

NEW FINDING AID: A GUIDE TO MATERIALS ON WOMEN IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ARCHIVES

During the last twenty-five years women's history has evolved into an important field of study. Historians and scholars have been able to integrate the daily experiences of women into the historical record because new archival materials on women's lives have been uncovered. Archives are realizing that much of their material relates to women and have developed finding guides and collection aids to this information. *A Guide to Materials on Women in The United Methodist Church Archives* is one such reference tool. Written by Kristen D. Turner for the General Commission on Archives and History, this guide documents a wealth of source materials on women's lives, issues, and religious experiences within the United Methodist tradition.

The Methodist Center on the campus of Drew University serves as the official archival repository of The United Methodist Church. Approximately 13,000 cubic feet of materials are housed at the Center. The earliest dates from 1731; the latest from 1995. Records from church agencies, personal papers from lay persons, clergy, bishops, and missionaries, and conference journals, annual reports, and minutes provide scholars with an abundance of source materials. These records document the growth of United Methodism in America, the place of religion in society, the importance of church work in American history, and the use of religion as a social and political expression.

The *Guide* includes items created by women which describe personal experience, highlight an individual's contributions and accomplishments, or illustrate the role and place of women in The United Methodist Church. Materials not created by women, but which examine women's issues and concerns, are also part of this guide. In addition, the papers of some men are included because accounts of women's lives are often revealed in the papers of their husbands, fathers, and brothers.

The *Guide* is divided into four sections: agency records, personal papers, reference collections, and oral histories. In addition, there is an index with name, subject, and geographic citations. Each entry contains collection information, a history or biographical note, a scope and content note, and references to related materials within the holdings.

The first section is agency records. Material generated by eight general church agencies and seven smaller church affiliated units is included in the *Guide*. These collections present a history of the agency and are a valuable record of the agency's specific activity. They provide information about church structure and governance, reveal United Methodist's

long standing commitment to missions, and outline the church's dedication to social responsibility and action.

The next three sections, personal papers, reference collections, and oral histories, personalize the individual's experience in and with the church. These sections of the *Guide* document the lives, experiences, and motivations of women and men involved in church work, including missionaries, bishops, ministers, and lay persons. Numerous accounts of distant mission stations are revealed in diaries, journals, correspondence, and photographs from women and men. Theses, dissertations, and manuscripts on a variety of topics related to United Methodism, particularly missions, are cited as well.

The holdings in the United Methodist Church Archives related to women are numerous and provide valuable insights into their lives and experiences. Researchers from a variety of disciplines can use this guide to complement their studies and expand the historical record of women's involvement in United Methodism. *A Guide to Materials on Women in the United Methodist Church Archives* may be purchased for \$25.00 (includes shipping) from the General Commission on Archives and History, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940 [Phone: (201) 408-3189].