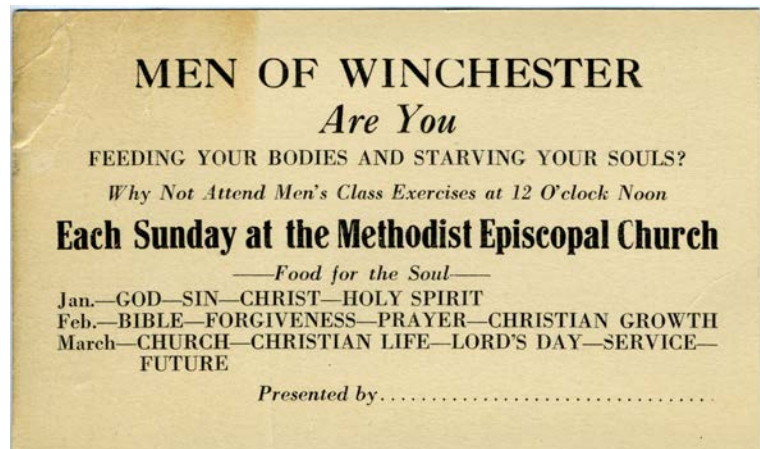

Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

Crawford's Societies, Clubs, and Organizations

Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, August/September 2021

July's installment of the *Crawford Chronicles* was devoted to Crawford's ladies societies: the Ladies' Social Circle, Woman's Home Missionary Society, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and the Woman's Society of Christian Service. While the ladies had their societies, the men of the church in early times were active in serving on boards and committees and contributing might and muscle when called upon.

Looking at the makeup of the church's organization in 1930-31, the Board of Trustees was made up of men. The Board of Stewards had fifteen men and five women. In the list of officers that included the treasurer, financial secretary, trier of appeals, delegate to City Missionary Society, and a few other positions, the only position held by a woman was the communion steward. There was a list of organizations and their presidents, all of which were women because the organizations were the Ladies' Aid Society, the Young Women's Club and the two missionary societies mentioned above. The only all male organization was the Men's Class.



This undated flyer in the church archives may have been distributed to the congregation at a Sunday Service.

Crawford historian Albert Bent wrote that in 1943, steps were taken toward forming a Methodist men's club that was to be called the Sherman M. Dodge Men's Club and it would honor all those who served in the armed forces in WWII. Lieut. Sherman Metcalf Dodge, a member of the church, was killed in action in a flight over Germany on October 14, 1943. He is buried in at the U.S. Military Cemetery in St. Avold, France. A tribute by Jean Makepeace, wife of minister Roger E. Makepeace, speaks of his leadership, his thoughtful services, and ambition to enlarge his horizons in his quiet, unassuming manner. One can see why the club was named for him. Membership was open to any male person age-16 and over and not just to Methodist men. "The object of the club was to promote a deeper interest in, and a closer relationship to the religious, civic, and social activities within our sphere of influence. At one time there were seventy members, several not otherwise connected with us." However, even with the energetic leadership of the president, Chester B. Koontz, Bent notes that the club, like most men's clubs, "gradually lapsed into desuetude." *Through the Years, a history of the Crawford Memorial Methodist Church 1871-1951* by Albert B. Bent.

In 1973, a new men's club was organized. They held a yard sale and painted Gifford Hall. Today a men's group gathers weekly in the morning and they begin with a poem, followed by a discussion centered on that week's *Upper Room*. Likewise, a women's group meets once a week in the morning for devotional discussions using the *Upper Room* and sharing of their faith journey.

The Epworth League has a long history. It was founded in May 1889 in Cleveland, Ohio for young adults ages 18 to 35. It was named for the village of Epworth where John and Charles Wesley were born. In "The Music Man," set in 1912 Iowa, a teenager declines a date because "it's Epworth League night." It's even mentioned in an Ernest Hemmingway novel when Gen. Eisenhower is described as "strictly Epworth League."

Our earliest records for the Epworth League in Winchester are from 1891. The pastor Rev. Clement Holmes (1893-1896) saw that the Perkins Chapter of the Epworth League was especially active. They held regular Sabbath prayer meetings and provided assistance to the Epworth Settlement and to the Italian Mission of Boston. Every week, *The Winchester Star* published notices for each church including its sermon topic and programs for the coming week. The issue of November 23, 1906, said the Epworth League meeting at 6 pm would address “Temperance, the use of strong drink.” The noon Sunday school lesson was “The World’s Temperance Sunday.” Isaiah 5:11-23. The morning worship service at 10:30 would be led by Mr. Lawrence Greenwood, the singing evangelist. Marjorie Rogers, daughter of Olive (Seller) Wilkins, said her mother, who some of you may remember, was active in the Epworth League from 1918-1925 during Rev. Gifford’s pastorate. Her father, Herbert Seller, was Sunday school superintendent for many years. He was a member from 1910 until he died in 1945.

Our Epworth League published a newsletter, *Winchester Epworthian*, from 1932 to 1935 – issues are now held at the Methodist Church Archives at Boston University School of Theology. It’s not certain the exact date Crawford’s Epworth League ended. Their treasurers’ records end with 1930. In the 1940s Epworth League became known as Methodist Youth Fellowship.



Crawford’s young people have a long history of serving those in need.
Pictured here: 1962 UNICEF Drive and 1966 paper drive.

People in the church today will remember Hope and Mal Oliver, who along with Buz and June Parry enthusiastically led junior high and senior high groups beginning in 1975. One Sunday each month, the junior high group served breakfast before the worship service. They performed musicals, held retreats, and went to Boston’s Old West Church to feed the needy once a month.

Today, Jessica Rubenstein, Children and Youth Minister, leads groups for middle school, high school, college and young adults. They cook for the Dwelling Place in Woburn and Somerville Housing Coalition; have participated in an UMCOR mission trip during which they worked for a week in Haiti and continue to collect disaster relief supplies; work with Habitat for Humanity; hold an annual coat collection for Boston’s homeless; participate in Pride Parade and Boston youth pride, and assist in many ways with Crawford’s events, including worship service, its garden and food ministry.



During the winter of 2020 Crawford’s youth group gave out coats to homeless on the Boston Common.

Doris Emmons, in her history of pastorates from 1948 to 1978, wrote there was a Sharing Group formed in the early 1970s that met in homes. It resulted from the Lay Witness Mission. How long the group lasted is not known.

A Couples Club was organized in the 1950s and in 1971 it segued into Pairs and Spares open to anyone in the community. Several marriages resulted from this well attended group.



Couples Club Luau, February 1965