

A WSCS Installation Message

by Helen Eichelberger Ake, 1965

editor's note: The following address was delivered Thursday, April 29, 1965 at the installation of the new Central Pennsylvania Conference WSCS officers by out-going president Mrs. Frank W. Ake – a Harrisburg woman by birth and by choice. Helen Eichelberger was born in Harrisburg August 9, 1911. Her mother was from a Church of the Brethren background and her father had been United Brethren. Both had joined the Camp Curtin Methodist Episcopal Church by the time that she was born. She graduated from Harrisburg's William Penn High School in 1929. After graduating from the Lucy Webb Hayes School in Washington DC in 1932, she returned to Harrisburg to work for five years at the Methodist Mission at 1218 North Seventh Street, now the Neighborhood Center at 1801 North Third Street. During those years she lived with her parents in Enola, where her father worked in the railroad yards, and rode the streetcar over the Walnut Street bridge (for a nickel) back and forth to work. Following her marriage to Rev. Frank Ake, she lived in parsonages across the conference but always reserved a spot in her heart for her beloved Harrisburg. She was president of the conference Woman's Society of Christian Service 1961-65.

Astronaut John Glenn, speaking at the luncheon which followed the great parade and welcome given him by New York City (March 1, 1962), stated that he was thrilled to see so many school children along the route waving the American flag – and how glad he was that it was not old fashioned to wave the flag, and that we need that spirit of loyalty and patriotism more than ever.

Flags and banners have been used since the earliest times of civilization. A flag or banner is a symbol. It reminds the person who carries it of past deeds and of past vows as it proclaims to those who see it the central loyalty of him or her who marches under it. When one has chosen her flag or banner, it becomes the symbol of those values which are very dear to her.

Methodist women march under a beautiful banner to which we have given our allegiance. This banner symbolizes the unity of the three groups of Methodist women who combined to make the Woman's Society of Christian Service. It reminds us of the three-fold nature of our world as Methodist women – our responsibilities in the home fields, the foreign fields, and in the area of Christian Social Relations. Further, it is a symbol of our personal three-fold dedication through membership – recalling our pledge to give our prayers, our service, and our gifts.

Each part of our emblem was chosen for a particular reason and blended together in a unified symbol – to represent an organization which aims to put other before self, and Christ above all.

While _____ sings the first verse of the hymn _____, will the newly elected officers present themselves at the altar. Will the officers who retire from office at this meeting come forward and light the candles, representing their years of service and those who served with them.

Dear officers of the Central Pennsylvania Conference Woman's Society of Christian Service, you have been elected to office today by your conference members after each of you was chosen for particular reasons for the office in question. Your talents and abilities, while individual, blended together are expected to make a harmonious group of leaders. As you stand before your fellow members to dedicate yourselves to the tasks for which they have selected you, I should like to remind you – and them – of some enduring values to which we give our allegiance.

These four values I should like to have you think of when you see and say the words "Woman's Society of Christian Service" – each value beginning with the first letter of the words in the organization's name.

"W" stands for our world-wide program. Your work begins here in our own conference, but the results reach around the world. The world is always changing. Wherever there is life, there is movement – and movement means change. What distinguished our time is not the fact of change, but its rapidity. John Glenn went around the world 3 times in 5 hours – it took Magellan 3 years. We must be ready today and tomorrow to meet the needs of our churches – in the urban centers, in the rural areas, in the rapidly emerging new nations. We must be more alert than ever to the challenge of this "space age" to help others to know Jesus Christ as the Light of the World.

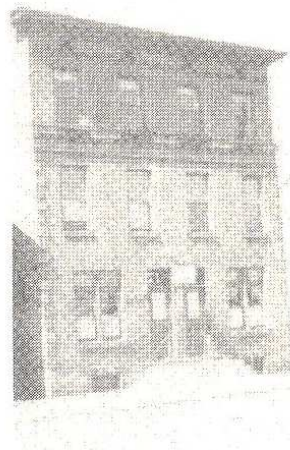
"S" represents spiritual enrichment. The total program of our Conference can grow only as it is undergirded with the spiritual enrichment of each member. The quadrennial theme of the Methodist Church is "Jesus Christ is Lord." How well I remember the stirring message given at General Conference – some of you remember with me – calling all Methodists to "a spiritual renewal – a fresh experience of Jesus Christ as Lord." The speed at which we live, and the mechanization and the regimentation of life, make prayer and personal devotions all the more essential. As a leader, will you take time to know Jesus Christ and to make Him central in your life? and to serve God with all your heart? If so, answer "I will."

"C" means cooperation. The Woman's Society on all levels is an integral part of the Methodist Church. Therefore, we are expected to work in cooperation with the entire program of the church – not as a different or unique organization.

The second “S” has two important meanings. The first meaning is stewardship – of time, talent and possessions. As a conference officer, you will recognize the importance of this. It will not always be easy to forfeit pleasure for the duties your job will require. It will not be easy to serve, to budget your time. But if you will let God give your life direction, it will be very rewarding. The second meaning is study. Part of stewardship of time is the necessity for personal study. We have a Biblical admonition: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” This includes the promotion on a conference basis of study by our members of our needs in mission and in the area of Christian Social Relations. As an officer you will need accurate information, always keeping in mind that intelligent study should produce action which is worthwhile, in order to share facts with others.

Robert Louis Stevenson said, “To travel hopefully is better than to arrive. The real success is in the labor.” To travel hopefully, to labor for something – that is, to seek more knowledge and wider experience – is to be alive, to know the joy is in the striving. Effort will be required if you are to help others travel hopefully, but you will find joy in the effort.

It has been said by many that no program is ever stronger than its leadership. Will you pledge your allegiance to these four ideals: world-wide program, spiritual enrichment, cooperation, and stewardship/study? Will you prayerfully and sincerely accept your individual responsibilities? If so, answer, “We will.” I now declare you duly installed officers. Now will you come forward, led by your president, and receive the light which signifies continuing service. And making your personal commitment, take your place in the congregation with that light.



The Methodist Mission in Harrisburg at
1218 North Seventh Street
where Miss Helen Eichelberger worked
1932-37.