



Free Methodist Historical Society

Newsletter

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LAUNCH OF THE MMHC BOOK PRIZE

It is with great excitement that we announce the start of a Book Prize sponsored by the Marston Memorial Historical Center. One of the center's goals is to mine the past to shape the future. This is accomplished by preserving documents, resourcing the global FMC, and encouraging scholarship. This prize will identify and publicize books that significantly help readers understand the FMC's history and mission, including those that address important issues today.

For many years, Marvin Zahniser (remembered on page 3 of this edition) served on the Free Methodist Committee on History and Archives. Several years ago he put forward the idea of a Book Prize, hoping to honor and to nurture the field of Free Methodist history. It is bittersweet to announce this, his brainchild, in the same issue where we recognize his passing.

Several guidelines have been established by the committee to facilitate the process of submitting a publication for consideration.

- The Book Prize will be awarded annually to the book judged to be the most significant publication over the preceding 12 to 24 months in terms of the contribution it makes to understanding Free Methodist origins, history, and mission.
- Though the book specifically must speak to the Free Methodist past, present, and future, it need not be written by a Free Methodist.
- Because of the broad international scope of the FMC and our passion for cross-cultural collaboration, books that meet the criteria may be published in languages other than English.
- Unpublished texts, dissertations, or theses are not eligible for consideration.

John Wesley famously described himself as a "man of one book," but he did not mean that he only read the Bible. Rather, he meant that all other books were compared to the Holy Scriptures. And Wesley certainly had exposure to many other books. From his journal and his letters we can know he was one of the most widely read persons in his time in all of England. From his childhood in the Epworth rectory to his days at Oxford University and throughout his busy life, Wesley read widely in church history, theology, and divinity, as well as philosophy, biography, poetry, general history, medicine, and travel.

The Book Prize continues this legacy of promoting good books that edify the spirit, inspire the soul, and motivate servants to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today, following the Free Methodist Way and boldly proclaiming and practicing Wesleyan/Arminian theology.

Editor's Note: This newsletter has followed a consistent layout for many years. Often the center story focuses on newly discovered historical material or a noteworthy person or episode from our denomination's past. The front page includes newsy updates and the back gives a review of a noteworthy book related to FMC or holiness history. This edition, however, is different. After what we have collectively experienced this past year, it seems like surprises never cease. In a year of great loss, the FM historical society lost several staunch friends and we are giving space in this newsletter to honor and grieve them. Please help us pay tribute to our faithful friends.

The Mission of the Free Methodist Historical Society is to preserve Free Methodist heritage and transmit it faithfully to each generation in order to assist the Free Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission.

EVELYN MARSTON MOTTWEILER

1928-2021

By Mindi Grieser Cromwell



“She did what she could” (Mark 14:8) is how Evelyn (Marston) Mottweiler wanted to be remembered on her tombstone. On March 11, 2021, she received her eternal reward. The Marston Memorial Historical Center and the Evelyn (Marston) Mottweiler Archives remain as a testimony that Evelyn dedicated her time and energy to serving the Lord in her position within the Free Methodist Church and that the church will benefit from her work for years to come.

Born into the president's house of Greenville College, Evelyn would go on to grow up in a bishop's house and then marry and raise her own children in a Free Methodist pastor's home. The first-born daughter of the Marstons came into the world on February 6, 1928, to Lucile (Thompson) Marston and Leslie Ray Marston, during her father's presidency at Greenville. With his doctorate in psychiatry, the college students joked that “the first hour she said, ‘mama,’ the second, ‘papa,’ and the third ‘psychology.’”

Evelyn graduated from Greenville College (now Greenville University) on May 31, 1948, and on the same day she married Reverend Jack Mottweiler.

After seminary, Jack and Evelyn pastored churches in Illinois and California. In 1971 they moved to Winona Lake, Indiana, where Jack became Director of Adult Ministries of the Free Methodist denomination.

Evelyn's father, Bishop Marston, held the directorship of the newly formed Historical Center from 1960-1974. After the Mottweilers moved to Winona



Lake, she assisted him as the secretary-librarian for the center. Reflecting on Evelyn's work during the time they spent together for the center, Bishop Marston wrote, “An important ministry of the Historical Center is the secretary-librarian's research in

response to inquiries concerning personages associated with Free Methodism long ago, by their descendants or connections who now are far removed from the church's fellowship. As has been the case with the Center's Heritage Library, this program has tended to bridge the gulf between these descendants and the church of their fathers or of their own youth.

Such research is time-consuming but rewarding. Also many requests come from local churches or conferences for research in preparation for their centenary observances, etc.” When Bishop Marston retired from the role of Historical Center director, Evelyn stepped in and served in that position from 1974 until her retirement in 1989. During her tenure she would go on to do most of the research and reference work for the publication of the

“Evelyn's ministry has been a blessing to many in the church, and to me personally. When we lived in Winona Lake in the early 70s, I often stopped in to chat with her. My own library was enriched by duplicate books that the Center did not need, but which were helpful to me. I always appreciated Evelyn's spirit, her meticulous record keeping, and her dedication both to the Center and to the legacy of her father, Bishop L. R. Marston. —Howard Snyder

“Evelyn and I served together in WMI in 1980, before I returned to the mission field. Then she was a member when we returned and pastored Winona Lake. We called her the energizer bunny. She would take folks to doctor's appointments and look after them. She exercised regularly. She was always doing things for others. A historian at heart, she saved her father's and then Jack's sermons. She loved her time with the Marston Center. —Rev. Bonnie Church

The Free Methodist Church Bibliography by Francine Walls. It was also under her leadership that the Free Methodist Historical Society was established.

Evelyn, a stalwart Free Methodist, served the larger church in additional ways, too. In 1979 she was elected world president of the Free Methodist Women's Missionary Fellowship International (later called Women's Ministries International). She served in this capacity until 1985, traveling extensively and ministering in more than 15 countries. She also held the secretary/treasurer position of the World Fellowship of Free Methodist Churches, where she enjoyed meetings in several additional countries.

Evelyn attended annual meetings of the Marston Center until health issues in recent years kept her from doing so, and she never ceased to contribute her prodigious memory and the belief, like her father, that the collection's importance lay not in its function as nostalgia but as a way to point us back to our founding biblical principles. As Bishop Marston once wrote:

"[We] look back to Methodism's and Free Methodism's origins and early days, not so much for antiques to be displayed in a denominational museum as for clarification of principles by which to interpret the church's place and mission in a new age. Reviewing what our heritage cost our founding fathers and to what profit they invested that heritage will help us recover and maintain the values we should conserve and invest in our generation for the profit of the next."

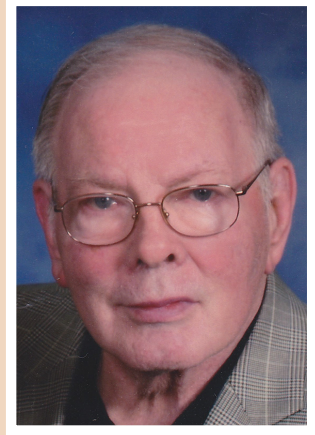
Evelyn's steadfast faith and rock-solid support of the Free Methodist Church around the world, including the value of the Historical Center to not only remind us of our past but inspire us into our future, will be missed by all of us.

Evelyn's work still remains as a guide to those of us who work in the Historical Center now. Her organizational skills with the collection as a whole have been invaluable. Because of Evelyn's and Bishop Marston's work we have a brighter vision and a deeper understanding of our mission for those generations yet to come.
—Cathy Robling

REMEMBERING MARVIN ZAHNISER

Marvin Zahniser had a deep love for Free Methodist heritage, so he wanted to focus on Free Methodism's future.

Marvin was steeped in history. His grandfather, Ralph, was one of the five Zahniser preacher brothers who had such an impact on the FMC. Marvin's father, Clarence Zahniser, wrote *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus*



Roberts (his doctoral dissertation in 1957). Marvin himself was a professor of history at the Ohio State University.

Over the years the Marston Memorial Historical Center drew on Marvin's wisdom and knowledge and in 2011 invited him onto the Historical Committee. He served until 2015, when ill health made it impractical for him to continue.

Marvin and his wife, Adrienne, contributed significantly to the work of MMHC in many ways. Their non-cash gifts have been just as important: Photos from 1915 Pittsburgh Conference camp meetings; a history of the Mt. Washington FM Church; material about FM male quartets, 1920-1980, along with an article about them; and an article, "A Youthful Remembrance of the Pittsburgh Conference 1934-1951."

Marvin was a strategic influence in plans for the Historical Center's Zahniser Chapel and through gifts helped bring this to reality. He contributed an important essay on the Zahniser brothers.

Years ago, Marvin intervened to help safeguard the Roberts Family Papers. These were documents (formerly in the possession of Benson Roberts, B. T. and Ellen's son) that Marvin's father used in his B. T. Roberts research. Concerned about their security, some years after his father's death Marvin loaded the 37 cartons into his station wagon and drove them to the Library of Congress, where they remain today. Later Marvin discovered about eighty more Roberts family letters among his mother's effects and sent them also.

Marvin Zahniser had a bright mind, a quiet faith, and a selfless spirit that continue to bless the Historical Center and the whole church.

—Howard A. Snyder

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REMEMBERING DON JONES

On December 2, 2020, the Marston Memorial Historical Center lost its friend Don Jones. Don, a long-time member of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, knew and loved the Free Methodist church through his relationship with Greenville College (now University) as an alum. Greenville President Emeritus W. Richard Stephens, a college friend of Don's, reflected, "Don is a faithful churchman whose vision and financial support have fueled ongoing ministries. It has been my greatest pleasure to know Mr. Donald Jones and to have his confidence." Don partnered with the MMHC to help keep the center intact at a crucial time in World Ministries Center history. He felt strongly that the Historical Center should remain at "headquarters" where pastors and international guests could benefit. His support and

vision helped MMHC build an official archive room and redesign the center to be a better tool to teach the history of the church in an interactive way that bene-



fits lives and ministry today. Don loved the Lord and his brothers and sisters in the Free Methodist Church and wanted to see her succeed in advancing the kingdom. As Linda Myette, FM History Committee member, said, "Don believed that God had called him to support ministry through the purchase of property. He was able to see possibilities in many properties that others would have rejected. He also believed in the importance of preserving history and making it available to future generations. His support of the Marston Center is testimony to that. It was im-

portant to Don that everything he supported be done well and with quality and integrity."