

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



100th ANNIVERSARY

1915 -2014

## ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

### Early History:

The history of Women's Work in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church does not begin with any particular group of women nor at any designated place. In reality, it started in the dusk of that Easter morning when our Master said to Mary, "Go, tell". Since that time the women have been conspicuous in every phase of the Kingdom's progress.

Pioneer ladies had little or no time to attend church, nor organize formal women's groups. Women's Work began in 1818 at the Old Steel Creek Church, Mecklenburg County NC. It was organized as "Home Mission Service". Names given to women's work varied: "A Mite Society", Ladies Missionary Society", Ladies Aid Society", or "Female Benevolent Society". Money was raised in various ways. Many of the Societies had monthly dues and some had initiation fees of ten cents to 25 cents. Sabbath eggs and butter were sold and the money given to missions. Other ways to raise money included quilting, sewing garments and bonnets, bazaars, hot suppers, and raising geese and selling their feathers to make feather beds.

The Ladies Missionary Society of King's Creek Church, Newberry, SC, and the Woman's Benevolent Society of Winnsboro SC Church were organized in 1871.

### General Synod Connections:

Synod gave Woman's Work formal recognition in 1898, and appointed Mrs. R.D. Bryson as General Superintendent of Woman's Work. In 1900 and every year since, a report of Woman's Work has appeared in the Minutes of General Synod. When the Superintendent of Woman's Work was discontinued, the President of the Woman's Synodical Union submitted the report. Mrs. Ira Ranson presented the first report on the floor of Synod in 1926.

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### Second Presbyterial Organized:

Mrs. Julia Hardeman Rhodes of the Louisville GA ARP Church believed that the organization of Woman's Work should expand beyond the local church. Invitations were extended to all churches in Second Presbytery, and a meeting was held at the Louisville Church on April 12, 1907. The meetings of this Union shall be held in strict accordance with Scriptural teachings; it being understood that only ladies are welcomed to the sessions and such gentlemen as the Union shall for any reason see fit to invite. One dear sainted minister said: "I predict you will have one more meeting and it will be attended by old maids and childless wives." Thus Second Presbyterial Union was formed.

### Woman's Synodical Union:

In 1915, the General Superintendent of Woman's Work, Mrs. R.D. Bryson called the women of all the churches to meet in Due West, SC to come together for the purpose of forming a Synod-wide society. Due West extended an invitation to meet there while Synod would be session. Women from six of the Presbyteries were in attendance. The name chosen was Woman's Synodical Missionary Union. Later, in 1949, the name was changed to the Woman's Synodical Union (WSU) to reflect the broader participation in all phases of the work of the denomination.

Arkansas and First were organized in 1909. Tennessee-Alabama was organized in 1910. In 1919, First Presbytery was divided into parts. Those churches in North Carolina retained First Presbytery while the remaining churches in South Carolina formed Catawba. Virginia was formed in 1921. Mississippi Valley was formed in 1933 with the merger of Arkansas and Memphis - Louisville Presbyterial Unions. Florida came into existence in 1963 following the formation of Florida Presbytery from a part of Second.

Northeast and Canada Presbyterials have had representatives on the ARP Women's Ministries Board since 2006.

Annual Meetings were held in the Presbyterials on a rotating basis. These were held in local churches within the Presbyterial. Bonclarken became the permanent site for the Annual Meeting to precede the Family Bible Conference in 2000.

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### Publications:

Second Presbyterial Union published "The Monthly Bulletin" written by Mrs. Julia Rhodes in Louisville GA. In 1908, the subscription was 25 cents per year. This became the official publication of the WSU in 1918 under the name of "Journal of Missions" and later was changed to "ARP Synodical Journal". WSU combined its publication with the church magazine "The ARP" in 1975, when it became a monthly publication of the Synod. Now "The ARP" is published six times yearly

### Jubilee Birthday:

Foreign Missions have always been important to the ARP Women's Ministries. In 1873, a small group of women in the Due West, SC, organized the first Missionary Society, just after our denomination created a Foreign Mission Board. As more groups were organized, the Women's Missionary Society was able to send out the first ARP foreign missionary, Mrs. Mary Galloway Giffen, to Egypt in 1875.

ARP women continued supporting foreign missions. In 1925, the WSU established the Jubilee Birthday Fund to commemorate the Jubilee (50th Anniversary) of Mrs. Giffen's departure to Egypt.

The WSU has provided full or partial support for various Birthday Ladies. This list includes: Miss Mary Lesslie, Miss Minnie Alexander, Mrs. Janet White Mrs. Imogene Covone, Dr. Margaret White (Janet's daughter), Mrs. Jerri Lotze, Mrs. Melanie Seeger, Mrs. Pam Brunson, Miss Judi Hodges, and Mrs. Judy Buis. The current Birthday Ladies are Mrs. Nannette Howard and Mrs. Shelia Osborne.

### Silver Tea and Synodical Hall:

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church purchased the property known as Bonclarken in 1921. Included in the purchase were the Heidelberg House, the Swiss Cottage, the Rose Cottage and 63 acres to be used as a Conference Center. The first Bible Conference was held in 1922.

Woman's Synodical Union purchased three well-suited lots with the hopes that a facility for Woman's Work could built. The WSU spent nearly \$4,000.00 renovating the Rose Cottage, which soon became inadequate. (The remains of the Rose Cottage is located near Founders Hall.)

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The Annual Bible Conference continued to be held at Bonclarken. "In 1950, the Presbyterials were asked in turn to serve as hostesses and help in entertainment and a part of the entertainment was a yearly reception where the guests fellowshiped and learned to know each other." A receptacle was for a silver offering. Records show that in 1953, the Virginia ladies were the hostesses for the "Silver Tea". This special offering was set aside for a new building for Women's Ministries.

The WSU sold one of the lots and exchanged the two adjoining lots on Hemlock Drive with the Bonclarken Board at no expense, for the lots across from the Chapel and across from Draffin Hall. Money was procured and Synodical Hall was dedicated during Bible Conference August 4, 1970. The total cost including architect fees, Henderson County NC fees, and the construction was \$55,538.00.

Ladies were asked to donate their books of trading stamps to be used for the furnishings of the new building. (For those of you who may not remember: various stores gave trading stamps for each \$1.00 in merchandise sold. Sometimes it was harder to get a woman to part with her books of trading stamps than it was for her to part with a dollar.) Some 1,456 books of trading stamps (S&H Green Stamps, Top Value, Quality and 15 other companies were turned in to furnish the new building. The value of the purchases and cash itself was approximately \$4,368.00.

The Silver Tea is held during Family Bible Conference on a rotating schedule with the ARPWM Presbyteries serving as hostess. The money donated is used for the upkeep of Synodical Hall.

### Denomination Involvement:

Mission has always been at the heart of Women's Ministries. Support is given through Jubilee Birthday to two currently serving missionary ladies. Gifts are given yearly to those missionary ladies who have retired.

Christian Education Ministry is supported through gifts to Camp Joy, a camp for campers with special needs. There are now four sessions held at Bonclarken each summer. Florida also hosts a Camp Joy each year. These have brought great blessings to all involved. Family Bible Conference is supported monetarily. WM also has two ladies who serve as co-chairmen of the yearly Conference.

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Outreach North America has received monetary support and personal involvement as various churches sponsor Mission Churches throughout the denomination.

As the arm of the denomination's higher education, Erskine College and Erskine Theological Seminary have received loyal support from the women.

Bonclarken has received much support. The women provided furnishings for the Ministers Apartments, Memorial Hall, Garrison Hall (replaced by Founders Hall), and the kitchen of the Youth Activities Building. Ladies have furnished gift items in the Gift Shop with all proceeds going to Bonclarken.

The ARP magazine also has received monetary support. Articles concerning the Women's Ministries appear in each publication.

ARP Women's Ministries:

The name of the organization was changed from Woman's Synodical Union to ARP Women's Ministries effective September 1, 2005. This restructuring occurred after much prayer and discussion.

A new vision statement reads, "ARP Women's Ministries is an organization which encourages and equips the community of ARP women to minister together for God's glory and purpose".

A paid administrator was included in the new restructure as a central resource person.

The restructure includes women representatives from all Presbyterials, even if they do not have organized Presbyterials. The new constitution states "The membership of this organization shall consist of all women members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States and Canada".

The ladies have tried to serve our Lord this past 100 years. As twenty-first century women we are proud of their work, and fortitude. We are also thankful for their work, and humbled by their determination.

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Prepared by Sandra Miller, Associate Reformed Presbyterian Women's Ministries, 2014.