

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE BRANCH OF THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Historical Facts

The Women's missionary Society is an organization rooted in African Methodism as far back as 1787, organized as the Women's Parent Mite Missionary Society in 1875 and as the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society in 1895.

The Western North Carolina Conference was organized 1896 in Wilmington, North Carolina at St. Stephen AME Church. The General Conference was meeting at the same place, and it was also at this historic time, the name of the missionary organization became The Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society. Charter members of record are: E.M. King, M.S. Pearson, S. B. Dudley, R.H. W. Leak and Mrs. G. T. Thurman. G. T. Thurman was elected the 1st Conference Branch President who served for several years under Bishop James A. Handy. She was succeeded by Mrs. E. M. King, the second Conference Branch President, who served until 1900. In September 1900 at Bethel A.M.E. Church in Greensboro, North Carolina, Mrs. Minnie S. Pearson, wife of Mr. W. G. Pearson, and a member of St. Joseph A.M.E. Church in Durham was elected third Conference Branch President. Under her major accomplishments, Pearson Memorial A.M.E. Church in High Point, North Carolina was erected in her honor. Mrs. Pearson served until she departed her life on September 5, 1940.

The General Conference Session at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1944 passed the merger of the Parent Mite and Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies to become, The Women's Missionary Society.

(Sources: Women's Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Edna Wilson McLoyd, Historiographer -Statistician, 2003; One Hundred Years of Victorious Service by Verdelle Jennings Johnston)

Some Achievements and Noteworthy Accomplishments 1980 - 2021:

The Presidents of Western North Carolina Conference WMS have brought their own vision, gifts and leadership that continue to pave the way in the work of missions and has made a difference for the cause of missions, is to be documented in the WNCC history. We salute the leading forerunners and document the special contributions as a wonderful part of history.

Mrs. Willa George (1980 – 1987) emphasis of the total development of all women and the positive awareness of each church. Mrs. George is the coauthor of the book “Voices of the Eighties.”

Mrs. Shirley Sheares (1987 – 1996) a huge supporter and promoter of the Dorcas. She was a guiding force and spearheaded the purchase of the Homeless Shelter, located in Raleigh. The Shelter was renamed the 2nd District AME Incentive Center and later the AME Empowerment Center. Following her passing, the center has been renamed in her honor The Shirley J. Sheares Empowerment Center.

Mrs. Everlena Diggs (1995 – 2003) established the first WNCC President’s Retreat and organized the WNCC Life Members Luncheon. Under her leadership, WNCC raised the highest amount of Dorcas monies for three consecutive years. The only conference to gain all three crowns in one year and continuously won two of three categories. Mrs. Diggs coined the phrase “The West is the Best!”

Mrs. Gertrude Foust (2003 – 2012) editor for the first WNCC Newsletter “Wake Up and Let’s Go.” She raised the WNCC Scholarship Fund to \$1000.00 for each recipient. Mrs. Foust presented the idea to name all local societies, and all are named for their outstanding missionaries.

Mrs. Frances Hope (2012 – 2013) served as WNCC Strategic Initiatives Coordinator for Prison Fellowship Angel Tree. The initiative continues to support youth of incarcerated parents.

Mrs. Nikki Walker Lyons (2013 – 2021) implemented the new electronic registration process, Intergenerational Breakfast and the Pearls Recognition Awards. The initiation of the Adopt a School Projects, giving support to children in foster care.

Western North Carolina Conference Branch Presidents 1869 – 2021

1st Mrs. G. T. Thurman

2nd Mrs. E. M. King

3rd Mrs. Minnie Pearson

4th Mrs. Vera L. Holt

5th Mrs. Mary Holbrook Shepard

6th Mrs. Hortense Duhart

7th Mrs. Verdelle R. Johnston

8th Mrs. Leslie Jane Morrow

9th Mrs. Willa Robinson George

10th Mrs. Shirley James Shears

11th Mrs. Everlena Diggs

12th Mrs. Gertrude Foust

13th Mrs. Frances Hope

14th Mrs. Nikki Lyons

15th Mrs. Diane Tawwab

Young Peoples Department

As has been the custom of the African Methodist Episcopal Church throughout the ages, whenever a senior group was formed, the next concern was for the children and young people of the church. During the second period youth work began. In 1916, a resolution, introduced by Mrs. C. B. Thompson was adopted making the Young Peoples Department a branch of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society. History reveals the YPD has continued to increase spiritually, physically, mentally, and numerically.

Western North Carolina Conference Branch YPD Directors 1990 -2021

Sister Rutha Brooks 1990 -1999

Sister Claudine Zimmerman 1999 -2007

Sister Alice Hillman 2007 – 2005 (Interim 2020 -2021)

Sister Mary Royster Harris 2005 - 2020

Sister Sholanda Nottingham 2021

Life Membership

After twenty-five years of continuous meritorious service in the Women's Missionary Society, a member is eligible to apply for Life Membership. An applicant for Life Membership shall be actively serving in the Local, Area, Conference and Episcopal organizations at the time of submitting the application.

(Source: Women's Missionary Society Constitution and Bylaws 2016-2020)

Western North Carolina Conference WMS – Life Members 2021

Sister Sonia Barbre

Sister Hazeline Brooks

Sister Rutha Brooks

Sister Marjorie Brown

Sister Theodora Byrd

Sister Janice Carmichael

Sister Katrina Cheek

Sister Carol Davenport

Sister Emma Devine

Sister Everlena Diggs

Sister Mary Edmond

Sister Gertrude Foust

Sister Laura Grady

Sister Elizabeth Hall

Sister Frances Hope

Sister Pauline Irving

Sister Mary Dasher McAdams

Sister Myrtle Mayo

Sister Yvonne Henning Parks

Sister Alberta Prince

Sister Angeline Pugh

Sister Florine Roberson

Sister Jacqueline Stowe

Sister Joan Suddreth

Sister Marie Torian

Sister Phyllis Wonson