HISTORY OF WOMAN'S WORK

IN THE

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

OF

AUSTELL, GEORGIA

Beginning with the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and ending with

The United Methodist Women
It was a rainy, chilly, disagreeable day in Boston on March 23, 1869, a Tuesday. Eight ladies met at the Tremont Street Church to plan for the conversion of the women of the whole world. They had sent notices of the meeting to twenty-six churches and had hoped for a much larger response but the inclement weather probably kept many away. The Tremont Street Church has been called "the Cathedral of Methodism". The eight who attended were Mrs. Flanders, Mrs. Rich, Mrs. Kingsbury, Mrs. Merrill, Mrs. Stoddard, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Parker.

From this beginning emerged the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. The first missionary sent from this group was Miss Isabella Thoburn who was sent to India. Four months later they voted to send Dr. Clara Swain, the first medical missionary, along with Miss Thoburn. In November 1869 the two women set sail from New York City to India. In 1876 Miss Emily Beeken sailed to Sierra Leone. In 1879 Lochie Rankin left for China and stayed for nearly fifty years. In 1881 Harriet Brittain was sent to Japan. In 1883 Flora Mitchel traveled from Boston to Atlanta for the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society to open Thay Industrial Home for young black women. And thus was born the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church.

Women had always been an important part of the church but in an unofficial capacity. They had always ministered to the sick in their community, had church suppers to make money to pay the preacher, and looked after the poor, the orphans and worked hard in any of the affairs of the church in which they could participate. But this was in their own community and not in the foreign field. And they had no official status.

On February 12, 1883, the women were given official recognition in the Austell Methodist Church for doing the things they had already been doing, attending church more faithfully, getting their children ready for Sunday
School, etc. On this date it was "ordered by the Conference that a Committee of four ladies be appointed to work in connection with the Board of Stewards, which consisted of Sisters E. C. Moore, Mrs. (Dr.) Medlock, Mrs. Goodrich and Mrs. MacKullins. The Conference also ordered that Mrs. Alice Mozley, Mrs. J. J. Parkerson, Mrs. S. H. Trents, and Mrs. Brinsfield be appointed as a committee to look after the sick". At this time Rev. W. W. Brinsfield was the Pastor-in-Charge.

Although there are no records of the exact date that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Austell Methodist Church was actually set up as such, in the second quarterly report to the Quarterly Conference on Missions in 1888 it stated that the mothers, sisters and wives organized into a Foreign Missionary Society and Aid Society. In the Conference Report for the third quarterly report of 1888, $1.00 was collected for foreign missions and in the fourth quarterly report for 1888, $40.00 was collected for foreign missions. Since there was no record of giving to the foreign field prior to this time, it is assumed that the Society devoted its efforts to the local church and the local community.

Our quarterly Conference reports give the following record of support in the foreign field:

In the minutes of the second quarterly report to the Conference, Rev. Brinsfield stated: "the money has been subscribed and the Woman's Foreign Society is doing a noble work".

The first quarterly report for 1890 shows that $1.50 was collected for foreign missions. It was also noted that the subject of foreign missions was being preached and collections taken.

The third quarterly report shows that $10.00 was collected for foreign missions.

In the first quarterly report to the Conference in 1891 it was stated
that "the Woman's Missionary Society was in active operation".

In the second report $29.00 was collected, in the third $13.00 was collected and in the fourth, $15.00 was collected for foreign missions.

No record of money for foreign missions was reported to the Conference in 1892 until the third quarter when $4.00 was recorded as given for foreign missions but it was reported that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was in active operation; and in the fourth quarterly report $31.50 was collected.

In 1893, first quarter $2.50 was collected for foreign missions, $30.25 for domestic missions, third quarter $2.00 for foreign missions and the fourth quarter $30.00 for foreign missions and $5.00 for domestic missions.

In 1894 the quarterly report shows that $30.00 was collected for foreign missions and $18.75 for domestic missions. During the fourth quarter of 1894 the meeting of the Carrollton District Foreign Missionary Society was held at the Austell Methodist Church, and "it was a spiritual feast to our church and community."

As can be seen by all of these reports, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was active in both foreign and local work, helping collect money for foreign missions and also taking care of the sick, visiting newcomers, having suppers to make money for the causes of the church and other things, and constantly growing in membership.

Our first records kept by the society itself begin in 1907 when Mrs. E. F. Morgan presented a record book of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society to the Society. It contained minutes from July 1907 to March, 1908. At that time there were 9 members, growing to 16. Their attendance varied from 8 to 12, and collections at the meetings were between $1.00 and $2.00. The Society was in charge of getting subscriptions to the Advocate and one report showed ten subscriptions churchwide.
At the March meeting in 1909, the names of Mrs. J. L. Causey and Mrs. C. D. Rutherford appear on the roll for the first time. It is interesting to know that they are both still living, Mrs. Causey being 102 years old and Mrs. Rutherford 97 years old, both having been devout Christians during all of those years and being active in the service of the Lord and the Church. At the September, 1909 meeting it is recorded that "mite boxes were distributed".

During this time the Society started meeting in the homes most of the time instead of at the Church as the weather was so cold to meet in the Church and they had to walk to wherever the meeting was held. At the January meeting it was recorded that only a few came as the weather was so extremely cold. This particular meeting was at Grandma Strickland's house and dues in the amount of 40¢ were collected.

The First Quarterly Conference report in 1911 showed that $70.00 was collected for foreign missions and $62.00 for home and Conference missions.

By this time the membership had grown to 21 members. At the May meeting in 1911 the members discussed buying a davenport for the parsonage and having a rummage sale to make money to buy it. At one meeting it was moved to buy lace curtains for the parsonage and Mrs. May Woodall was appointed to buy the curtains. Mrs. Woodall was a wonderful Christian and was very active in the Society during all of these years. She was the president over and over and when she was not president she had other offices.

Rev. Speer reported on April 13, 1912 that "the ladies are doing good works" and in July he reported that "our sisters have both the foreign and home missionary society. The pastor is persuaded that the work is Growing in missionary interest".

At this time the report from the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was as follows:
"Since the last report we have spent $107.87 for new carpet for the Church floor and painting the floor, $30.00 for davenport for the parsonage, $8.00 of which was paid by the Lithia Springs Church, $1.99 spent for material making screens for the parsonage, $9.00 for upholstering pulpit chairs, $8.13 for parsonage floors, grand total since last quarterly Conference $156.99, leaving a balance in treasury of $5.71, for foreign work $61.00. We accepted for this year foreign missions $25.00, home missions $5.00. We are encouraged, we are growing. Yours in Christ, Mrs. Woodall, President, Mrs. Cureton, Recording Secretary".

At a meeting in April, 1913 mention was made of getting up a box for the Orphans Home and also a committee was appointed to visit "sick strangers".

In June, 1913 the Society met at the home of Mrs. Cureton, the ladies carrying lunches and spending the day out in the country, bringing their sewing and finger work. They enjoyed their lunch outside under the oak trees and a good time was had by all of those present.

Since we do not have minutes of the Missionary Society during this time, we have had to glean what information we could from the reports to the Quarterly Conference which are as follows: In 1919 Rev. Lawrence W. Neff, the pastor in charge, reported that the Woman's Missionary Society was doing good, faithful work and the junior society, recently organized, was meeting with encouraging success. In the third quarterly report for 1919, it was reported that the members of the foreign and home department were 15, and in the local aid department there were 15; received and sent in from the foreign and home $17.64. This included three quarters, received in local aid $35.16, spent in local aid $20.96, balance on hand $14.26.

In the May, 1920 report to the quarterly conference it stated that the Woman's Missionary Society at Austell was doing good work in the religious instruction of the children. The July 25, 1920 report showed that $30.00 was
collected for Armenian Relief. It was also reported that the Missionary Society was doing good work in all departments except the Young People's Division. In the November, 1920 report the total membership in the Missionary Society was 18, amount collected $54.15, Aid and Home Department $21.35, a total of $76.00. Spent on the parsonage $34.00, grand total for 1920 $110.00.

In the August, 1921 report to the Conference it was stated that $10.00 was given for Armenian Relief. While it does not specifically mention that the Woman's Missionary Society was responsible for this, they probably had a hand in it. On September 30, 1921, the Woman's Missionary Society reported 16 members, 2 members subscribing to "Voice", amount spent for local work $15.25, amount sent to Conference treasurer $31.02.

In the second quarterly report of April 1, 1922 Rev. W. W. Cash reported that the Woman's Missionary Society had taken on new life and was growing. The Bible Class and the Junior Department were making the greatest progress. In the August 10 report the pastor stated that the Woman's Missionary Society was still working and making some progress. In the fourth quarterly report he stated that $16.00 was given for Japan Relief. It also stated that the society was doing good work among the women and children.

In the third quarterly report for 1924 and 1925 it was reported that the Woman's Missionary Society had made its very best report for the last quarter. These women are striving to do their work in the most helpful way. Their work is a source of strength to the pastor and to the whole work of the church. This report was made by Rev. Stephens. In this report $9.20 was given for relief of the poor. In the October report for 1924 and ending October 1, 1925 it stated as follows: Dues $47.65; Pledge $12.50; Week of Prayer $3.10; Bell Bennett Fund $10.00; Scarritt Loan Fund $4.00; Total $77.25; Local $25.40, Signed by Mrs. C. T. Perkerson, Treasurer.

The 1925-26 report shows the Woman's Missionary Society as doing the most
acceptable work. They are well organized. The report of the Woman's Missionary Society for September 30, 1925 to September 30, 1926 shows dues $60.00; Bell Bennet $55.00; Total $115.00; Number of members, 31; Money spent on Local work $43.20, signed by Rev. J. W. Stephens.

The first quarterly report of 1927 shows the society as having a large and strong membership and doing very effective work, that they have an inordinately fair missionary spirit. Respectfully submitted by Rev. F. S. Hudson. At the second quarterly Conference it states that the Missionary Society is being very active and doing valiant work; that the amount of money for missions for the quarter was $8.21. The third quarterly report to the Conference states that Austell has a good Missionary Society and makes regular contributions to missions. The fourth quarterly report of the Woman's Missionary Society from September 30, 1926 to September 30, 1927 is as follows; No. of members enrolled, 23; dues collected $52.50; Spent on local work $27.78; Memorial Fund $19.35; Week of Prayer $4.65; Total $104.28. Signed by Mrs. C. T. Perkerson, Treasurer.

The report of the Woman's Missionary Society for March 25, 1928 shows $6.61 raised for missions; In the third quarterly report to the Conference it stated that the Missionary Society was active but was not represented at the recent Conference of the Woman's Missionary Society of the District. The report for the fourth quarter shows number of members, 21; Juniors, 15; "Missionary Voice" subscriptions, 9; amount sent to Conference treasurer from October, 1927 to 1928, $54.20; Special $5.00; Local work $17.84; Juvenile $4.58; Total $81.67; signed by Mrs. J. M. Strickland, President.

In 1929 the following report for the third quarter ending September 30: No. of members 19; amount sent to Conference Treasurer $15.25; Juvenile $5.00; Total $18.25; Spent locally $5.05. All departments in good working order and we expect to pay everything in full. Respectfully submitted, Mrs. J. M. Strickland, President.

The second quarterly report for 1930 shows that the Woman's Missionary Society
had 23 members; Dues raised during the year, $12.50; Raised for other purposes $38.30; Total $50.80; Signed by Mrs. C. D. Rutherford, President.

The first quarterly report to the Conference for 1930 shows the number of members 25; sent to Conference treasurer $12.50; spent on local work $11.19. Signed by Mrs. C. D. Rutherford, President. In Rev. Wagner's report to the Conference he states that the Missionary Society purchased a new communion service with the assistance of the Epworth League.

In the fourth quarterly report to the Conference for 1930-31, Rev. Wagner advises that "the Missionary Society is in excellent condition. They have furnished the parsonage with an electric stove. We have had an unusually good year.

The first quarterly report for 1931 advises that the Missionary Society is steadily going forward, the attendance is good and they have a record for meeting their obligations when due. A new living room suite has been added to the parsonage and other odd pieces of furniture. The third quarterly report for 1931 shows that the Woman's Missionary Society is doing more and at no time have they failed in their programs and activities. Due primarily to their activity on the inside of the parsonage, the furnishings, walls and floors are 200% better than 18 months ago.

The fourth quarterly report for 1931-32 by Rev. Wagner enumerates many improvements in the parsonage which the Woman's Missionary Society made, such as kitchen cabinets, new dining room suite, new living room suite, lamp, table, carpet and other minor items. They have increased their attendance and interest.

In his 1932-1933 report the pastor stated that he had appointed the Woman's Missionary Society in the circulation of Christian Literature. He stated that the Society was carrying on loyally, they are almost out of debt, which is a fine record considering the amount of work they have done for the church and parsonage in the past two years. He had only praise for them and their work. They always did their share of the work of the charge and even bought a new lawnmower and have assumed half of the cost of the song books.
In 1934, Rev. A. T. Hind reported that the Missionary Society was carrying on its work with fine interest to the cause of the church. The Society was very active in looking after certain local matters as well as the regular matters of their work. They have been at work raising money to pay off some of the debts which have been worrying the church, which they have about succeeded in doing.

In 1935 Rev. Hind reported that the Society was doing fine work not only in their regular meetings and studies but in several projects on which they are working, viz; planning for improvements at the parsonage. In the fourth quarterly report Rev. Hind advised that the Missionary Society is doing its usual good work and their religious interest is expressed in loyal service.

In 1937 Rev. Carl Adkins in his first report to the quarterly Conference states that the Woman's Missionary Society is well organized and quite active. Rev. Adkins states in his second report that the "Woman's Missionary Society under the leadership of Mrs. Pat Winn continues to do good work. A number of them attended the Conference meeting at the last session. Just recently they have purchased a beautiful electric ice box for the parsonage." In the third quarter Rev. Adkins reports that the Woman's Missionary Society meets regularly and is carrying a full program. The women of the church who have already made a number of fine contributions to the parsonage are planning to assume the burden of repairing the pastor's home. In passing, it is interesting to note that Rev. Adkins was a very personable, handsome, intelligent young bachelor which may account to some degree in the unusual interest of the women of the church in making the parsonage a more attractive home for the young pastor. In the fourth
quarter Rev. Adkins reports that the Woman's Missionary Society has met all of its obligations for the year. Besides the fine work they have done in maintaining their organizational standards they have made a "constructive Construction" of the parsonage. The local Woman's Missionary Society attended the zone meeting the past month. In the first quarterly report for 1938-1939 it states that "The Woman's Missionary Society continues to do constructive work. Plans are now under way to make a number of adjustments in the parsonage. They meet regularly and maintain a good average attendance. In the second quarterly report it is stated that the Woman's Missionary Society continues to do a great and useful work. Plans are under way to recondition the parsonage. The Business Woman's Club has been organized and they have taken as their special problem the Decatur Orphan's Home and hope to raise $100.00 for this work during the year.

The third quarterly conference report shows that the Woman's Missionary Society continues to do a great work and are planning for their summer project the reconditioning of the parsonage. Missionary education is and has been stressed. The fourth quarterly report shows that the Woman's Missionary Society continues to do a most constructive work. Their attendance has been good and they have made a number of substantial financial contributions to the church. When their plans have been completed at the end of the month they will have spent approximately $450.00 on the parsonage.

The first quarterly report under the leadership of Rev. Maness in December, 1939 reports that the Woman's Missionary Society is operating in a splendid way and has two circles. The second quarterly report shows that the Woman's Society is doing good work, having two circles. In September, 1940, Rev. Maness reported that "We have a good Woman's Missionary Society which on last Monday was reorganized in keeping with the new set-up of the women's work. The program was well carried out and every lady present was enrolled as a charter member and others have enrolled since that day. The outlook is fine for this part of the
work of the church.

The early 1940s were the World War II years, many of the women went to work for Bell Bomber Plant to take the place of the men in the Service and overseas. The women worked for the Red Cross, rolled bandages, helped out with Bloodmobiles and did all they could for the war effort.

During these years the society met regularly, had dinners, projects to make money, bazaars, and used the money for various things that were needed in the church. We were still in the little white frame church. But after World War II the community was growing and the need for a new church was deemed necessary if we were to experience any growth. In 1947 the Annual Conference was changed from November to June and Austell was sent a minister to guide the membership in the construction of a new church. A Building Committee was formed and the Woman's Society of Christian Service was the first to contribute by handing over a check for $2,000.00 which they had made by feeding the Austell Rotary Club their weekly lunch for many years. The dedicated women who spearheaded this and cooked the wonderful meals in a crowded little room over a grocery store in Austell were Mrs. Pat Winn, Mrs. Ruby Maynard, Mrs. Zora Rutherford, Mrs. Steve Berry and Mrs. Ruby Perkerson. They were assisted at this time by other members of the Society but they were the faithful quintet who were there each week, rain or shine, sleet or snow, over a long period of time to make the first $2,000.00 donated for the new church. The ladies also held many $5.00 a plate dinners to raise the money needed to start a new church. In August on home coming day during the afternoon $8,000.00 was raised to begin the construction of the church.

During the 1950s the Society functioned regularly and effectively. At the June, 1956 meeting the members welcomed "Aunt Lottie Roberts" back into the fellowship with us. Aunt Lottie had lived away for many years during her married life. She was a saint who in her later years contributed so very much to our meetings and to the community at large. She was an inspiration to all who knew
her. One of our stained glass windows was in her honor. It is "The Angel At The Tomb."

In July, 1956 the Society had as a guest speaker Mrs. Layona Glenn, a retired missionary from Brazil. She made a beautiful talk to the group. She lived to a ripe old age after her retirement and traveled everywhere relating her experiences as a missionary to different groups. She was beloved by everyone with whom she came in contact.

It was during the 1950s that the Society adopted a little girl whose name was Thelma Prope3 from the Ethel Harpe3 Home in Cedartown as our special person to sponsor. The ladies made beautiful dresses, skirts and blouses, bought shoes, sweaters, coats, socks and many other things for her during her teen years. They would take them up to the home to her. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard were usually the ones who drove to Cedartown to take her clothes and take her downtown in Cedartown to try on her shoes. Thelma had a good marriage and has several children. Some of the ladies kept in touch with her during the years.

Later they sponsored another little girl, Brenda Davis, who was taken in charge, clothed and looked after until she also married. Brenda now lives in Perry, Georgia with her husband and little daughter.

In April, 1958, it was voted to divide the Society into two circles, the Wesleyan Service Guild and the Woman's Society of Christian Service. In June, 1958 it was decided to draw names for the two circles and 18 names were drawn for Circle No. 1 and 18 names for Circle No. 2.

At the April, 1959 meeting Mrs. Tillie Smith, who was president of the Woman's Society of Christian Service, advised the group that on March 31st a group of ladies had met and made bandages for the cancer clinic of Our Lady of Perpetual Health at the home of Mrs. Susie Causey and if anyone wanted to be notified of the next meeting she would call them. Mrs. Bob Perkerson, Mrs. Zora Rutherford, Mrs. Louise McKinney, Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Grady Causey signed up.
This became a monthly project for the Woman's Society and it ended up with between twelve to twenty people going to the various homes for lunch, sewing bandages and fellowship, each person bringing a covered dish. Mrs. Marian Rutherford would take the bandages to the home and they were greatly needed and appreciated by the sisters who had charge of the home.

In April of 1968 when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church united, the Woman's Society of Christian Service name was changed to the United Methodist Women.

The United Methodist Women now have three circles, The Suzannah Wesley with 17 members, the Kate Westmoreland with 24 members and the ACTS with 8 members. All three meet monthly and have projects, good programs, studies and continue to take an active part in whatever is needed to be done in the church.

There were many years during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s in which we have no written records of the activities of the Woman's Society, nor the exact date on which it became the Woman's Missionary Society instead of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. But the Society has always been interested in foreign missions and a large part of their endeavors have been in the foreign mission field. The Society survived during all of the hard times in the late 19th century, in the periods in which World War I and World War II were waging and the members worked with the Red Cross rolling bandages and other volunteer work. During the Depression the church survived and the women kept right on doing the things they had started out to do, taking care of the sick, helping out with people who were out of work, feeding transients who were on the road looking for work. When there are chores to be done, the United Methodist Women are always called upon to pitch in and help. And this they are glad to do because that is what it is all about.