

Church Women United in Wellesley Collection, 1955-2009  
Wellesley Historical Society

**Repository Identifier**

mawelhs

**Local Identifier**

2008.10

**Name and Location of Repository**

The Wellesley Historical Society

229 Washington Street

Wellesley, MA 02481

(781) 235-6690

[www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org)

**Title**

Church Women United in Wellesley Collection, 1955-2009

**Date**

1955-2009, bulk 1973-2009

**Extent**

2.5 linear feet, 5 document boxes, plus 2 oversize banners

**Name of Creator**

Church Women United

Church Women United in Massachusetts

Church Women United in Massachusetts/Rhode Island

Church Women United in Wellesley

Church Women United in Wellesley/Weston

United Church Women [until 1966]

**Historical Note**

Church Women United is “a national ecumenical movement of Christian women, witnessing to unity and faith in Jesus Christ through worship, study, action, and celebration” (1988-1989 booklet). The Wellesley chapter of the organization was active from c.1950 to 2009. The mission of the organization, born in the spirit of prayer and advocacy, “is a women’s movement fundamentally grounded in the biblical principles of the Christian faith and the richness of denominational diversity” (1999 *CWU Local Unit Handbook*, section 1, pages 3-4). The organization prides itself in being “a company of women of every racial, ethnic, economic, educational, and age group” (1988-1989 booklet).

The national organization was initially conceived as a women’s peacemaking group, formed just after the attacks on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. “From December 11-14, 1941, 100 women from three interdenominational women’s groups met ... to form the United Council of Church Women (UCCW). This newly-formed Council represented women from 70 Protestant denominations” (*Handbook*, section 1, page 3).

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By 1950 the UCCW was one of the 12 interdenominational agencies that formed the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), and it was within this structure that the UCCW movement became the General Department of United Church Women (UCW). When the UCW became independent of the NCCC in 1966, they changed their name to Church Women United (CWU). A new set of bylaws was approved in 1967.

Structurally, CWU is organized into three units: national, state, and local. The Wellesley local unit was part of the Massachusetts state unit (sometimes including Rhode Island), and that unit was part of the national organization. Currently there are over 1,200 local units supported by over 70 affiliated denominations. The Wellesley unit ceased operations in 2009.

The CWU in Massachusetts state-level unit has roots dating to before the founding of the national organization. In 1930 a number of Massachusetts church groups united to form the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Church Societies; this group merged with the wider national CWU in 1942.

In the Wellesley local unit, the participating churches changed over time. Initially, in the 1950s, the participating churches were Wellesley Congregational (Village) Church; the Wellesley Baptist Church; the Unitarian Church; St. Mary's Episcopal; St. Andrew's Episcopal; Wellesley Hills Congregational; the Universalist Church; and Christ Church Methodist. By the 1990s the participants additionally included the First Church of Christ, Scientist; St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (Weston); St. James the Great Roman Catholic Church; St. John Roman Catholic Church; St. Paul Roman Catholic Church; and the Society of Friends; by then the Unitarians and Universalists had come together as the Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills.

CWU is best known for its three annual interdenominational worship celebrations: World Day of Prayer (March), May Friendship Day (May), and World Community Day (November). The United Church Women in Wellesley initiated Spiritual Life Day (October) as a fourth celebration, and that celebration remained unique to the local chapter. The organization also sponsors other celebrations, including global ecumenical initiatives like World Day of Prayer and the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

Through the decades CWU has been involved in civil rights and social justice movements, particularly regarding racism; the 1961 *Assignment Race* initiative "challenged the vestiges of racism within the CWU movement, the church, and the larger society" (*Handbook*, section 1, page 4). The movement has also had close ties with the United Nations, and in the 1990s was at the forefront of advocacy against punitive welfare reform measures. Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s CWU has focused on developing a global reach.

CWU in Wellesley disbanded in 2009; the final board meeting was held on May 29, 2009; official notice was sent to the national organization on September 17, 2009. [Cite reasons from letter]

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**Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains documents and papers pertaining to the activities of the Wellesley unit of Church Women United. Initially the group operated under the name united Church Women; they formally changed their name to Church Women United in 1966-1967.

The bulk of the collection consists of papers relating to the activities of the Wellesley unit board; included in this group of materials (Series I) are meeting minutes, budget/treasurer reports, and event planning. Correspondence relating to these activities has been left with the relevant materials, rather than separated out. Series II contains planning documents and program books for the main events the CWU sponsored celebrations through the course of the ecclesiastical year. Series III contains some materials relating to the Outstanding Young Church Women annual recognition, which was awarded during the May Friendship Day. Series VII contains photocopied reproductions of UCW in Wellesley publicity scrapbooks, which provide a window into how the group operated in the community. The remaining series contain publications and papers

**Library of Congress Index Terms**

Christian sects

Christian women—Prayers and devotions

Christianity

Ecumenical movement

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Department of  
United Church Women

Wellesley (Mass.)

Women—Religious aspects—Christianity

Women—Religious life

Women in Christianity

Women in the ecumenical movement

Women's prayer groups

**System of Arrangement**

The collection is organized into eight series, organized by type. Within each series materials are organized chronologically.

- I. Board Meeting and Organizational Documents, 1957-2009
- II. Event Celebrations, 1973-2009
- III. "Outstanding Young Church Women" annual award
- IV. Printed Materials: *The Massachusetts Church Woman*, CWU regional newsletter
- V. Printed Materials: *The Church Woman* (CWU national magazine)
- VI. Printed Materials: Miscellaneous Papers
- VII. Publicity Scrapbooks, 1973-2009
- VIII. Ephemera: Banner and Tablecloth

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**Conditions Governing Access**

The Collection is open for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.

info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

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**Technical Access Restriction Note**

In this collection there are two 3.5-inch micro floppy disks. The disk titled "E-Mail Class" is a Sony brand double-sided MFD-2HD. The disk titled "Tilda's Travel Disk" is an SKC brand and is double-sided/double-density/double-track 135-tpi MF2DD; they date from c.1995. While these disks were located with the "Outstanding Young Church Woman of the Year" materials, it is not known what they actually contain; Tilda Mitsakos oversaw the process of nomination and selection during the 1990s, and the disks are likely related to that work. The Wellesley Historical Society does not currently have equipment which can access the information on these disks. They are located in Series III - Box 5, Folder 3.

There are color photograph negatives in Series III - Box 5, Folder 1.

**Physical Access**

Some of the materials are fragile.

**Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use**

Copyright restrictions may apply.

**Languages and Scripts of the Material**

English

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

2011.35

**Accruals**

The Historical Society may add materials to this collection in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.

**Related Archival Collections**

Berkeley-Albany Church Women United, Graduate Theological Union Archives

CWU Interchurch Center, New York, NY

CWU in Dallas, Texas/Dallas History & Archives, Dallas Public Library

CWU in Houston Records, 1911–2011, University of Houston Libraries Special Collections

CWU in Illinois Records, Black Metropolis Research Consortium, University of Chicago

CWU in Kansas, Kansas Historical Society

CWU Naperville, Women and Leadership Archives Loyola University Chicago

CWU, United Methodist Church General Commission on Archives and History

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**Description**

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in April 2019 by Alden Ludlow. Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

**Bibliography**

*Church Women United Local Unit Handbook*, 1999 (in collection)

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**Container List**

**I. Board Meetings/Organizational Documents, 1955-2009**

This series contains [organizational *Local Unit Handbook* that provides a comprehensive overview of the organization, including its history and structure.] The CWU operated on the academic calendar (their fiscal year ran from September 1 through August 31), and they generally met from September through May, thus the overlapping dates.

**Box 1**

Folder 1: Organizational Documents: *Church Women United Local Unit Handbook*, 1999

Folder 2: Organizational Documents: Bylaws, 1964 (revised 1967)

Folder 3: Organizational Documents: Cash ledger record book, 1955-2002

Folder 4: Board Meetings, United Church Women, 1957-1959

Folder 5: Board Meetings, Church Women United, 1973-1974

Folder 6: Board Meetings, 1974-1975

Folder 7: Board Meetings, 1975-1976

Folder 8: Board Meetings, 1976-1977

Folder 9: Board Meetings, 1977-1978

Folder 10: Board Meetings, 1978-1979

Folder 11: Board Meetings, 1979-1980

Folder 12: Board Meetings, 1980-1981

**Box 2**

Folder 1: Board Meetings, 1981-1982

Folder 2: Board Meetings, 1982-1983

Folder 3: Board Meetings, 1983-1984

Folder 4: Board Meetings, 1984-1985

Folder 5: Board Meetings, 1985-1986

Folder 6: Board Meetings, 1986-1987

Folder 7: Board Meetings, 1987-1988

Folder 8: Board Meetings, 1988-1989

Folder 9: Board Meetings, 1989-1990

Folder 10: Board Meetings, 1990-1991

Folder 11: Board Meetings, 1991-1992

Folder 12: Board Meetings, 1992-1993

Folder 13: Board Meetings, 1993-1994

Folder 14: Board Meetings, 1994-1995

Folder 15: Board Meetings, 1995-1996

Folder 16: Board Meetings, 1996-1997

Folder 17: Board Meetings, 1997-1998

Folder 18: Board Meetings, 1998-1999

Folder 19: Board Meetings, 1999-2000

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**Box 3**

Folder 1: Board Meetings, 2000-2001  
Folder 2: Board Meetings, 2001-2002  
Folder 3: Board Meetings, 2002-2003  
Folder 4: Board Meetings, 2003-2004  
Folder 5: Board Meetings, 2004-2005  
Folder 6: Board Meetings, 2005-2006  
Folder 7: Board Meetings, 2006-2007  
Folder 8: Board Meetings, 2007-2008  
Folder 9: Board Meetings, 2008-2009

**II. Event Celebrations, 1973-2009**

This series contains planning notes, program drafts, print mockups, posters, and program books from the four main annual celebrations sponsored by CWU: Spiritual Life Day (October), World Community Day (November), World Day of Prayer (March), and May Friendship Day (May). The Spiritual Life Day was unique to the Wellesley local unit. The May Friendship Day was the event in which the Outstanding Young Church Women were honored (see Series III).

**Box 3**

Folder 10: General instructions and planning  
Folder 11: Spiritual Life Day, 1977-2007  
Folder 12: World Community Day, 1973-1999  
Folder 13: World Community Day, 2000-2007

**Box 4**

Folder 1: World Day of Prayer, 1974-1998  
Folder 2: World Day of Prayer, 1999  
Folder 3: World Day of Prayer, 2000-2009  
Folder 4: May Friendship Day, 1974-1988  
Folder 5: May Friendship Day, 1990-1999  
Folder 6: May Friendship Day, 2000-2006

**III. “Outstanding Young Church Women” Award**

This series contains [11 folders] papers relating to the nomination and selection process for the CWU “Outstanding Young Church Women” annual award. Each of the denominational representatives submitted nominations for their selections, based on various criteria; girls had to obtain letters of recommendation during the process. The purpose was to recognize “young church women as representatives of many fine persons in their denomination who are giving service to the church of their denomination, but it may include service to nay church or denomination or to the community.” The girls selected were usually high school juniors or seniors; one was selected from each of the CWU representative churches, with a few exceptions. The chosen girls were introduced

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during the May Friendship Day celebrations at whichever church hosted that year. The program ran until 2009, so this series is only partial.

**Box 4**

Folder 7: 1985  
Folder 8: 1990  
Folder 9: 1991  
Folder 10: 1995  
Folder 11: 1996  
Folder 12: 1997  
Folder 13: 1998  
Folder 14: 1999

**Box 5**

Folder 1: 2000  
Folder 2: Form letters, nomination requests, sample forms, other business  
Folder 3: Micro Floppy Disks (2). See Technical Access Restrictions note above.

**IV. Printed Materials: *The Massachusetts Church Woman* (regional newsletter)**

This series contains newsletters targeting members of the CWU Massachusetts regional unit. News contains messages from the Executive Board, event plans and dates, and other information. Frequency varied from four to eight issues a year.

**Box 5**

Folder 4: *The Massachusetts Church Woman*, 1973-1981 and 1991 Jubilee Program

**V. Printed Materials: *The Church Woman* (CWU national magazine)**

This series contains a few copies of the CWU national magazine which were included as discussion points in several board meetings. Frequency varied from four times a year to ten, depending on year.

**Box 5**

Folder 5: *The Church Woman*, 1977-1978, 1984, and 2004

**VI. Printed Materials: Miscellaneous papers**

This series contains miscellaneous papers, pamphlets, newsletters and other materials collected by CWU in Wellesley board members for reference and use in their board meetings.

**Box 5**

Folder 6: Miscellaneous papers



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**VII. Publicity Scrapbooks, 1973-2009**

This series contains the contents of several scrapbooks and “publicity books” created by the UCW Wellesley board and members. The scrapbooks have been unbound and copied on to acid-free archival paper, and are presented in original order. They contain press releases, newspaper clippings, and other material. Almost all of the clippings are from *The Townsman*.

**Box 5**

Folder 7: “Publicity Folder, Church Women United of Wellesley,” 1973-1980

Folder 8: “Publicity, Church Women United,” 1980-1992

Folder 9: “Church Women United Publicity,” 1992-2000

Folder 10: “Church Women United Publicity,” 2000-2009

**VIII. Ephemera**

**Archival Oversize Materials Costume Box**

Banner and tablecloth