**Church Women United in Greater Dayton Historical Overview**
***Agreed to Differ---Resolved to Love---United to Serve***

Women of a diverse spectrum of denominations and faiths in Dayton joined together for ministry in 1911. This group became officially known as Church Women United in Greater Dayton in 1941.

CWU Dayton was very active in issues that touched the lives of others such as the Ohio Migrant Ministry and the Farm Workers Ministry Program during the 1970s. For example, CWU Dayton joined the boycott of lettuce and grapes during Farm Worker Week in 1971. CWU Dayton also prepared meals for farm workers passing through Dayton.

In 1948, CWU Dayton began working with the Federal of Jewish Women's Club planning Interfaith meetings and teas. In 1965, over 1,000 Protestant, Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Jewish women gathered for interfaith fellowship. History records that in 1961-1962 CWU Dayton supported City Mission, Goodwill Auxiliary, Social Health Association, Urban League, Women's Temperance Union, and the YWCA. There was the CAN-A-LOT project, Birthday Party Project, Miami Valley Literacy, Boys and Girls Clubs, adopting a ward at the Dayton Mental Health Center, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), Metropolitan Civic Women, Miami Valley Literacy Council, and the Goodwill Doll Sale. In June of 1988, CWU Dayton was one of 20 sponsors in Dayton for the Hiroshima Day Vigil.

In 1983, 3869 pounds of clothing was collected for Church World Service (CWS). Even today, CWU in Greater Dayton continues to support CWS by preparing hundreds of health and school kits, participating in CROP Walk and Christian Rural Overseas Program –raising money for hunger) and collecting money for Blanket Sunday. CWU in Greater Dayton continues to support UNICEF, Jail Ministry of Dayton City Jail, Life Enrichment Center, Daybreak Housing for Homeless and Runaway teens, The Dayton Peace Museum, as well as Fellowship of the Least Coin and other ministries for homeless.

In 1986, a national CWU imperative was conceived. Each local unit of CWU was to consider the pauperization of women and children and commit to a ministry. CWU Dayton organized a task force (May 1987-May 1992) and the idea for "Dream House' began in 1988. Sister Jean Foppe, a CWU member who worked with jail ministry suggested that a transitional house begin for 5-6 women coming out of prison or jail. In a family-like environment, counseling, job training, *etc*. would be provided while women worked on changing their lifestyles. Beginning in October 1988, "Dream House" task force wrote grants, gained church support, found a house, and oversaw many details to establish Dream House. Under the leadership of CWU Dayton President, Charlotte Leasure, Vice President Joan Brown, task force members and many other supporters, Mercy Manor became incorporated on April 11, 1991 and the first house opened in 1992. The first house closed and a different house was opened and is still operational in 2026.

CWU in Greater Dayton had on-line Zoom meetings and celebrations during COVID. Almost 200 women in the Dayton metro area continue to have membership in Church Women United. Efforts are being made to encourage younger women to become members and to be actively involved in the movement which has done much to nurture the spiritual and justice work of church women. Members of CWU in Greater Dayton have been and continue to be active with CWU OHIO and attend the State Leaders Council and Assembly and the East Central Regional CWU Events.

(Prepared by Jerri Wood in 2018 and Revised by Cecelia Long in 2026)