TEXAS METHODISM'S OTHER HALF
by Margaret Wasson

When Texas was settled by Anglo pioneers, there were, of course, women who accompanied their men in the covered wagons. And many of these women were Methodists. The story of Methodism's other half therefore begins in the early 1800s, when Mexican authority specifically forbade Protestant preachers or preaching. How the early settlers managed to hold occasional services in their log cabin homes is a tale oft told; William Stevenson preached at old Pecan Point on Red River in the fall of 1815, and John Rabb recalled that it was in his home in June 1824, that Henry Stephenson preached the first Protestant sermon in East Texas — for a party of four families. Of course Colonel Stephen F. Austin knew nothing of this affair until it was over.¹ Rabb's wife, Mary Crownover Rabb, was sixteen when this couple was married in Jonesboro on Red River in 1821. The couple settled near LaGrange in Fayette County two years later. In her fascinatingly misspelled Reminiscences: Travels and Adventures in Texas in the 1820's, Mary provides a vivid picture of what it was like to struggle for survival in the face of hostile flies, sand-gnats, mosquitoes, rattlesnakes, and Indians. During one 10-day period she was alone with her baby while her young husband tried to secure a headright for land where the Indians would not be so bad. She writes:

Now lonely as I was after rising early in the morning and attending to making meal for the day I kept my new spinning wheel whisling all day and a good part of the night for while the wheel was rowering it would keep me from hearing the Indians walking around hunting michieaf.²

She reports the Runaway Scrape in 1836, when "old Sam Houston" was retreating and when her baby, Lorenzy, died on the road. She concluded her reminiscences: "How many tryels and trubbles we past threw together here in texas and no opportunity of going to church yet god was mindful of us and blesst us and gave us his sparit and made us feel that we was his." It is good to know that nine Rabb children flourished, seven of them enrolling in the Methodist college at Reutersville.³

¹The Texas Methodist Historical Quarterly, July, 1909, p. 81.
³Ibid., pp. 14, iii.

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When Methodist preacher J.W. Kenney moved his family from Kentucky to Texas in 1833, his wife's sister, Miss L.A. McHenry, accompanied them. The two, daughters of a Methodist preacher, were called "women of culture and refinement." Mrs. A.J. Lee, a Kenney daughter, remembers that her mother "taught her children to read when they were very young... When we read well enough she required us to read one chapter of the Bible on weekday and two on Sundays, thus laying a good foundation for subsequent education." She recalls a camp meeting in 1834:

We had a tent where all that came were welcome. Mother was the Martha of our tent but was not left to serve alone, all giving a hand. There were no churches to hold services. Private homes were thrown open for preaching... On one occasion they had an old fashioned love feast, and handed around bread and water. Then came the experience of some: mother arose and spoke. I felt very proud that she spoke in meeting.

When the first missionaries — Robert Alexander, Dr. Martin Ruter, and Littleton Fowler — came to Texas in 1837, preaching was held at the Kenney home once a month. Auntie conducted a school in which William B. Travis' son was a pupil; later she had a boarding school for girls. She had been instrumental in requesting missionaries, too. In Mrs. Lee's judgment the efforts of the preacher's wife as burden bearer at camp meetings were rewarded:

A great deal of good was done at these meetings. Hundreds converted, some may have fallen away, but many are now walking the streets of the New Jerusalem in consequence of the doctrine heard preached at these meetings. Repented of their sins, were forgiven and ever remained faithful to their profession.4

By 1840, when missionary Orceneth Fisher's family came to Texas by covered wagon, the Methodist Church presence was legal and growing. Fisher's daughter, Mary, was twelve years old. She developed into a woman of many gifts. After a year of teacher preparation in Springfield, Illinois, she returned to Texas in 1845 and married Robert Wells, who is remembered in Methodist annals as the editor-publisher of the first Texas Christian Advocate. Besides assisting him in this venture, Mary conducted a female high school at various times. The prospectus for one school promised the parents of future students that "...every effort will be employed to improve their physical constitution, their heads, and their hearts."5 The couple settled in Gatesville, where Robert preached, practiced law, and engaged in business ventures. Mary bore eleven children, losing four young daughters but fortunate to have seven survive. (One of her daughters became the mother of Dr. Ina Corinne Brown, of

whom more later.)

Mary’s diaries indicate that she was practical as well as intellectual; she could and did spin, weave, sew garments for her children and herself, make soap, make cheese. With all of this busy life, her home was “always headquarters for the Circuit Rider preachers, who came, preached, spent the night, and after arranging for future appointments, rode away to other fields, with Bible, medical aids, and a change of clothing in their saddle bags.” Like Mrs. Kenney, Mary Fisher Wells is an exemplar of the preacher’s wife.

In Dallas County, too, the pioneer Methodist services were held in private homes, notably the cabins of Isaac Webb and W.M. Cochran, whose young wives, Mary and Nancy Jane, were “shouting Methodist” sisters from Tennessee. Settling near Farmers Branch in 1843-44, they welcomed Thomas Brown, visiting Methodist preacher from Indiana, who slept at the Webb cabin, preached at the Cochran cabin, and in 1845 formed the first Methodist society of five class members. Webb’s diaries reflect blessings of bee trees and plenty of game, hardships with fever and occasional Indians. We can imagine these young pioneer women making a home in the wilderness while maintaining their staunch Methodist convictions. Later Mrs. Cochran gave three acres of land, two for the church and one for the family burying ground.

Another Methodist laywoman, the widow Sarah Horton Cockrell, gave the first land for the location of a Dallas Methodist church, at the corner of Lamar and Commerce Streets, recording her gift on April 4, 1860, with the words “for and in consideration of the love I have for the cause of Christ and from an earnest desire to promote his heritage on earth.” Her husband, Alex Cockrell, had been killed in a shoot-out in Dallas less than two years earlier. As John William Rogers put it:

“The widow Cockrell bowed to the conventions of the day and publicly was only a woman wearing the reticence and frailty with which women were supposed to be endowed by God. But privately she was as astute a manager as any man could have been of the affairs which the death of her husband had so suddenly thrust into her hands.”

She had already opened her lavish St. Nicholas Hotel in 1859. It was destroyed by the great Dallas fire of 1860, only three months after her gift to the church. The Civil War delayed the construction of the church, but in 1868 the first Methodist church in Dallas was erected on the lot provided by Mrs. Cockrell and by a later gift from J.W. Browder.

4Ibid., p. 34.
6Adolphus Werry, History of First Methodist Church, Dallas, pp. 32-33.
A remarkable example of the traditional "pillar of the church" was Grandma Rogers, who came to Texas as a child of five in 1849, lived in 30 different counties, but is chiefly remembered for her long connection with the Northwest Texas Conference. Martha Knight rejected one suitor because he was a Baptist, choosing instead Methodist Tom Rogers, whom she married on her fifteenth birthday. The young couple lived with Father Rogers for eight months, and Martha recalls, "I had the best time of my life" going to one camp meeting after another until September, then to the cotton patch the rest of the year. Tom Rogers bought for their home a Bible, a Discipline, Pilgrim's Progress, and The Methodist Armour. He also subscribed to the Christian Advocate, and Martha started in 1857 her lifelong habit of reading it. (Her memoirs were dictated to various persons at different times because she never learned to write or to read handwriting.)

When Mrs. Rogers said, "We never missed many services," she was stating the pattern of her life, filled as it was with strenuous activity. She reports driving an ox-drawn wagon 300 miles in 14 days in 1861, while her husband was driving beeves to the Confederate Army in Natchez. She raised to maturity ten of her twelve children; she ran tent boarding houses in Wichita Falls, Eastland, and other railroad construction towns. In Sweetwater in 1881 she fed 36 railroad men, providing five gallons of coffee and five gallons of buttermilk for dinner; five gallons of Cali beer and ginger cakes for supper. She boarded clerks and cowboys, too, and reports that many of them "old and young, tell me that my prayers were the cause of them being led to Christ." Not surprisingly, we hear, "I was getting tired of cooking and other hard work where we did not have preaching." When a Methodist minister came through the tents at Wichita Falls looking for Methodists and she produced her church letter, she says, "I was the gladest woman you ever saw to get my letter in the church again."

In 1889 she commenced to tally the sermons heard during the year — a grand total of 115 — 100 Methodist, 10 Baptist, 5 Presbyterian. Significantly one of her pastors, B.J. Osborn, noted, "Every sermon she hears is a good one, and the last one she hears is always the best — they are all good to grandma."

Grandma Rogers collected bishops, making a relatively late start with Bishop Alpheus W. Wilson. Bishop Joseph S. Key in 1890 was her second, and by the 1914 General Conference in Oklahoma City she had met them all except one. She rated Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon the best looking, Bishop J.H. McCoy the sweetest natured, Bishop W.E. Mc-

11Ibid., pp. 12-23 passim.
12Ibid., pp. 24, 49.
Murry great in size and intellect. She admits, "I have seen pretty bishops, fine ones, small ones and large ones, but I love them all."13

At her first General Conference she declared, "I got the sixth degree in Methodism: first degree joining the church and taking my vows for life; second, Church conference; third, Quarterly Conference; fourth, District Conference; fifth, Annual Conference; and the sixth, General Conference. The next degree I expect to take in Heaven with all of my loved ones." At 84 she declared, "I enjoy going to the conferences better than any gathering in this world. It always impresses me that Heaven will be something like them."14 Grandma Rogers took her seventh degree in 1944 at the age of 101. She would be gratified to know that the history of her beloved Northwest Texas Conference's first fifty years contains her biographical sketch — along with those of 173 (male) preachers.15

Women's Role in Pioneer Churches

It has been said that in pioneer days the churches were the greatest civilizing agencies. They brought the people together clean and in their best apparel . . . farmer's wives and daughters tired of drudgery and starved for companionship. The churches set moral standards.

As Texas churches were organized and meeting houses were built, the women were counted upon to perform the many "Martha" tasks which keep things moving smoothly. Soon Parsonage Societies were being formed to make sure that the preacher's family had a decent place to live. At First Methodist, Dallas, for example, thirteen women were enlisted by the presiding elder on November 24, 1874, with the short-term objective of getting ready for a new pastor on Christmas Eve. There were committees for bedding, bedroom furniture, and kitchen furniture: the ladies went out two by two to solicit help and contributions; soon three more were added to clean the parsonage. When the preacher arrived, the group adopted the name, Ladies Aid Society, and a constitution stating their purpose:

... to raise funds as may be needed for the benefit of the church, send relief to the sick and indigent persons found in the city without regard to sect, to visit and minister to the sick and distressed of the church, and society, to visit all strangers in the church.16

Even before this society was organized it was a matter of record that a committee of five ladies recruited by the presiding elder had raised $800

13Ibid., p. 34.
14Ibid., pp. 25, 55.
16Werry, First Church, Dallas, pp. 125-26.
toward the building fund; to provide the 75-foot spire the ladies staged another successful fund drive.\textsuperscript{17}

At First Methodist, Fort Worth, the women were organized in 1874 also, calling themselves the Ladies Aid Society or the Pastor’s Willing Workers. The group “had in mind chiefly the doing of the things for the local congregation which would not otherwise be done.”\textsuperscript{18}

In Beaumont much the same pattern was followed in 1877, when the Ladies Aid Society was organized. Members “swept the building, filled the lamps and generally got the church in order for services.”\textsuperscript{19} Other activities included entertaining the itinerant preacher when he came to town, giving ice cream suppers, chicken dinners, and concerts to help raise funds for the circuit riders’ work.

**Organization of Missionary Societies**

Formal organization of missionary societies in Southern Methodist churches in Texas began in 1880 as the result of a movement which culminated at the Atlanta General Conference of 1878. Approval was then given to a petition which had been advanced for several years by a group of concerned women. As the 1878 *Discipline* stated, “In view of the fact that in most heathen countries women are only accessible to teachers of their own sex, the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, are hereby authorized to organize special Missionary agencies...” The fact that the petitioners had already found a volunteer and had raised enough money to support her undoubtedly was a factor in this approval. The oft-repeated story of young Mrs. David McGavock of Nashville (who gave the diamonds, which had pinned her wedding veil, to Mrs. J.W. Lambuth to support work in China) reflects the emotion and the appeal of woman’s work for women. Miss Lochie Rankin from Tennessee was sent to China in 1878 to start a ministry of forty years.

In Atlanta the organization was implemented with election of officers by the women with the full cooperation of the eight bishops, whose wives were named as vice-presidents. Mrs. Juliana Hayes of Baltimore was to be president, Mrs. McGavock secretary, and one woman from each of 23 geographical regions was named a manager. Mrs. Robert Alexander was the manager for Texas.

In 1880 Mrs. Hayes attended the organization meetings of women in Texas conferences. Some idea of her technique comes from a North Arkansas Conference report that she “conducted a map exercise on

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{18}J.D.F. Williams, *History of First United Methodist Church: The First 120 Years* (Ft. Worth), pp. 38-41.
China, read a letter from Miss Rankin, and exhibited Chinese shoes." It is easy to imagine the reaction to a pair of tiny shoes for bound feet. It was 1882 before the West Texas Conference Missionary Society was organized at the annual conference in Seguin, at 11 p.m. on Saturday, October 21. This was apparently the only time the church building was available for the women to use. Mabel Howell, however, offers another explanation. In order to meet the minimum requirement of three locals for a conference society, the ladies from Seguin helped those from Gonzales and San Antonio to conduct their organization on the spot and thus qualify. As Howell says, "We can sense the eagerness of this small group of women who resorted to such measures to achieve their goal."20

Soon the home mission goal was likewise activated as a channel for women's concerns about unfortunates in their own locales. First came the Woman's Department of Church Extension in 1886, soon changed in 1890 to the Woman's Home Missionary Society. The same pattern of conference organization was followed, made easier by the success of the foreign mission effort. Both organizations existed independently until 1910, when the two mission boards were united and there was one Woman's Missionary Society.

Texas women have long been active in mission. The North Texas Conference society, for example, reports that during the period 1884 until 1965, 17 women served as foreign missionaries, six as home missionaries, and 21 as deaconesses. The first in this line was Dona Hamilton of Paris, who went to China in 1884. Lelia Roberts of Bonham was sent to Mexico in 1887, serving there for more than forty years and honored in 1928 as one of 48 women for distinguished service to the whole denomination. Other Texas women on this list were Mrs. Virginia K. Johnson, Mrs. Nat G. Rollins, and Mrs. L.P. (Maria Morgan) Smith.21

In 1907 the short but memorable missionary service of Ruby Kendrick began. She was sent from Plano to Korea, where she died of appendicitis before completing her first year of service. Gus W. Thomasson has described the vivid impression Miss Kendrick made at meetings of Texas Epworth Leaguers in Paris and Corpus Christi on the eve of her departure for Korea:

She spoke ... her subject being: "Can the world be Evangelized in this generation?" ... mission zeal reached a new high ... she spoke at the farewell meeting ... Five thousand people were assembled to hear her message. A small mite of a girl ... she boldly, fearlessly, charmingly spoke to the vast audience, in words so sincere and appealing, so audible and convincing that she fired her hearers with an enthusiasm

The news of Miss Kendrick's death came during the North Texas Conference Epworth League meeting in Denison in June, 1908. The meeting became a memorial to her; a call was made for volunteers to take her place. The day marked an epoch in the lives of Texas Leaguers.  

The spirit and example of Ruby Kendrick proved to be a great inspiration to thousands of these young people, who contributed in all nearly $120,000 to the Ruby Kendrick Mission Council which supported a list of 30 different mission persons and projects and finally established a $10,000 mission scholarship at Perkins School of Theology.

Other conference missionary societies have their rolls of honor. For example, the Texas Conference sent Miss Rebecca Toland to Cuba, where she started a 44-year career of missionary service.

It is not surprising that Georgia Harkness declares, "In the American Protestant churches, it is in the women's voluntary organizations for lay service that the most spectacular and the most acceptable contributions [of women] are to be found."23

State and local institutions, especially those serving women and children, have long been supported by the "home mission" side of the missionary organizations. Many services in prevailing black communities are provided in Bethlehem Centers, so named by a black woman leader of the home mission board who pointed out that the star of Bethlehem shone on all races alike. Settlement houses were early developed. In Dallas the City Board of Missions in 1902 was the second in the nation to meet particular points of need within the total urban setting. The first person to serve here as a deaconess was Estelle Haskins, later a staff member of women's work in the M.E. Church, South. She found that there were 25 saloons within a radius of six blocks of her settlement house.  

A descendant of this institution is today's Wesley-Rankin Center, still receiving support from the national board for work with a largely Latin American clientele. Today the Methodist Home in Waco, the Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio, and the Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso are but three of the Texas "home mission" centers.

The present United Methodist Women, successor to the Woman's Society for Christian Service which succeeded the Woman's Missionary Society, is today a national organization of 1.5 million women. The three-fold purpose, as stated in the 1976 Discipline is "to know God and to

24Sara Estelle Haskin, Women and Missions in the M.E. Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House, M.E. Church, South, 1920), p. 204.
experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church."

Financial support provided by Texas United Methodist Women is generous and consistent. According to the 1978 General Minutes of the Annual Conferences, the total cash sent to conference treasurers by United Methodist Women in the five conferences within the state — Central, North, Northwest, Southwest, and Texas — was $925,629 for the year 1977. This is substantially more than these conferences reported as general advance specials and world service special funds.

Leadership training and continuing education have been emphasized by United Methodist Women. Each year studies introduced in regional schools of Christian mission, taught in conference schools, and implemented at the local and circle level include a Bible study, a mission study, and a timely problem issue. In 1980 the studies were Parables of the Kingdom, Mid-East Mosaic, and Human Rights. Carefully prepared study materials are produced for each study. More than 27,000 women in all jurisdictions attended conference schools this past summer, 1,727 in Texas alone. In consequence, Texas Methodist women have found their spiritual life enriched, their consciousness raised, and their understanding of world headlines sharpened. More than one Texas clergy friend has observed to me that the women are more knowledgeable than laymen in the congregation in matters of social concern, too. In 1951 Curl commented, "The Women's Society of Christian Service has been in the very forefront of Christian social action on a national and international level, as well as on the level of our local church communities."

Contributions of Modern Individuals

Besides the valuable work of the missionary societies throughout the past century, attention should be paid to individual Methodist women such as the founders of educational or social institutions, benefactors of Methodist causes, and others whose names are remembered and honored for their outstanding contributions of talent. Two of the founding mothers, women of vision and personal charisma, were Virginia K. Johnson and Lucy Ann Kidd-Key. Mrs. Johnson, called "Saint Virginia" by some of her admirers, was the guiding spirit of a home for young women — unfortunate girls — in Dallas. (Perhaps few today realize that Virginia Hall at SMU is named in her honor.) From 1893 until 1941 over 3,000 unmarried mothers were

provided a two-year program of spiritual, educational and vocational training here. Babies were cared for, adopted into Christian homes, given legal names, and made honorable, respected citizens.

Grandma Rogers visited the home in 1922, finding an imposing structure that had been erected in Oak Cliff eleven years before. She commented:

Sister Johnson is a dear old soul. She is doing a wonderful work. She has fifty-two pretty young girls ranging from twelve to twenty-two years of age. She takes them for two years, redeeming their character, saving their souls, and sends them out into the world to make good and useful women. She said that all those she now has belong to the church except two. Their parlor where they have Sunday School and prayer meeting is as nicely furnished a room as I ever saw. I don’t see how she ever raised enough money to build such a home and furnish it like it is.27

Apparently Grandma Rogers was not aware of financial support for this home by conference funds from 1895 and Methodist Home Mission funds from 1898. The home was closed in 1941, when a Texas law was interpreted to mean that a girl could not be required to remain for as long as two years, the time Mrs. Johnson felt was necessary for her redemption. Proceeds from the sale of the property were earmarked by the Woman’s Society for Christian Service for use in the North Texas Conference and helped to fund the opening of Bethlehem Center here.

Young women from quite a different background were those to whom Mrs. Lucy Ann Kidd-Key devoted 28 years of service in Sherman as head of the North Texas Female College, later named Kidd-Key in her honor. Mrs. Kidd, a Kentuckian, lived in Mississippi for 19 years as the wife of a planter doctor; after his death she headed Whitworth College in Brookhaven, Mississippi for ten years. In 1888 she was invited by Bishop Charles B. Galloway to come to Texas as president of the college, which had been closed for two years. Bishop Galloway had been impressed by Mrs. Kidd’s administrative ability as well as her talent; he had served one of his first appointments in Yazoo City, Mississippi, where Mrs. Kidd was an active member of his congregation. Mrs. Kidd accepted the invitation, moved to Sherman in the summer of 1888, revived the college, and built it into a strong institution with emphasis on fine arts, especially music. After her marriage in 1892 to Bishop Joseph Key (with Bishop Galloway officiating) she was known as Mrs. Kidd-Key.

The president developed a loyal following and financial support for her school. She employed top faculty members, even importing such music luminaries as pianist Harold von Mickwitz from Finland and violinist Carl Venth from Germany to teach in the conservatory, which at one time boasted 131 pianos, nine of them grand pianos. At its peak in 1908, enrollment was 521 with girls from fourteen states and Canada.

27Hunt, Grandma Rogers, p. 39.
Intensely feminine, Mrs. Kidd-Key was greatly admired; her chief ambition in life was to assist both rich and poor girls to attain the dignity and culture which she herself possessed. She placed in first rank the position of women in the home and through her influence many Kidd-Key girls married outstanding business and professional men.

Her cultural influence was stressed in a tribute appearing in the Sherman-Democrat the day after her death in 1916: “As wife, mother, and friend she stood out among the greatest. As teacher she was peer of the foremost education of the most highly cultured and civilized epoch of the world’s history.” To honor her, the college name was changed to Kidd-Key; it continued as a junior college until its closing in 1935.  

Methodist women in Texas have been generous in financial support of many Methodist causes since the days of Sarah Cockrell. The pattern of giving on a massive scale is exemplified for us today by the manifold largesse of Mrs. W.W. Fondren of Houston and Mrs. Joseph J. Perkins of Wichita Falls. During the S.M.U. Ministers Week of 1980, the fifty-first series of Fondren lectures was presented, one of the outstanding means of continuing education for Methodist clergy persons from the Southwest. Established by the Fondrens in 1920, this lecture series has brought to the SMU campus a veritable Who’s Who in the field of missions. Methodist bishops and distinguished leaders from several denominations have consistently voiced the most current and significant ideas and challenges. Parenthetically, it must be noted that of the 60 Fondren lecturers listed — in some years the lectures have been presented by a team — only one woman’s name appears, that of Theressa Hoover, head of the Women’s Division of the Board of Global Ministries. She is in good company with such giants as Sherwood Eddy, Sante U. Barbieri, and Albert C. Outler. The other two lecture series during Ministers Week were founded in 1935: the Peyton lectures emphasize preaching, the Jackson the Bible. Women had a role in financing both.

The Fondren fortune, founded on oil, has been invested in notable gifts to the Methodist Board of Hospitals and Homes, the Methodist Home in Waco, St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Houston (the Fondrens’ home church), Scarritt College for Christian Workers in Nashville, Southwestern University in Georgetown, the Texas Conference, the Institute of Religion and the Methodist Hospital in Houston, and Rice Institute (now University). All of these institutions joined with Southern Methodist University to honor Mrs. Fondren in 1957, when the Fondren Science Building was dedicated. The Fondren Library, said to be the first fully air-conditioned university library in the country, had been contributed in 1940. Mrs. Fondren served as a lay delegate to General

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28 Annie Laurie Connelly, *The History of Kidd-Key College, Sherman, Grayson County, Texas*, pp. 40, 88.
Conference as early as 1940 and has been named to the Methodist Hall of Fame. Bishop A. Frank Smith said of her:

I do not know a person who has been more intelligently interested in as many activities as Mrs. Fondren. She has been an inspiration for the eternal values . . . [she] represents the finest in stewardship and statesmanship.29

For many years it was Mrs. Fondren’s custom to attend the events of Ministers Week and to hear the Fondren Lectures.

Lois Craddock Perkins shared fully with her husband, Joe J., as major donors to Texas Methodist causes. The Perkins School of Theology — the chapel and seven buildings for classes and living quarters — is perhaps the greatest tangible evidence of Perkins generosity. When this campus was opened in 1951, it marked a milestone in theological education for Methodists in the southwest. Other Perkins gifts to SMU include the Perkins gymnasium, administration building, and physical plant building. Beyond this campus Perkins generosity is evidenced at the Methodist Home, Dallas Methodist Hospital, Southwestern University, and the Western Assembly grounds at Mt. Sequoyah, Fayetteville, Arkansas. There have been important gifts to the Methodist Board of Pensions as well as to a lectureship in the Perkins’ home church, Wichita Falls First Methodist.

A native of China Spring, Texas, Mrs. Perkins came to Wichita Falls in 1915 to teach sixth graders at a salary of $50 a month. Three years later she married oil man Joe Perkins. Her lifelong interest in education is evidenced by her years of teaching an adult Sunday school class as well as by the support of colleges. Mrs. Perkins has served as a trustee of SMU and as a member of the World Methodist Council.30

On a more modest scale are sermon series arranged at Highland Park Methodist Church by two outstanding laywomen, Mrs. W.H. Francis and Mrs. Vahram Rejebian. The Francis Memorial sermons were established in 1963 with preachers of national reputation brought to Dallas in the fall: the first four were Edward Bauman, Ralph W. Sockman, Carlyle Marney, and Gerald Kennedy.31 This series ended in 1968. Before that, Finis A. Crutchfield, Jr. and Dow Kirkpatrick had brought the messages. Mrs. Francis, who died in 1979, was one of the first women to be elected to the board of stewards of this large church. She was a generous supporter of missionary causes, especially the local outreach projects.

Ermance Rejebian and her husband started an annual sermon series during Holy Week of 1966. For the first few years the sermons were

30Dallas Times Herald, November 9, 1970.
preached at 7 a.m. in the church garden; later they were moved indoors and started on Palm Sunday at the morning and evening service, followed by three evening services during Holy Week. Bill Steel, son of long-time Highland Park minister Marshall T. Steel, gave the first Rejebian sermons. Most of the series preachers have been Methodists selected for their special connection with the church as well as their ability to bring an inspiring message. Among them have been Ewart G. Watts, Bishops Paul E. Martin and W. McFerrin Stowe, with William M. Elliott, a Presbyterian, an exception to this practice. Born in Turkey, Mrs. Rejebian is a very honored naturalized citizen, whose oral book reviews in Dallas for the past 45 years have made her well known and highly respected. Each year she presents a review of a Bible book for the United Methodist Women and usually gives the first of the summer book reviews at her church. She has also served on the board of stewards here.

Texas Methodist women have brought their talents to serve the wider church world. Two Texas-born women with Ph.D. degrees from prestigious institutions forty years ago have had notable careers in the field of education. Mary Alice Jones, born in Dallas, University of Texas B.A. and Yale Ph.D., was the author of numerous books for children in the religion field, such as *Tell Me About Jesus*, as well as curriculum materials for church school classes at the elementary level. She had two periods of service on the Methodist General Board of Education. She recalled her experiences in Grace Methodist Church, Dallas, Epworth League and at the summer conferences at Epworth-by-the-Sea:

> It was the part of the church that I enjoyed most during those years and I think it gave me a "rooting and grounding" in the church which nothing else did. It had enthusiasm and vigor, even if not profundity.³²

Ina Corinne Brown, granddaughter of Mary Fisher Wells, was born in Gatesville, went to the University of Chicago for her college degrees, and is perhaps best known for teaching anthropology at Scarritt and for her books in the intercultural field, such as *Understanding Other Cultures*. One of her sisters had a long career of missionary service in Brazil.

Another example of the contribution of Methodist women in Texas to the whole of Methodism was their urging the creation of a devotional magazine, called *The Upper Room* when it became a reality in 1935. The proposal was made by women in the Philathea Class of Travis Park Methodist Church in San Antonio, led by Mrs. Seth A. Craig. The publication has been called a "Twentieth Century Miracle," since by 1980 it had 54 editions, in 40 languages, with a circulation of 3,000,000 copies each issue.³³

Two women whose careers have been based in Texas are among those who have rendered notable service in church music. Nita Akin, organist at Wichita Falls First Methodist for fifty years, has a reputation as a concert organist, a teacher of organ, and a patroness of young organists. Born in McKinney, Mrs. Akin was head of the organ department at Midwestern University for twenty years. She and her husband, Jake Akin, provided scholarships for many exceptionally talented students; Akin graduates now serve in Methodist music ministries at First Methodist, Houston; Christ Methodist, Rochester, Minnesota; Highland Park, Dallas; and there are many more. The Akins helped to start the Master of Sacred Music degree plan at Perkins in 1959. They underwrote the cost of organ renewal at Wesley’s Chapel in London in 1978. Mrs. Akin says her greatest honor was to play that organ in the bicentennial opening of the restored chapel.

Jane Manton Marshall is a native Dallasite who grew up in the Presbyterian church but became a Methodist when she married Elbert Marshall, son of a former Methodist missionary in Brazil. She is active in the Northaven Methodist Church in Dallas. During the past 25 years Mrs. Marshall has composed and published more than 100 church anthems which are widely used in many denominations. In fact, she was recently honored by the Southern Baptist Convention for her contribution to church music. She is also the author of three books of songs for children. Currently Mrs. Marshall serves as chair of a national committee charged with recommending 120 hymns to be included in the supplement to the *Methodist Hymnal* now moving toward publication. She says that one of the problems faced by her committee was that of “inclusive” language, that is, neither sexist nor racist.

Texas Methodist women writers cover a wide spectrum from authors of missionary histories and curriculum materials to fiction and poetry. Mrs. Claude M. Simpson contributed perceptive and informative “Missionary Milestones” in her role as historian for the North Texas Conference Methodist women from 1953 until 1971. She was the first president of the Texas Council of Methodist Women and was active at jurisdictional and general board levels. Another historian, Mrs. T. Herbert Minga, wrote the comprehensive account of women’s work in all Texas conferences as a chapter in Olin W. Nail’s *History of Texas Methodism, 1900-1960*. She was a published poet; her sonnet sequence on the apostles is entitled *Twelve Men*. Allyne Porter wrote a fictionalized account of a Texas itinerant preacher’s family, *Papa Was a Preacher*. By 1965 this book had sold 200,000 copies. “Papa” was R. E. Porter, who was a member of the North Texas Conference for over 60 years.
In recent years the status and role of women in Methodism has received a great deal of attention. It took a long and strenuous struggle to secure for women laity rights in 1919 and then clergy rights in 1956. Georgia Harkness once observed, "The church is the last stronghold of male dominance." Nail reported with some surprise that he had been unable to find the name of any woman in the records of the Southwest Texas Conference from 1859 to 1890, although, as he says:

In this long period when no recognition was given the women, it does not mean they did not have a part in the work of the church. They usually outnumbered the men and were more loyal and faithful than their husbands and fathers.

In his conference history he perhaps tried to make amends in 1958 by filling 17 pages with the photographs as well as the names of 340 women, all wives of preachers.

At the 1972 General Conference it was noted that only 13 percent of the lay delegates were women, although 54 percent of church members were women. Barbara Campbell’s conclusion is that The United Methodist Church "by custom and tradition still excludes women from full participation in all phases of its life. There are no legal barriers; but the practice has been formalized by default." Mrs. C. M. Simpson quotes another leader in UMW work as saying, "In the job I am in I have to look like a girl, think like a man, act like a lady, have horse sense, and work like a dog."

In the Northwest Texas Conference in 1980 there were 15 women elected to the annual conference council on ministries out of 53 members; one woman was chairperson of the committee on equitable salaries, and served on the Council on Professional Ministries; one clergywoman was on the Board of Ordained Ministry; four out of eleven members of the Board of Diaconal Ministry were women.

At Highland Park Methodist, Dallas, the first women — eleven of them — were elected to the board of stewards in 1953. Today 90 out of the 191 members of the administrative board of this church are women. That's progress over 27 years.

Clergy rights for women have made little headway since the landmark ruling in 1956. "Both men and women are included in all provisions of the Discipline which refer to the ministry," says the 1976 Discipline.

34Harkness, *Women in Church and Society*, p. 27.
36Barbara A. Campbell, *United Methodist Women In the Middle of Tomorrow* (Women’s Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, 1975), p. 44.
38Letter from Helen Releford, January 18, 1980.
But by 1970 only .07 percent, or 173 out of 23,376, of Methodist clergy in full connection were women. By 1979 the Division of the Ordained Ministry reported that the total number of female clergy in The United Methodist Church had passed the 1,000 mark. Of that number 388 were in full connection as pastors or associate pastors — more than double the 1970 figure. There were three women district superintendents and 92 conference members in full connection serving outside the local church. In the five Texas conferences, according to data available in 1979, there were 20 women out of 1145 ordained ministers in full connection. Most of these women did not have pastoral appointments. In North Texas, for example, one directed Bethlehem Center, one served as chaplain for women prisoners, and one was chaplain for the Dallas Community Colleges.

Methodist women have fared better in the diaconal ministry, the new category for the "lay person whose decision to make a professional career in the employed status in the United Methodist Church or its related agencies is accompanied by the meeting of standards for the office of service, and who has been consecrated by the bishop." In the Texas conferences 62 women and 48 men were listed in 1979 as diaconal ministers in the fields of religious education, financial administration, and music.

The future outlook for women in Methodist ministry has its bright side. A major breakthrough since February 1979, was the election of Marjorie S. Matthews, a 64-year old district superintendent in the North Central Jurisdiction, as bishop. Furthermore, enrollment trends reported at Perkins School of Theology show a definite increase in the number of women students aiming for careers in the ministry. In the fall of 1970 there were ten women enrolled for Master of Theology degrees; in the fall of 1978 there were 77. Women enrolled for the Master of Sacred Music degree were 23, up from 2 in 1970. Totals for women in this period were 430 for M. Th., and 89 for MSM.

There are other encouraging trends at Perkins. For the past few years the women students have conducted their own Women's Week, bringing to the campus outstanding women clergy for lectures, classes, and dialogue. In 1978 the theme was "Committed to Change" and the speakers were Dr. Margaret Farley of Yale Divinity School and Dr. Beverly Harrison of Union Theological Seminary. Students have also prepared an "inclusive" hymnal for chapel use. In January 1979, Perkins was hostess for a national consultation of clergywomen, second in a series

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39 Campbell, Middle of Tomorrow, p. 45.
40 Texas Methodist, Nov. 30, 1979.
42 Statistical Table from Perkins School of Theology, Nov. 21, 1979.
which started in Nashville. Some 600 women preregistered; their concern was “to examine the appointability and upward mobility of clergywomen in the United Methodist system.” While weaknesses were pointed out, the associate editor of the Christian Century declared, “More than any other denomination, The United Methodist Church is utilizing its talented women and ethnic minority persons in leadership positions.” At this consultation a Texas participant was Janice Riggle Huie, who with her husband serves as co-pastor at St. Mark Methodist of Austin. They represent a new trend — the clergy couple.

Probably because so few women had availed themselves of clergy rights in the 20 years after legal obstacles were removed, the 1976 General Conference authorized a Commission on the Status and Role of Women to be organized in every conference. The mandate for these commissions: to be concerned with “leadership enablement, resources and communication, affirmative action and advocacy roles, and interagency coordination... directed toward the elimination of sexism in all of its manifestations from the total life of The United Methodist Church.”

In the Texas conferences the COSROW commissions have functioned with varying effectiveness. Jan Wiksten’s report for North Texas suggests a modest first step:

Because of the lack of visibility of women in the North Texas Conference the COSROW strongly urges that every local church have a clergywoman or woman seminary student preach in its pulpit at least one Sunday during the year.

Further, the commission “openly and unequivocally affirms and endorses the concept and guiding principle that clergy appointments be made without regard of race or sex.” Northwest Texas also advocates a “Woman in the Pulpit Sunday” or a “Women Speak the Word Sunday,” using leading laywomen as well as clergywomen.

Central and Southwest Texas commissions filed somewhat more detailed reports. Central sent representatives to two national consultations, proposed to enlarge the commission by adding one representative from each district, and designated mid-April to mid-May as Women in the Pulpit month. Concern was expressed for divorced spouses of clergymen.

Southwest Texas planned to help churches examine the working conditions of women they employ, to share worship materials of an inclusive nature with pastors and worship commissions, to supply local churches with names of women, both clergy and lay, who would be willing to speak to their congregations. This commission also presented a
rationale for the work:

There is a hungering and hurting world that needs to hear the Good News of the Whole Gospel. There are two very real issues — Racism and Sexism — that distort the vision of the Church and thereby distort the Good News that we share. Together, the two commissions of The United Methodist Church — Religion and Race (R and R) and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) are to some as a pair of glasses through which we look at the Church and the world. These glasses have the R and R lens for color correction (racial inclusiveness) and the COSROW lens for “shape” correction (inclusiveness of women).

The COSROW lens helps the Church look at
- Clergywomen — see that their ministry brings new dimensions to the proclamation of the word.
- Clergy Couples — and see that their presence offers happy new possibilities for the Church rather than receiving them as problems to be solved.
- Women of the Church — and see that their witness is needed alongside that of men. Their gifts lead them to serve in the areas of finance, decision-making, and administration as well as teachers, servers, and cooks.47

In February 1980, a national conference was held in Cincinnati on church women’s history with the theme, “Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the United Methodist Tradition.” Papers were read on twenty-five different topics. Two Texas women were assigned topics concerned with Hispanic American Methodist women. The first of two volumes of these papers will be published by Abingdon in November 1981.

As we look to the future for Texas Methodist women, it is interesting to have the prediction of Douglas Jackson that by the year 2000 the role of women in the church will be much more important. In a recent interview he declared:

We’re going to see a growing number of women as pastors and on levels of religious leadership . . . they will be higher achievers and more competent than the males on the average . . . Women pastors are much more capable of delegating leadership than men are. Maybe that’s the way they have been socialized, depending on other people to do things for them, but generally women are going to be much better church administrators than men.48

Programs of United Methodist Women, of COSROW bodies in the conferences, and of current preacher preparation, all seem to augur well for the future as lay women assume more responsible positions and as clergywomen find greater opportunities for meaningful Christian service.