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"Will future historians record that in the week of December, 1941, when the United States of America entered the World War, a new United Council of Church Women was born and that the spirit of the church women of the United States made it, in the war months that followed, an instrument of the Spirit of Christ in the world? To this end may we all work and pray!"

(—Amy Ogden Welcher, President of UCCW, 1942, The Church Woman)

"Our history reveals how women have tried to lead out in being 'interracial' and struggling for justice."

(—Clarie Randall, President of Church Women United, 1991, Church Woman 57,1 (1991, p.3)
In December, 1941, in the week following the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, three women’s religious organizations, the Council of Women for Home Missions, the National Council of Church Women, and the Woman’s Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference, met in Atlantic City, New Jersey to decide if the three groups could successfully merge into one united movement of church women. That goal was realized when the three groups combined to form the United Council of Church Women (UCCW). The earliest roots of this group ran back to the mid-nineteenth century to the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society, founded in the late 1860s. In 1887, the first Day of Prayer for Home Missions was held by the Presbyterian Women’s Board of Home Missions, and in 1890, the first Day of Prayer for Foreign Missions was observed. One hundred years later, Church Women United continues to observe annually World Day of Prayer.

Up until the turn of the twentieth century, women’s missionary efforts had been confined largely within specific denominations, with Methodists and Presbyterians leading the way; but in 1901 the first interdenominational effort was launched by the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions. Women’s missionary activities continued to be split between foreign and domestic work, however, since no national organization existed under which the two fields could be brought together. A 1926 survey conducted by the Federal Council of Churches indicated that almost two thousand local groups of church women existed around the
United States.ⁱ Many of these groups would be united in 1941 under the banner of the United Council of Church Women. In 1950, UCCW joined with eleven other organizations to found the National Council of Churches, and subsequently UCCW changed its name to United Church Women. Sixteen years later, in an effort to emphasize the goal of unity among all women, United Church Women changed its' name to Church Women United (CWU), the title under which the group continues to labor.

According to Church Women United's 1989-90 annual report, approximately seventeen hundred local units of Church Women United exist around the United States today. Church Women United members come from twenty-five supporting religious organizations, and bring together Protestant, Jewish and Catholic women.² Church Women United maintains three national offices, with the main branch in upper Manhattan. Two subsidiary offices are located in Washington, D.C. and another at the United Nations. The D.C. office serves as the "legislation watchdog", keeping Church Women United officials


² Church Women United is supported these organizations: African Methodist Episcopal, AME-Zion, American Baptist Churches, Disciples of Christ, CME, Church of God, Church of the Brethren, Council of Hispanic American Ministries, Cumberland Presbyterian, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Greek Orthodox, International Council of Community Churches, Korean American CWU, Moravian Church, NBC of America, Presbyterian Church/USA, National Baptist Convention-USA, Inc., Reformed Church in America, Religious Society of Friends, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church. Roman Catholic Women did not participate in CWU until Vatican II.
abreast of changes in issues concerning child care, medical care, low-income housing and civil rights. The United Nations office is primarily concerned with Church Women United’s international activities. International programs range from advocacy of the rights of women political prisoners in the Philippines, to support for battered women in Central America. During 1989-1990, Church Women United channelled almost fifty thousand dollars into overseas projects, as well as another twenty thousand into domestic projects and seventy thousand into emergency grants that, among other things, aided victims of Hurricane Hugo. The funds for these "intercontinental grants for mission" come from offerings collected during World Day of Prayer, held the last Friday in March, and World Community Day, held the last Friday in November.

Church Women United has maintained, since its inception, a commitment to the dual goals of active involvement in domestic and foreign missions and to ecumenicity. Church Women United traverses the globe in keeping their commitment to worldwide missions. According to former Church Women United executive director Margaret Shannon, "[We] might have busied [ourselves] with pat little projects that could have been checked off as finished. Instead United Church Women tacked frontiers of world peace, human rights and Christian unity." Shortly after the United States bombing of Hiroshima, Church Women United sent representatives to Japan to

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3 Annual Report, 1 March, 1989 to 1 September, 1990, Church Women United, New York, pp. 4-5.

4 Shannon, p. 23.
restore relationships with that country’s women. These efforts led to the founding of the Tokyo Council of Church Women, as well as the establishment of several Christian colleges there. During World War II, Church Women United also worked to ease the conditions of Japanese-Americans living in relocation camps in the United States, and sent food and clothing to the resident of Eastern Europe.

Church Women United has faced a lot of adversity and opposition since its' founding in 1941. In 1957, Senator Joseph McCarthy attacked CWU for its stand on peace and for supporting the United Nations. The most serious criticisms levelled at CWU, however, stem from the group’s stance on racial issues. According to executive director Shannon, the experience of World War II that brought the attention of Church Women United to the discrimination against blacks in the United States. Shannon says:

Many white women were unconscious of the deep-seated nature of the problem [of race] in their own communities, yet it was clear enough that race relations must become a priority of this new movement. United Council of Church Women was an appropriate channel for both Negro and white women to work on this problem together. Although individual congregations were almost universally segregated at this time, [CWU] declared its intention to make its fellowship open to all Christian women.  

CWU’s commitment to the notion of interracial and interdenominational activity among women remained strong from the group’s organization. Church Women United’s first president, Amy Ogden Welcher (1941-1944) recalls:

5 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
We were interracial from the beginning. I recall Abbie Clement Jackson, an active Black church woman...asking specifically if black women and white women will work together in United Church Women. I replied, 'If we don’t mean interracial, then I want no part of it.' We sought understanding and...friendships...

In 1954, following the Supreme Court’s ruling on school desegregation in Brown vs. the Board of Education, Topeka, Church Women United held "Human Relations Workshops" across the country to support harmonious race relations. Cynthia C. Wedel, former Church Women United president (1954-1958) recalls:

I was national president during those years when race relations were absorbing much of our concern. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 on school desegregation was raising problems and opportunities everywhere. As I look back, I think our best work as church women in that era was our firm stand on integration...

Although Church Women United has done many great things in its career, our early and very firm stand for integration, for complete racial harmony within the churches is something of which we can always be proud and something that I think [is] going to make a difference in the whole history of the Christian church in this country.

In 1961, Church Women United initiated project "Assignment: Race" in which members were sent throughout the United States to help local units work on civil rights issues and on combating racism. Bessie March, chairperson of the project, in an interview with Margaret Schiffert, current editor of Churchwoman magazine says of her experiences during this project:


7 Ibid., p. 6; and "Jubilee: Historical Video II," Church Women United, New York.
There were a number of women who lived in the Deep South who encountered much trouble with the Ku Klux Klan and burning crosses. I used to listen to them telling how they were treated. One of them was a dear old woman who was not afraid of anything...The women of the church were always almost fearless. If there was something we wanted to do, they would go with us and plan for it and do it...Louise Wallace and I travelled together. We went to homes in states where people weren't used to seeing the Black and White together...Louise and I would have the same room together, and people hadn't been seeing that in some of those towns. Little towns up in New England, not just in the South."\(^8\)

Church Women United has indeed confronted the problem of racial prejudice head-on in areas outside the South. In 1945, one hundred and fifty leaders of the national organization met in Washington, D.C. for a meeting. Although reservations for accommodations were made in advance, upon their arrival, the hotel honored only the reservations of the white women. Upon the hotel's refusal to lodge the black women, all Church Women United members withdrew their reservations. For the duration of their stay in Washington, Church Women United members boarded in homes of individuals, black and white, sympathetic to the organizations' cause.\(^9\)

The South, however, presented special problems for Church Women United and its' commitment to interracial cooperation. In 1942, the national organization decided to recognize only state councils that were open to all races; and in that same year, Church


\(^9\) Shannon, pp. 34-35.
Women United changed the name of one of its three annual celebrations, May Fellowship Luncheon to May Fellowship Day, to accommodate southern chapters that could have integrated "teas" but not integrated luncheons for members. After the 1954 Brown decision, Church Women United leaders from the southern states met in Atlanta to discuss the problems facing many communities on the eve of school desegregation. Church Women leaders were concerned, according to Margaret Shannon, not only with the immediate difficulties of the situation, but with factors that would affect the success of desegregation in the long-run. Of particular concern was the continued instillment of racial prejudices in children at home, job security of black educators in integrated schools, and the use of church facilities to maintain private, segregated schools.

Mississippi, not surprisingly, posed a special challenge for Church Women United in the area of race. The national organization came under attack from the notorious Governor Theodore G. Bilbo only six years after the groups' founding. In 1947, Bilbo published his racist rantings under the title of Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization, and Church Women United was one of the groups Bilbo credited with mongrelizing the white race. Bilbo wrote:

There is in existence [a] religious organization operating under the name of United Council of Church Women...This group...is rendering a great disservice to the integrity of the white race in the United

10 Ibid., p. 32.
States. Some members...are not only preaching social equality between the white and black races, but they are brazenly practicing it...Such 'stunts'...are not only disgraceful, unthinkable, and outlandish, but these practices are an open, brazen and defiant betrayal of the white race and an affront to every suggestion of the decent, cultural American ideals and aspirations of the Anglo-Saxon race...We do question the right of any white man or woman...to compromise, contaminate and do those things which will lead to miscegenation and the mongrelization of our white race...The one gratifying thing [is] that this group vowed never to hold a session in any city in the United States where the people do not practice social equality of the races. Thank God that we will not be bothered with them below the Mason and Dixon Line!11

Church Women United also worked in Mississippi during the state's 'long, hot summers' of 1964 and 1965, through the program "Wednesdays in Mississippi". The program was organized by the National Council of Negro Women and carried out by a number of women's groups, including Church Women United. Each week, groups of women from northern cities went into Mississippi communities to meet with southern women for the purpose of alleviating the racial tensions that were particularly high in the state in the mid-1960s.12

Despite Bilbo's fulminations, Church Women United was active in Mississippi by the 1950s. CWU presently maintains chapters in seven locales: Jackson, Greenville, Pontotoc, Holly Springs,


12 Shannon, pp. 135-136.
Coldwater, the Gulf Coast area and Oxford -- the site of one of the state's most heated civil rights struggles. In 1962, the year that the University of Mississippi was integrated, the town's local chapter of Church Women United was organized officially. The group that adopted the Church Women United name in 1962 existed as early as 1955, but operated under the name "Woman's Society of Christian Service" (WSCS). WSCS was composed largely of women from the historically black Burns United Methodist Church. These women, along with black women from local Baptist and CME churches, came together each May to observe World Day of Prayer, one of Church Women United's three yearly celebrations. Across town in Oxford's First Presbyterian Church, white women were also gathering to commemorate World Day of Prayer. Samantha Redmond, the founder of Oxford's Church Women United remembers someone saying at the time, "Isn't this something, we've got two worlds. We're having our World Day of Prayer and the whites are meeting uptown." This statement reflects well the division along racial lines that

13 The details surrounding CWU's actual formation in Oxford are sketchy because interviews conducted with early members and the information recorded in the group's minutes book produce several conflicting versions of the events. What follows is, at present, the truest possible recreation of the group's organization and integration.


16 Redmond, 12 November 1991, tape recording.
characterized Mississippi society in the decades before the Civil Rights Movement.

One of the Presbyterian women participating in the World Day of Prayer celebration, Lillian Beanland, was a retired missionary who had worked in Africa for a number of years, along with her husband Gayle Beanland. Beanland knew that World Day of Prayer was also being celebrated in the black community and she decided to unite the "two worlds". Beanland knew several members of the black women's organization, in fact one of the women, Foster Houston, a member of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, worked as Beanland's maid.

Beanland also knew Samantha Redmond, the pastor's wife at Burns Methodist and a teacher at a local black school where Beanland had occasionally made presentations to the children about her experiences in Africa. Beanland approached Redmond with the idea of the two groups joining together in the next World Day of Prayer, and offered to purchase the programs from the national office if Redmond organized the event. Samantha Redmond was not the first person Lillian Beanland approached with this idea. She discussed it with other minister's wives, but Redmond was the first to agree to play the lead role in organizing Oxford's first integrated World Day of Prayer. Redmond, undaunted by the challenge, remembers telling Beanland, "We [the Women's Society of Christian Service] are going to recognize it anyway, and I'll just tell them there's a group who would like to join us in it!"17

17Ibid.
According to Samantha Redmond, Oxford’s integrated World Day of Prayer was a success; but the establishment of a Church Women United chapter in Oxford was still several years away. For the next few years, from approximately 1957 to 1962, several black women, along with Lillian Beanland, attended state Church Women United meetings in Jackson. After several of these trips, Redmond decided to organize a unit of Church Women United in Oxford, and in 1962 the group, consisting of ten black members, formed under the leadership of Samantha Redmond. One of the tenets of the national organization is interracial cooperation, and the existence of an all-black group seems curious in light of this guideline; but perhaps the participation with the white community in celebrating World Day of Prayer, or the involvement of Lillian Beanland provided the group with its integrated status.

The date of the first white involvement in Church Women United in Oxford differs from source to source, but seems to have been somewhere between 1963 and 1966. Susie Marshall, one of the group’s original members pinpoints 1963 as the year that four white women became members of the Oxford unit. These women were Willie Hume Bryant, Virginia McMurray, Doris Murry and Sara Morrison. Virginia McMurray, in an interview, stated that white women became involved in Oxford’s Church Women United sometime after Willie Hume Bryant, who had been a member of the Jackson unit while her husband served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical

18 The ten original members were: Alberta Evans, Bertha Fryson, Foster Houston, Ida V. Johnson, Susie Marshall, Samantha Redmond, Edna Thompson, Emma Turner, Katie Mae Wilson and Augusta Woods.
School, returned to Oxford. McMurray remembers this because when Bryant returned to Oxford there was no integrated Church Women United chapter in which she could participate. McMurray's version of the events would place the integration sometime after 1964, the last year Alton Bryant served as Vice-Chancellor of the medical school. The most conclusive evidence seems to be recorded in the Oxford CWU unit's minutes book. Minutes of Oxford's CWU meetings go back as far as October 18, 1965, and the names of white women, other than Lillian Beanland, do not appear for another year. In October, 1966, the names of fifteen white women are listed for the first time as members of Oxford's Church Women United.\(^{19}\)

That Church Women United, a group committed to fostering communication among racial groups, was organized in Oxford the same year that the University was integrated seems unlikely to be mere coincidence. None of the group's original members, however, allude to Meredith's integration and the racial tensions that gripped the campus and town as a catalyst in the group's formation. Susie Marshall, one of the ten original members, says she got involved with Church Women United because she wanted:

> to get a relationship...an understanding [with the white community]...because at that time we didn't know anything about what their churches

\(^{19}\) The fifteen white women listed are: Mrs. C.M. (Doris) Murry, Mrs. Robert Halley, Mrs. Duncan Whiteside, Mrs. C.E. Matthews, Miss Katherine Rea, Mrs. C. Campbell, Mrs. Alton (Willie Hume) Bryant, Mrs. Wayne Hoffman, Mrs. Gayle C. (Lillian) Beanland, Mrs. James L. Jones, Mrs. Virginia McMurray, Mrs. Roscoe Boyer, Mrs. E.S. Smathers, Mrs. C.M. Fortenberry, and Mrs. Sara Morrison.
were doing...and I just wanted to know more...and to try to understand them and become friends.  

The topic of race relations is a sensitive issue that many Oxford CWU members are reluctant to discuss.

Although several of the women interviewed say they can think of no instance in which the group experienced prejudice or opposition from the community once they integrated, one member recalls a state meeting held in Oxford where the police were summoned to watch Burns United Methodist Church because rumors of a Ku Klux Klan march were circulating.  

One possible explanation for Oxford's acceptance of an integrated movement like Church Women United is the anti-inflammatory stance adopted by the local unit. Virginia McMurray, one of the first white members, says of those early years, "To me it wasn't out waving the flags and saying 'Let's integrate everything'...We were just there and we were integrated...We were very cautious not to try any big deals that were changing things..."  

Many members of Church Women United were active in the desegregation of public schools, especially many of the black women, like Susie Marshall and Samantha Redmond who were public school teachers. As a group, Church Women United supported public education and kept abreast of the progress made by the local


schools. According to the records of the group's November 7, 1969, meeting, Church Women United leaders composed a letter that was sent to the white community and a copy of this letter was to be kept in the minutes book. One can only speculate as to the contents of the letter however, for the copy is not in the minutes book and could not be located. It seems likely though that it might have concerned public school desegregation, since that movement was at its peak in Mississippi in 1969.

In an effort to facilitate local public school desegregation, according to Susie Marshall, Church Women United:

invoke[d] ministers to come to us and...talk about the problems...after desegregation of schools and we would try to listen and weigh what we as Church Women United would say to each other, not to use harsh words but be careful about the words that would cause a bad relation between us as Church Women United...We invited ministers to come and give us some...things that we could do to help the community, 'cause a lot of people...felt really hostile about desegregation of the schools.23

One example of such a meeting is recorded in the minutes book. On November 6, 1970, Reverend Wayne Johnson gave a report to Church Women United on the educational programs in Oxford. Johnson expressed particular concern for the Headstart program's method of grouping children according to ability.24 Church Women United's involvement in project Head Start has been both physical and financial. Before the federal government provided funding for


24 Minutes of Church Women United, Oxford, Mississippi, 6 November 1970.
project Head Start, Oxford's CWU sent donations to help with the lunch program. Even though CWU no longer provides this service, the group continues to support Head Start by conducting story hours for the children and by accompanying them on field trips.

Oxford's CWU exhibits special concern for the needs of children. In the late 1980s, the national organization instituted "Imperative: The Five Year Plan" designed to alleviate not only the immediate suffering of women and children living in poverty, but also to eliminate the roots causes of poverty. Church Women United in Oxford however, has been working since the integration of public schools in the late 1960s to provide necessities to area school children living in poverty, through the group's main service activity, the Children's Clothing Project. The project operates on funds raised at the group's yearly "Silver Tea" held each September. The first Silver Tea was held in 1966, and the money raised was used to send unit president Susie Marshall to New York City for a CWU training session. Funds raised at Silver Teas held since 1966 have gone towards the maintenance of the Children's Project.

At each local public school there is a designated teacher who watches the children, and when a need for shoes or clothing is seen the Children's project director is notified and the necessities are purchased for the child and given to them for "good behavior". Teachers and CWU Clothing project directors use the utmost discretion in giving to needy children and make every effort "not

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to destroy self-dignity, but to give the children a sense of well-being from feeling properly dressed."  

Although not a large project, usually operating on limited funds, Church Women United members feel that the Clothing Project raises the self-esteem of many children each year, and improvements in clothing contribute directly to scholastic advancement.

The efforts undertaken by Oxford’s Church Women United to improve at least one aspect of the living conditions of local children reflects elements of a social gospel ideology. Most scholars of religion downplay the significance of social gospel thought among Southern protestants because the largest denominations in the region, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian, emphasize individual salvation and an afterlife. Church Women United in Oxford is composed largely of women from two of these religious groups, but the organization exhibits a concern for temporal as well as spiritual life -- the main tenet of social gospel movements.

John Patrick McDowell in his work on the Woman’s Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal church in the South, argues for the existence of a southern social gospel, pointing to the organization’s "concern for the nation’s problems and the victims


27 Minutes of Church Women United, Oxford, Mississippi, 18 November 1971.
of those problems."\(^{28}\) Furthermore, McDowell presents as evidence of social gospel thought, the growing awareness among Methodist Episcopal women of:

> the influence of the social environment on all people’s lives...[and] particular concern for the home environment of immigrants, native poor whites and blacks. [Methodist Episcopal women] sought to eradicate conditions that they considered detrimental to family stability; they were especially concerned about the well-being of children...They...consistently sought for the recipients better education, updated medical care, improved living conditions, and other social improvements...\(^{29}\)

Many of these statements also apply to the work of Church Women United in Oxford and point to the existence of social Christianity in the South, especially since the Children’s Project is the distinct domain of the local unit and not part of an agenda set by the national organization.

One issue, distinctly southern in character, that marks the history of Church Women United in Oxford is the reluctance of the First Baptist Church to participate in CWU activities. The Oxford unit of CWU presently consists of ninety-seven members and only one of these women, Kay Moorhead, is a member of First Baptist Church. In addition, Moorhead is not a native southerner, but comes from Colorado where her father was a Baptist minister. Since the founding of Oxford’s CWU, never have more than two individuals from


\(^{29}\) Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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First Baptist belonged to the local unit. Oxford's CWU, like the national organization, stresses cooperation across denominational lines, and the members of the local unit come from a variety of churches, from New Hope Missionary Baptist to St. John's Catholic church. The majority of members come from First Presbyterian, Second Baptist and Burns United Methodist churches. The south's largest denomination, Southern Baptist, shows little interest however, in ecumenical activity in Oxford. First Baptist Church participated in a Vacation Bible School with the black Second Baptist church, a missionary Baptist affiliate in 1970, and more recently, in November 1990, CWU's World Community Day was held at First Baptist Church. The program drew no members from First Baptist Church, other than Kay Moorhead.

Ellen Rosenberg, in her recent work on the Southern Baptists, offers several explanations for the denomination's anti-ecumenism. One reason is the Southern Baptist's "unique sense of mission...to bring the gospel truth to the world as no other Christian tradition can." Secondly, because the Southern Baptist church is so large and financially secure, there is little motivation to join forces with other denominations. Race is a final factor that may contribute to Southern Baptist exclusivity. Rosenberg suggests that Southern Baptism is the religion of upper and middle-class

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white society, and therefore issues that fall outside these racial and class boundaries are not significant concerns of the Southern Baptists.\footnote{Ibid., p. 150.}

Kay Moorhead offers another possible explanation for First Baptist's non-participatory posture, and it is one that can be applied to Southern Baptists as a whole. Church Women United, as a national organization, maintains a liberal agenda. In the mid-1970s, CWU worked diligently for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, including the controversial abortion clause. In 1969, Oxford's CWU unit took into consideration the support of a Planned Parenthood program for the community.\footnote{Minutes, Church Women United, Oxford, Mississippi, 21 April 1969.} The idea was abandoned because organizing a Planned Parenthood clinic required five thousand dollars, a sum outside the local unit's financial reach. Instead, Oxford Church Women United members were encouraged to spread the word to mothers of the town that birth control pills were available at the Public Health Office.\footnote{Ibid., 14 September 1969.} Moorhead feels that CWU's liberal platform discourages Southern Baptist Women from joining the local unit. Moorhead also notes that she finds some of the national organization's programs theologically disagreeable, like the inclusion of the word "gods" in a World Community Day program on Hawaiian women.\footnote{Kay Moorhead, interview by author, 18 November 1991, Oxford, Mississippi, tape recording.} Unlike some Southern Baptists,
Moorhead has not allowed these differences to discourage her from playing an active role in an interdenominational group. "As far as I am concerned," says Moorhead, "I think what is important...is that black and white women in Oxford are together and doing something."³⁵

Like Moorhead, most Oxford Church Women United members realize the value of the work they do in the community, whether it be providing clothing for needy children or enlisting groups of female prisoners from Parchman to conduct seminars for Oxford’s youth on keeping their lives on track.³⁶ Oxford CWU members are also pleased with their efforts to foster communication between blacks and whites. Churches should take the lead in working for social justice, argues Susie Marshall, and through Church Women United, Oxford women have "been able to go many places as a group together, black and white..., that we had never experienced going before."³⁷ Oxford’s CWU unit, according to Virginia McMurray, is the most integrated group in town, aside from the Ministerial Association. "As far as a group that meets together and has some social life together," says McMurray, "I think we’re the only one."³⁸

Church Women United’s continuing work in Oxford is in serious danger however, unless the organization attracts young members. In the last year, the Oxford unit has lost two long-time members, and

³⁵Ibid.
³⁷Ibid.
³⁸McMurray, 4 November 1991, tape recording.
several others are in bad health. At a recent World Community Day celebration, it was clear that the group's membership and the majority of its' leaders are women past retirement age. These women, in most cases, are long-time members who joined the group not only because of a desire to help the community, but at least in the case of the white membership, because voluntary organizations have been traditional outlets for the energies of women who do not work outside the home. As more women enter the workforce, the interest in voluntary associations suffers and groups like Church Women United must rely heavily on older members to survive.

Oxford’s CWU members are aware of the problem, but few offer any solutions. "We’re not exactly dying on the vine," says Virginia McMurray, but:

we don’t have enough young people, black or white, joining. They’re all too busy. They’re...so committed to things they have to do for the sake of their jobs...most of them have families, and its just very difficult.39

Church Women United members are looking to the incoming president for an infusion of new life. Trudy Pojman, a native New Yorker whose mother helped to found a unit of Church Women United in Staten Island, is the 1992 president elect.40 Pojman is more familiar with Church Women United’s national agenda than many of the local members, and perhaps will be able to implement new projects that will stimulate the interest of younger church women.

39 Ibid.

Whatever the future holds for Church Women United in Oxford, the work they have done in the community deserves recognition. As Reverend Stanley Smathers told the members of Church Women United in their meeting of February 15, 1970, "Our task today is to tear down the walls that we have built around ourselves. We come to the best understanding of God when we study together, as we have something to learn from each other." The "light in Mississippi," Smathers concluded, continues to grow brighter through the work of Church Women United.
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