

A Legacy of Missions



“It is a fact that God puts some great idea in every longing, human soul. At some point in our life—early or late—we feel a trembling, fearful longing to do some good thing, something different to help some good cause.” —*Nannie Helen Burroughs*

Nannie Helen Burroughs was a petite woman with a presence that stretched around the world. Her entire life revolved around the pursuit of her God-given mission to help African American women find ways to live triumphant lives and serve God. She is a heroine for Christian women everywhere.

Nannie Helen Burroughs served as leader of the woman’s convention, auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention, founded the National training School for Women and Girls in Washington, DC, in 1909 and used her skills as an editor, writer, speaker, and teacher to impact the lives and living conditions of thousands, both nationally and internationally. Find out more about Nannie Helen Burroughs at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nannie_Helen_Burroughs

The History of Woman’s Missionary Union and African Americans

The record of Woman’s Missionary Union® in race relations is to be applauded and should be made known to every present and potential African American woman who participates in Women on Mission. According to Dr. Emmanuel McCall, former Director of Black Church Relations for the North American Mission Board (formerly Home Mission Board), “In most instances, WMUs have prodded men in other denominations structures to take seriously racial reconciliation and interracial ministry.” Consider these facts:

- In the years before the formal establishment of WMU, Ann Graves of Baltimore solicited the support of African American churches when collecting funds for foreign missions with her mite boxes. Each woman was asked to set aside no less than two cents on the first day of each week.
- Annie Armstrong and the Maryland Baptist Home Mission Society worked with local black Baptists to establish an orphanage. They taught in and helped to fund schools for black children.
- In 1895, the first black woman spoke at a WMU annual meeting. In December 1896, the corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Foreign Mission Board, L.G. Jordan, requested the assistance of Annie Armstrong in establishing a women's missions organization in their convention.
- L.G. Jordan, his assistant Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Annie Armstrong established the National Baptist Woman's Auxiliary in 1897.
- During the 1940s, almost every state had a black staff member and administered camps for black children.
- The 1957–58 WMU Yearbook and the 1959 Guide for Community Missions implored women to support the laws that opened public facilities to all races.
- Throughout the controversial sixties, WMU publications supported racial reconciliation.
- In 1973, Margaret Thomas Perkins became the first African American woman to serve on the professional staff of WMU. She worked for nearly 20 years to strengthen missions education and involvement in SBC African American churches.
- In September of 1998, the WMU National African American Advisory Council was established.