



Free Methodist Historical Society

Newsletter

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OPEN FOR RESEARCH INCLUDING THE NEW ONLINE CARD CATALOG

The time of transition into our new location is complete which includes unpacking and getting the collection accessible. Several researchers were in the queue to gain access to the material. This made the Marston Historical Center (MMHC) the place to be in the summer of 2023.

It has been great to have researchers back in our space using the resources to pursue topics such as: E. E. Shelhamer, Gilbert James and interracial evangelism, J. W. Haley's work in the Congo, 1920s LAPC yearbooks, various resources to help piece together family history, and the contributions of women serving in ministry in the Pentecost Bands and in the Free Methodist Church.

Information gathered has been featured in articles and recently published books. In many cases providing resources is reciprocal — we provide material from the library and FM Archive and further research is shared with us to add to our collection. For example:

“ I have been greatly aided by the materials located at the MMHC and their courteous and professional staff. But the MMHC does more than provide resources for studying the past. Its resources serve today's Free Methodists as they face the challenges of our own times.”

“ I came to use the archives to begin putting together the ministry and history of the Free Methodist Pentecost Bands while they were part of the denomination. The Free Methodist archives, along with some manuscripts and diaries that Marston had were particularly helpful.”

“ Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to do all of this. This trip was an absolute thrill in every way! I've just gotten to work on some of those Pentecost Band photos. I created a composite for you of one of them. This is the Pentecost Band workers for their magazine The Pentecost Herald, along with Thomas Hiram Nelson in the center.”

Researchers from across the globe can now access the online card catalog through the MMHC website at <https://historical.fmcusa.org> to see what books are available at our location in Indianapolis. Digital Librarian Kyle Moran has been working faithfully for years to make this a reality. Please note that we are a resource library rather than a lending library. We look forward to assisting our next guests.



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.

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AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY:

GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY AND THE WOMEN WHO DEEPENED ITS FAITHFULNESS

By Brian T.
Hartley and
Benjamin
Wayman

In December, 2022, Greenville University was awarded an Institutional Saga grant from the Council of Independent Colleges' Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), to recover, discover, and compose a largely unwritten history of the lives of key women who have shaped the university over its 130-year history. The project is currently underway and will create a collection of vignettes that provide a fuller picture of GU's longtime commitment to women in leadership in the context of its mission to educate for character and service.

Christian education at Greenville University has always been about helping students discover their vocation. Discerning one's calling is the heartbeat of education for Christian character because the heart of discipleship is about embracing, each in our own way, Jesus's invitation to follow him. Professor of Theology and Dean Emeritus Dr. Brian Hartley, grant writer and director, noted that since GU's founding in 1892, three themes have endured: (1) learning integrated with the Christian faith; (2) partnerships with the greater community and with the Free Methodist Church; and (3) raising up leaders, particularly women. Mary Alice Tenney's *Still Abides the Memory* tells the development of the University's missional focus up to 1942, but the narratives connecting the dots from subsequent years to the present lie buried in campus archives and in the memories and voices of persons who served GU.

The unwritten history aims to display the pioneering role of Greenville University in training, empowering, and employing women for leadership. It's perhaps providential that the College's start coincided with the groundbreaking

work, *Ordaining Women* (1891), by the founder of Free Methodism, B.T. Roberts. The book's re-release in 2015 includes an introduction and notes supplied by Dr. Ben Wayman, chair of Greenville University's theology department. While the church did not fully recognize and implement Roberts's vision until much later, Greenville College became a hub for training and deploying women for leadership throughout the church and the world.

From its beginnings, Greenville College recruited women of character and competence to teach on its faculty, including Tenney, the author of its published history. These women exercised an outsized influence on the ethos of the institution and the education of students. Their leadership at board level, in executive leadership roles, and in key leadership positions across campus put Greenville

at the forefront of the Christian college movement. Countless women alumni have served, and continue to serve, in positions of leadership within the institution and across the church, including Suzanne Davis, the current President.

Through this project, Greenville University is telling this story of growth, influence, and faithfulness through the



Greenville University Grant Team

lens of women connected with it. The stories that are emerging are reminding those connected to Greenville University, the Free Methodist Church, and the University's larger constituency of the contributions of the leading women of our collective history.

One of the most striking stories and lives is that of Dr. Elva McAllaster (*pictured, right*).

McAllaster was a professor of English at Greenville College from 1956-1988, after having served in the same role at Seattle Pacific College from 1948-1956. McAllaster's influence on undergraduates at these two Free Methodist schools over the course of forty years was monumental, and such influence was how she understood her vocation. Discovering and embracing one's vocation is, after all, not limited to students, but rather was a joint endeavor of the whole academic community of faith — students and employees alike. In his recent biography of the late Eugene Peterson, Winn Collier calls McAllaster his "first true editor," and later comments, "She stayed in touch with Eugene for decades (after his graduation from Seattle Pacific in 1954), encouraging him as he deepened his writing skills (and reading list) and commenting on each piece he published," (*A Burning in my Bones*, 2021, p. 58).

In his study of the McAllaster materials, Mikey Ward discovered that "McAllaster articulated her teaching career as the ultimate opportunity 'to train leaders of Free Methodism,' in order to have 'far-reaching consequence,' for the Free Methodist Church." In an unpublished vignette of McAllaster, Ward recovers three documents that particularly "reveal how McAllaster's experience at Greenville not only fundamentally altered her life's vocation, but in turn, helped give rise to the development of a

national organization, the Conference of Christianity & Literature (CCL). In this way, research on the vocation of Dr. Elva McAllaster reveals how women leaders of Greenville's English department were influential in both Free Methodism and Christian literary scholarship throughout the 20th century."

A crucial component of her formation was under the tutelage of Dr. Mary Alice Tenney, whom McAllaster described as her "patron saint and guardian angel."

For McAllaster, Greenville was uniquely prepared and positioned to help her live into her vocation of training up the next generation of leaders, even though at that time, the Free Methodist Church did not receive women into its highest levels of leadership.

Though women now receive ordination and lead ministries within the Free Methodist Church, the battle for full inclusion has been a slow process and even now is not fully realized. This project seeks to highlight women while also including women in the leadership and composition of the history. In the fall, several female

participants will come alongside grant researchers in the creative process of discovery, recovery, and writing of this more inclusive history. In addition to Hartley and Wayman, participants include Dr. Sharon Grimes (interim archivist), Rev. Keli Pennington (campus chaplain and director of the Women in Leadership program), Dr. Kollin Fields (assistant professor of history and political science), and Dr. Steve Tungate (director of the Center for Pastoral Formation). We are collectively committed to recovering the stories of these women of faith and Christian character and are confident that the history that emerges will deepen our own faithfulness as we participate in God's work at Greenville University in the present and into the future.



*Save
the Date*

MARCH 16, 2024

FM World Ministries Center and Hugh A. White dedication and open house. Watch social media for more details.

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The third Marston Book Prize was awarded in October 2023. The Marston Book Prize is awarded annually by the Marston Memorial Historical Center and the Committee on Free Methodist History and Archives in honor of Free Methodist Historian and Bishop Leslie R. Marston. This year's selection, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Intertwined Pasts, Presents and Futures*, merits the prize because of its significant contribution to Free Methodist understanding of its history, theology, and interrelationships with the broader holiness movement.

Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Intertwined Pasts, Presents, and Futures, edited by David Bundy, Geordan Hammond, and David Sang-Ehil Han, includes chapters on ecumenical relationships, black radical holiness women, optimism of grace, and international holiness connections. Dr. Howard Snyder reflects on the book's importance, "*Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Intertwined Pasts, Presents, and Futures* offers new and expanded insights into Free Methodist history and theology, especially in relation to the broader holiness movement and early Pentecostalism. The editors include a specific focus on "Radical Holiness"—that is, institutions and groups such as God's Bible School, the Vanguard Mission, the Pentecost Bands, and related entities which have been

important in FM history but have received inadequate attention in the literature to date."

Brett Heintzman will interview David Bundy in a Light and Life Communications podcast to discuss this year's book prize. Look for that episode in Apple Music, Spotify or your favorite podcast catcher.

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 one book, the Holy Scriptures. And Wesley certainly had exposure to many other writings. From his *Journal* and his *Letters* we can readily tell that he was one of the most widely read persons in his time in all of England. The Book Prize continues this legacy of promoting good books that edify the spirit, inspire the soul, and motivate the servant to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today, following the Free Methodist Way and boldly proclaiming and practicing as Wesleyan/Arminian theology and practice. As the next round of entries for the 2024 Book Prize opens, we want to identify and publicize books that significantly help readers understand the history and mission of the Free Methodist Church. This can include books grounded in that heritage that are addressing important issues today.

— Howard A. Snyder

