater society, the Church eventually understood the great potential in enlisting the energies of all people, male and female.

In many ways, their struggles within larger Protestantism mirror women's struggles within society. As they left the National Council of Churches of Christ, they increased their independence and freedom to move where they felt the Spirit moving them, but they also lost public visibility when their feminist actions were no longer an anomaly. Likewise in society, their successes led to their decreasing visibility.

It is true that Church Women United are still included in government commissions, they still petition the government at all its various levels, and they still attack social inequities at all levels of society. However, now they are ignored by the local and national media. Part of this is the immense growth of NGOs, part of it is the

changing nature of newspapers as they did away with so-called "women's pages," and part of it is the increasing secularization of society. A larger issue has been the increasing backlash against women and the concomitant growth of conservative Protestantism with their diminution of women's status within the Church and society.

As the field of missiology has grown over the past two decades, much has been uncovered concerning the origins of this vast arena of women's activism. This study has attempted to recreate some of the highlights of liberal Protestant women's activism across the middle of the twentieth century; more work needs to be done in this interdenominational and inter-faith vein. In particular, study needs to focus on the backlash era of the past four decades. As the spotlight receded from progressive activism work still continued but little of it has been studied yet. The immense growth of middle-class women working full-time outside the home has forced these activist networks to get creative in their programming and scheduling. Historians have yet to study the effects of this major societal shift within this arena of reform.

However, the lack of public recognition has not deterred these women from continuing their efforts to bring real equality around the world, for their style of social

reform was never marching in the streets or being involved in public protests. No, they used their theology of love to work within the system to make the societal changes they felt were necessary.

The website, today, shows they have 1200 local and state units. They are composed of fifteen NGOs and thirty denominations. Their 2012-2016

Quadrennial Priorities

The Quadrennial Priorities presented here represent the accumulated wisdom and concern of women across the movement. These priorities are offered as general guideposts for this quadrennial as they allow a variety of specific actions to be taken in support of them according to the interests, knowledge, and skill set of each unit within CWU.

Bringing God's Shalom/Salaam to Our World

Summary of the 2012-2016 QP:

Local, state and national Church Women United units intentionally seek to be prayerfully informed and proactive in addressing the following issues from the perspective of women, children and families around the world:

- Health: Promote the health and well-being of all people.
- Environmental Care: Promote personal, communal and governmental decisions that express care for all God's creation.
- Justice: Promote shalom/salaam through understanding, education, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation and non-violence.
- Economic Justice: Promote dignity, safety, and economic opportunities for all people.³

They have decreased in size but their ambitions are still impressive.

³ <http://www.churchwomen.org>, accessed 28 October 2014.

Their 1976 statement sums-up nicely who they are; it reiterated the "Movement" aspect of Church Women United and the fact that it was non-hierarchical. Therefore any local council was open to making whatever stands it so chose. They closed their statement with this: "Church Women United has, on many occasions and in many places, been the bridge over which women from many faiths and backgrounds and points of view have walked together, sometimes agreeing to disagree, sometimes rejoicing in new-found insights and newly-experienced feelings."⁴

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⁴ "Concerning Abortion," August 1976, CWU-GCAH-UMC.

APPENDIX A

Timeline of Coordinating Efforts

- 1988---World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women
- 1901---Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions
- 1903---Council of Women for Home Missions
- 1912---Federation of Women's Boards of Foreign Missions
- 1924---Committee on Allied Christian Agencies
- 1928---National Commission of Protestant Church Women
- 1930---National Council of Federated Church Women
- 1938---National Committee of Church Women
- 1941---United Council of Church Women
- 1950---General Department of United Church Women of the National Council of the Churches of Christ
- 1966---United Church Women
- 1968---Church Women United

APPENDIX B

1908 Methodist Social Creed

The Methodist Episcopal Church stands:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, injuries and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of labor for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the suppression of the "sweating system."

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, with work for all; and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life.

For the release for [from] employment one day in seven.

For a living wage in every industry.

For the highest wage that each industry can afford, and for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.¹

¹ As found at: <http://archives.umc.org>

APPENDIX C

Federal Council of Churches "Social Creed" of 1908

We deem it the duty of all Christian people to concern themselves directly with certain practical industrial problems. To us it seems that the churches must stand:

- For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.
- For the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safeguarded against encroachments of every kind.
- For the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crises of industrial change.
- For the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.
- For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality.
- For the abolition of child labor.
- For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.
- For the suppression of the "sweating system."
- For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.
- For a release from employment one day in seven.
- For a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford.
- For the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.
- For suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury.
- For the abatement of poverty.

To the toilers of America and to those who by organized effort are seeking to lift the crushing burdens of the poor, and to reduce the hardships and uphold the dignity of labor, this Council sends the greeting of human brotherhood

and the pledge of sympathy and of help in a cause which belongs to all who follow Christ.²

² As found at <http://liberalslikechrist.org/about/socialcreed.html>

APPENDIX D

The Church Woman's Decalogue of Peace: A Statement of Principles

1. "War" in the words of the report of the Oxford Conference "is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in the world, and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ." We believe, therefore, that the church should seek to abolish war as a means of settling international disputes, and should never bless nor condone the war method.
2. We believe in the world mission of the Christian church, in the church as a world society composed of men and women of all races and nations, and in an orderly world community founded upon peace and justice.
3. We believe in international relations based upon respect for the rights of all men, and upon lawful and orderly processes in attaining justice for all peoples.
4. We believe that no nation has a right to be a law unto itself or the sole judge in its own cause, or to claim its rights without regard for the welfare of other nations and races.
5. We believe in international cooperation as the best means to prevent war, to advance peace with justice, and to remove the causes of war.
6. We believe that the United States should consult with other signatory states in the event of the violation of the Pact of Paris, or any treaty to which the United States is a party.
7. We believe in a policy of neutrality for the United States which will distinguish between the victim and the aggressor and withhold aid from a treaty breaking nation, thus, not obstructing the world community in its efforts to maintain peace.
8. We believe that the national defense policy of the United States should be based upon the defense of our soil and upon our commitments in our own hemisphere and under the Pact of Paris.
9. We believe in the reduction of armaments and the control of the munitions industry by international agreement.
10. We believe in freedom of conscience and in the right of every citizen to put his allegiance to God above his allegiance to the state.³

³ As found in *The Church Woman*, January 1939.

APPENDIX E

Study and Program Materials for 1958-1959

THEME: MIDDLE EAST

1. Adults

Middle East Pilgrimage--R. Park Johnson
New Voices, Old Worlds--Paul Geren
The Lands Between--John Badeau
Introducing Islam--J. Christy Wilson

2. Youth

Multitudes in the Valley--Dennis Baly
Caught in the Middle--Gloria Wysner
Pearls Are Made--Ann M. Harrison

3. Children

They Live in Bible Lands--Grace W. McGavran
The Thirsty Village--Dorothy Blatter
Deedee's Holiday--Jeanette Perkins Brown

THEME: NORTH AMERICAN NEIGHBORS

1. Adults

Concerns of a Continent--James Hoffman
The Shadows They Cast--Jeanette T. Harrington
This Is North America--Doris Darnell
This Is the Migrant--Louisa Rossiter Shotwell
Frontier Books
In the Shadow of Mount Royal--Mary Isabelle Milne
He Belonged to the West--Isobel McFadden

2. Youth

WHAT--Concerns North American Youth?--Sarah S. Parrott
Always an Answer--Alice Hudson Lewis

3. Children

Ten Pairs of Shoes--Mae Hurley Ashworth
Leo of Alaska--Edith Agnew
Flaco--Dorothy Westlake Andrews
Mateo of Mexico--Ella Huff Kepple
Manuel: A Little Boy of Mexico and Rosita: A Little Girl of Puerto Rico--Jeanette Perkins Brown

Maps, plays, etc., may be secured from Friendship Press, 257 Fourth Ave, New York 10, N.Y., or your own denominational Literature Headquarters.

Visual Aids on Current Mission Themes
available from
The Methodist Book Center
615 Tenth Street Des Moines 9, Iowa

Home Missions - Christian Concerns of North American
Neighbors

- North American Neighbors*—16 mm. film, 27 minutes—This new film gives a forceful presentation of the way of life of our continental neighborhood, from Alaska to the Caribbean.
- Again Pioneers*—16 mm. film, 72 minutes—Struggles of a migrant family.
- Christian Frontiers in Alaska*—SFS (filmstrip with recording), color—Beautiful photography of scenery, people, and Methodist projects in Alaska.
- Children of the Harvest*—color filmstrip, script for adults and children—Deals with conditions and problems of migrant workers.
- Heart of the Neighborhood*—16 mm., color, 30 minutes—Marcy Center in Chicago.
- It's a Busy Life*—SFS, 91 frames, 10 minutes—A message for all Methodist women. Mrs. Busy's solution for her harassed life inspires rededication.
- The New Commandment*—SFS—Recognition of basic human rights for minority groups.
- Our Newest Neighbors*—filmstrip—Spanish-speaking Americans from Puerto Rico.
- Stranger at Our Door*—16 mm., B&W, 20 minutes—Difficulties of refugee family.
- They, Too, Need Christ*—16 mm., B&W, 40 minutes—Dramatic story of a Spanish-speaking family in the U.S.
- What Happened to Hannah*—SFS, color, 17 minutes—Depicts what happens when a congregation becomes aware of social ills.

Foreign Missions - The Middle East

- Mid-East Profile*—16 mm., color, 28 ½ minutes—Explores the conflicting forces at work in the Mid-East and presents opportunities open to Christian missions.
- Village Reborn*—color filmstrip, 70 frames—Inspiring story of a literacy class in a village church revolutionizing the life of an entire Egyptian community.

Assignment in Unity—color filmstrip, 70 frames—Subtitle, "Your Church and the World Council of Churches."
The Long Stride—16 mm., B&W, 28 ½ minutes—A dramatic documentary picture of our Methodist Overseas Relief Work.
South of the Clouds—16 mm., B&W, 35 minutes—On Mid-East-theme, this film is a challenging story of life in a Christian college in Beirut, Lebanon.
 Recordings—two 15 minute programs on 33 1/3 record—"Boy without A Face" on Home Missions theme, and "State of Gaza" on Middle East theme.

Audio-Visuals Suggested in the Program Book of
 Woman's Societies of Christian Service and
 Wesleyan Service Guilds for 1958-1959

Methodism in Hawaii—color filmstrip and 33 1/3 rpm record.
Puerto Rico, Land of Hunger and Hope—color filmstrip—Showing a general view of Christian work in Puerto Rico.
Se Habla Espanol—color filmstrip—Featuring Spanish-Americans reached through Woman's Division projects.
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights—B&W filmstrip.
Christmas Customs Near and Far—16 mm., color.
Ceremonial Objects of Judaism—filmstrip—similar to World Beliefs series.
Literacy Unlocking the Bible and Literacy Opening Blind Eyes—color filmstrips—On Laubauch's work.
African Panorama—SFS—How the program of the churches are changing Africa.
To Rekindle the Gift—16 mm., color film—Picturing Woman's Division medical, educational, evangelistic, and rural work projects.
Full Measure for Childhood—SFS, 18 minutes—Viewing work of the Woman's Division in behalf of children
Right or Wrong?—16 mm., B&W—Problems of a teen-ager's gang in the city.
What Happened to Jo Jo—16 mm., B&W, 36 minutes—Young people of the church recognizing the needs on Mulberry Street.
City Story—16 mm., B&W, 44 minutes—Dramatic portrayal of problems of a downtown church.
None Goes His Way Alone—16 mm., B&W—A documentary on the rural church.
It Happened in Ionia—16 mm., B&W—Documented story of the program of leadership education in the First Methodist Church, Ionia, Michigan.

For the Children

Pablo of Costa Rica—color filmstrip—The story of a Christian boy as he plays, works for his widowed mother, attends school & church in Costa Rica.

Sea Shells and Coconuts—color filmstrip—Relating an appealing experience of the children of a Puerto Rican family.

A Puppy for Jose—color filmstrip—Story of a migrant boy (Mexican-American).⁴

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⁴ As found in "Des Moines Council of United Church Women School of Missions," 8 September 1958, Des Moines Scrapbook, CWU-SHSI.

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