

Chapter IV. Organizations and Activities 1915-1939

The above brief summary of activities in the church under different ministers leaves much to be said. In any church a large part of what is done is the work of specialized societies within the framework of the church and they for the most part go on and on no matter who is the minister in charge. Any attempt to relate them to each period in turn would make necessary a large amount of duplication and in many cases this would fail to indicate their development throughout this whole span of years. For this reason it seems desirable to look separately at some of them at least.

The two fundamental governing bodies went on with little or no change. They are the Quarterly Conference and the Official Board. The first of these, now defined as "the governing body of the charge," has been that for many years. The presiding officer is the District Superintendent, and the members are various officials of the local church as designated in the Discipline. This organization fits the local group into the larger connection. Much of the local business is transacted by the Official Board over which the pastor presided in the period under discussion except when an elected president substituted for him in his absence. Both of these bodies function to a great extent through committees.¹⁵

Of the organizations under the supervision of the above, perhaps that which was oldest in time and widest in its application to people of all ages in the church and congregation is the Sunday School, now called the Church School. In this local church it goes back at least as far as 1857, though of course at that time it was in simpler form. Something of the early development has been briefly traced in the former book. Even if material for such a study were available it would be impossible to give a detailed account of the changes in the years from 1915 to 1939. The School had become highly departmentalized before the first of those dates, and became somewhat more so afterwards. There were departments for every age, from the Cradle Roll to older adults and, except for the babies there were courses of study appropriate to the various age groups. There was general superintendent and also superintendents for the different departments. All of these together with other officers and the teachers constituted the Sunday School Board, which determined policies and transacted business for the School subject to the Official Board or Quarterly Conference.

Many of the adult classes and some made up of younger people were organized and had social and business meetings over and above the regular study periods on Sunday. It is of course impossible to list these classes throughout the years to say nothing of giving an account of their varied activities. Besides most of them seem to have left very little record on which a narrative could be based. Perhaps some slight indication of the services they have performed can be given by a brief narrative of the past of one class of women, which has been very active for years and has kept, or at least has produced more written indications of projects than all the other classes put together.

The Loyal Ladies' Class was organized March 25, 1919 and has had a continuous existence from that day to this. It is primarily a Bible Class meeting at the Church at the Church School hour on Sunday. But throughout the years it has performed other functions, one of which is social. Many weekday meetings were held, given over to devotional exercises, programs, business, and frequently refreshments. In the first of these [weekday meetings] many members and non-members have brought deeply spiritual and inspirational messages to the class. Some of the programs provided entertainment through readings, music, playlets, costume parties, and other devices, in many instances showing great ingenuity. Frequently the program was made up of serious talks by members or guest speakers, including many returned missionaries. The business had various aspects. One constant interest was in the sick and in strangers. Calls made by members were reported at the business meetings and at times arose to astonishing figures – even as high as several hundred in a month. Much of the business had to do with moneymaking and for this purpose the class resorted to most of the expedients common in Ladies' Aids. The greater part of this money was devoted to missionary or charitable projects. For some years the class supported a Bible Woman in India and later another in Japan. They contributed to the salaries of individual missionaries such as Frank H. Smith, or Marie Power or the Patterson family in India, and at other times to worldwide Methodist movements such as the Centenary, the Crusade for Christ and the Advance. They dressed dolls for charity, sent boxes of food or clothes or toys to children in this country and elsewhere and carried out many minor projects to help the unfortunate. If one considers the activities of this one group and then tries to imagine its sum total multiplied by the appropriate number for all the societies in this local church to say nothing of thousands of other churches, the result is impressive.



Loyal Ladies Class - 1920

There has been a tendency for fewer men than women to manifest their interest in the church through special organizations. Perhaps this is because many of them are in the Official Board and are expending their energies on work for the church as a whole. But there have been a number of flourishing classes for men, as well as mixed classes, in the Church School; and one other group, commonly called The Brotherhood, has had a place in the church most of the time at least for over fifty years. It has been explained in the old history that this grew out of the Men's Club, which was organized in 1901 and seven years later adopted the name Brotherhood. It seems to have been mostly a dinner club, which contributed much to fellowship in the church and introduced new men in the community. But it has to some extent duplicated the interests of the women in devotional exercises, informational programs, and charitable and missionary contributions. It has occasionally co-operated with some women's organization in arranging a reception for some special purpose, as to welcome a new parsonage family. One unique service performed by this society especially in the '20's and '30's has already been referred to – that is the series of church night suppers conducted wholly by the men.

The women, meanwhile, had not one organized group but several, one of which, the Bible Class, has already been described. The most longstanding and general of these was the Ladies' Aid Society, which goes back in one form or another to the early years of the church. It has been related in the old history that this society worked valiantly for the building fund when the stone church was erected, and later to buy the old parsonage at 937 New Hampshire Street. This society worked under a constitution, which was revised or made over from time to time but the provisions need not detain us here. From about 1895 on to 1939 it worked as a whole and also through subdivisions variously called, divisions, groups, circles, etc.; but whatever the name and whatever the number the purpose of this was to provide small units that could function more efficiently than the large society, and could get its members better acquainted with each other. The small groups, much of the time at least, held their own meetings, kept their own minutes, and were quite likely to adopt individual methods of making money. But whatever the method the proceeds went into a common fund for the church as a whole and often amounted to large sums. These women made contributions to the church debt or budget, amounting to hundreds of dollars a year, paid for papering the parsonage, carpeting the lecture room, equipping a new kitchen, and keeping up payments for years on the cost of the present parsonage. All this money was earned by the usual methods adopted by such societies for decades – dinners, teas, rummage sales, food sales, bazaars, chrysanthemum shows and many others. The ladies also sewed for charity, many calls on invalids and shut-ins, and conducted meetings with devotions, programs, and refreshments; similar to those we have already seen the Loyal Ladies conducting. In 1932 Mrs. Hunt, the wife of Dr. Hunt who was then minister, organized as we have already noted the Harmony Circle, which might be described as a Ladies' Aid for younger women. It was established and at work by the middle of the year. In 1937 it had sixty-five members.

Unlike the Loyal Ladies, the Ladies' Aid Society did very little with regard to Missions. This was not from any lack of interest but was because most of its members belonged to one or the other of the old established missionary societies. It has been pointed out in the earlier history that the Women's Foreign Missionary Society had been

formed in New York in 1869 and by 1873 Lawrence had an “auxiliary.” The Women’s Home Missionary Society was organized in 1880 but did not have a chapter in Lawrence till 1896. Something of the work of these two groups has been related in the old history. Each society both before and after 1915 attempted to maintain three sub-groups for the training of children and youth. The Foreign Society organized Little Light Bearers for tiny children, King’s Heralds for those from eight to twelve years of age, and the Standard Bearers for older girls. The corresponding societies sponsored by those interested in home missions were respectively, Mothers’ Jewels, Home Guards, and the Queen Esther Circle. This last, while no doubt meant to be a counterpart for the Standard Bearers, tended in Lawrence to be made up of mature young women. It also lasted longer than the others and probably accomplished more. The four younger groups were not very stable and usually did not last very long after any particular new start. For some years in this later period the Queen Esther Circle and the Standard Bearers met together. A similar tendency is seen in the two Missionary Societies. For a number of years they had all-day meetings, one group presenting a program in the forenoon and the other in the afternoon, the next month the order being reversed. In the time between there was a devotional service and either a covered dish or a sack lunch.

But it is more important to know what these societies did than just how they did it. Their meetings, consisting of the usual devotions and missionary study need not detain us here. Both societies put their interest into practice in many ways. The Foreign Society in the ‘20’s supported several scholarship girls and several Bible Women, mostly in India though one of the women was in Sumatra. It also contributed one hundred dollars to an interdenominational college, and made gifts to the “Frank Smith fund.” It was also in the ‘20’s that with the help of the Loyal Ladies, the society paid half the salary of Marie Powers in India. But in 1928 she married Mr. Roy Spear, missionary in Burma, and for some reason could not continue to be supported by individual churches. For a time the Lawrence society transferred its support to Ethel Margaret Waldorf who was doing missionary work in South America; and in 1930 it adopted Eloise Smith, the oldest daughter of Frank and Gertrude Smith, so frequently referred to in this narrative. Eloise had gone back to Japan and continued to work there and continued to be supported largely by Lawrence till her marriage to Mr. I. V. Korts in 1937. After a short interval Elsie Power, sister of Marie Power and a missionary in Burma, was secured to be “our missionary.” These personal contacts were of course invaluable in stimulating interest in foreign work; but so also were two other sources of inspiration. One is the study of books on missions, which throughout the years covered every field in which such work was carried on. The other, more personal, was the opportunity to meet and hear a large number of men and women who had either lived and worked as missionaries in some foreign area, or as church officials in this country had helped in the administration of missionary organizations. Something like forty addresses by people with first-hand knowledge were given at meetings of the society. In the late thirties the “house parties” for young girls, which are now so important in the missionary set-up of the Methodist Church, were being introduced, and Lawrence young people were participating.

In this period two societies flourished which were purely local and had no disciplinary recognition. The first of these goes back beyond 1915 and its early history

has been explained in the old book. It was started about 1895 as the Pipe Organ Society to work for the purpose indicated in the title. After the organ was installed in 1904, the name was changed to Woman's League, and the organization continued to 1940. Its meetings were almost purely social, with programs frequently in the nature of entertainment, though there was usually something of a devotional nature. One of its chief services was in making new women feel at home. In some ways that was like another Ladies' Aid. Financial transactions were usually on a smaller scale than those of the Aid, but it duplicated the efforts of that society in calling on the sick, sending flowers and cards, giving church receptions, and banquets, furnishing flowers for the pulpit, and appointing hostesses for church night suppers. The members did a good deal of charitable work and paid money for church improvements, as equipment for the kitchen. Perhaps their biggest financial contribution was a gift of \$1000.00 for the finishing of the basement.

The second non-disciplinary organization was the Methodist Guild. In 1916 Miss Amy Woodbury suggested that the church needed a society for business and professional women who because of their employment could not attend the usual meetings for women. She associated four other young women with herself; and these five called a meeting and acted as hostesses when, on February 11, an organization was effected, and a constitution planned. From that time for almost twenty-five years meetings were held with great regularity but also with great variety. They were primarily social, either dinner meetings or evening gatherings with refreshments; and were held in the church, in homes, at restaurants, and in the summer frequently in parks or on private lawns. The members were not all Methodists. Some very active participants were outside the church. Like some other societies that we have met, the Guild showed much originality in arranging unusual diversions. But, also like other societies, it had a serious side. The programs were frequently given over to informational talks. The financial projects were chiefly of two kinds. One was to help the church itself. When the basement was fitted up the Guild paid for the fireplace and later installed lights over it and paid half the cost of equipping it for the burning of gas.

It also bought a picture to hang over the fireplace and conducted an impressive ceremony at which the picture was presented. The other type of project was for charitable or missionary purpose. Thus the members gave parties for Haskell students or Mexican children in Lawrence, contributed money for underprivileged children here through Miss Electa Kindlesperger, the school nurse, or to such children in other communities through Miss Gladys Hobbes, a deaconess who was at one time president of the Guild. They gave sums of money to the church budget and to the building fund of the National Training School in Kansas City, as well as other enterprises. At times they had Bible classes for Guild members. In this as in earlier societies talks were given by returned missionaries. But the Guild had one special tie with missionary work through its first president, Miss Ruby Hosford who in 1918 went as a missionary to South America and for years kept this group in touch with details of her work.

Meanwhile in the very same period in which the Methodist Guild was active, another group with similar name and in some ways similar purposes was growing up in

the Church as a whole. In 1917, the next year after our local Guild was organized, Mrs. Effie M. Potter, the wife of a minister in Anderson, Indiana, started the "Potter Mission Circle," for business and professional women, and devoted to both home and foreign missions. In the next three years several other churches initiated such organizations, apparently each quite independent of the others. These were brought to the attention of officers of both the Home and Foreign Societies; and in February 1921 both of these organizations were represented on an organizing committee. The young woman who seems to be usually looked upon as the chief instrument in bringing these different elements together is Miss Marion Lee Morris of Evanston, Illinois. A constitution was drafted and at a luncheon in May 1921 a number of young women joined and paid dues in both the Home and Foreign societies. The objectives were development of spiritual life, opportunities for world service, promotion of Christian citizenship and personal service, and provision for social and recreational activities. The first projects for which money was appropriated were work with industrial girls in Japan and with foreign children in a settlement in Gary, Indiana.

In its experimental stage the Guild was approved and allowed to expand in a territory made up of four states – Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, with certain provisions for expansion into other parts of the country. Soon after this, territorial limitations were removed, and definite proportions established as to how the financial contributions were to be divided between the fields. It is unnecessary to follow in detail the steps by which this society expanded and developed. It came to have a secretarial office independent of those of the two parent societies, with headquarters at first in Chicago and later at 150 Fifth Avenue, New York. It also came to have a regional organization similar to that, which was adopted for the church as a whole at the Uniting Conference.

Our own local church came to be affiliated with this movement in 1933 when Mrs. R. A. Hunt, the minister's wife, organized a Wesleyan Service Guild in Lawrence. As the members of the old Methodist Guild did not wish to lose the identity of their group they continued for about seven years longer; and during that period this church had two Guilds working side by side.

By 1939 the new organization had two jurisdictions established, the North Central and the Northeastern, with three regions in the first and one in the second having officers already functioning. Moreover, there were forty Annual Conferences scattered throughout the country that had Conference Guild Secretaries, as indicated in the 1939-1940 Handbook. This Handbook reveals that our church had three personal contacts with the Guild at this time. The chairman of the national Spiritual Life Department with an office in New York was Nancy Longenecker. The conference secretary for the Kansas Conference was Mrs. Hunt who, as we have seen, organized our local society. And the foreign project for this year was the work in China being carried on by Mabel Ruth Nowlin, a graduate of the University of Kansas in 1913 who had been active in the young people's work of this church through her student years. One other thing about this early Guild is of interest to Lawrence Methodists. The typed history of the Guild, which is sent

out from the central office, includes a beautiful summary of the purpose of the Guild written by Nancy Longenecker. It follows:

“That we may not be bound by prejudices and intolerance of any kind; that our love may grow toward our fellow men as deep and broad as we desire God’s love to be toward us; that peace may come to us all through the consciousness that we are acting upon the ideal of our love of God; that thanksgiving for all blessings may be a natural expression of our everyday life.”

The two Guilds, referred to above, that worked side by side from 1933 to 1940, were really very much alike. Both had dinners or social meetings at the church or elsewhere. Both had many talks on serious subjects; and both made financial contributions to the church itself or to charitable and missionary projects. The new society, somewhat less social organization than the new, had two distinguishing features. First, its chief emphasis was on missions with a careful balance between Home and Foreign, this being of course in keeping with its origins as an auxiliary to both the Home and the Foreign general society. Study books were adopted in pairs, one for each field; and guest speakers were likely to be returned missionaries from Japan, China, India, Africa, Malaya or some other foreign field of endeavor; or people experienced in work with Indians, Mexicans, migrant workers, slum dwellers or other under privileged people in our land. Funds, likewise, were carefully allocated between home and foreign projects adopted nationally by the central Guild Organization. Mabel Nowlin, whom we have met before, and Mildred Ann Paine were recognized Guild missionaries; and various community members orphanages, city missions, and like institutions were similarly endorsed in the home field. The second condition which distinguishes the new Guild from the Old, is that whereas the latter was purely local, the former was part of a growing and developing network of societies national in scope. This meant connection with Guild offices on District, Conference, and Jurisdictional levels, and representation of the local group at Guild Weekends and conventions or other gatherings in many places.