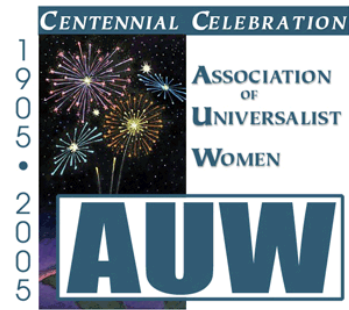


### **AUW Centennial Chronicle**

The Association of Universalist Women (AUW) continues the celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, featuring a brief historical note by decade and the profile of a distinguished member from that time.



### **AUW and WWII: Decade 4: 1935-1944**

In 1935, women leaders of the church advocated a mandatory policy of neutrality as the only hope for peace in the United States. They favored a program including “elimination of war profits” and stoppage of “madly increasing expenditures in the name of preparedness.” Membership in the church had been declining, and by the U.S. entry into World War II in 1941, attrition had become so severe that desperate measures had to be taken. The downtown building was sold and a temporary location was secured at 4600 Dupont Ave. S. The plan was to build a new church immediately, but the war delayed those plans until 1949.<sup>1</sup>

### **Biography of Mildred Boone Olson (1905-1993)<sup>2</sup>**

Past AUW Board member Mildred Olson, served our church in many capacities along with her husband, former minister Rev. Carl Olson. Together, they are credited with rebuilding our membership after the severe declines during the pre-war years.

Born in 1905, Mildred Boone was raised in the Universalist church in Muncie, Indiana. As a young woman she attended national conventions of the Young People’s Christian Union, where she met her future husband, Carl H. Olson, whom she married in 1930. At each church where Rev. Olson served (first in Ohio), Mildred was his tactful and friendly right hand. At her husband’s invitation, she was a careful critic of his sermons.



Carl and Mildred came to Minneapolis in 1939 – at the urging of Rev. Robert Cummins (father of Rev. John Cummins, minister emeritus, First Universalist of Minneapolis) – to serve the congregation of the Church of the Redeemer (predecessor to First Universalist of Minneapolis). Their efforts to attract new members and increase attendance from a handful in the late 1930’s, to a full church in 1963 (when Rev. Olson retired) has been attributed as much to Mildred as to her husband.

Another challenge facing the church when the couple arrived was the existence of two similar, competing women’s associations – the Women’s Social Circle and the Women’s Association. Mildred was an effective facilitator, bringing the two groups together, to today’s women’s group, the AUW.

For many years after Rev. Olson’s death in 1965, Mildred remained active in church affairs, serving on the Board of the AUW and as chair of the church’s Friendship Committee. Mildred was instrumental, along with the new minister, Rev. John Cummins, in starting the Carl Olson Ministerial Scholarship Fund, which has already assisted eighteen young people to enter the liberal ministry – providing a most cherished legacy.

<sup>1</sup> Carl Olson's words paraphrased from the church newsletter, *The Lamp Post*, undated.

<sup>2</sup> Biography by Jeanne L. Irish (1985, president of AUW); edited by Mary Junge, Jennifer Thomas and Marree Olson Seitz, Mildred’s daughter (2004). Photograph provided by Tom Jackson.