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## Wesley Center of Religion (Formerly Wesley College)

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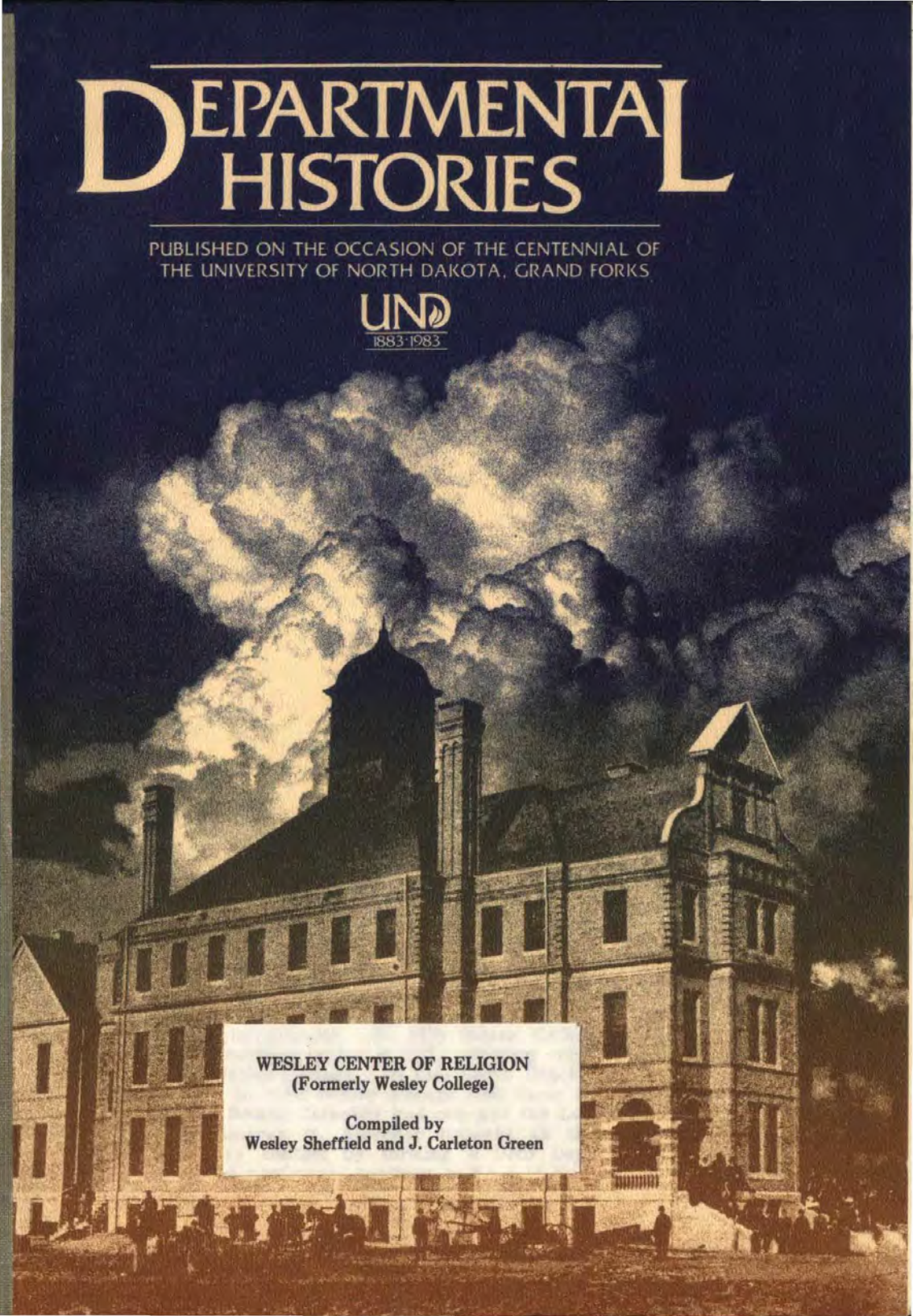
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# DEPARTMENTAL HISTORIES

PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENNIAL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA, GRAND FORKS

UND  
1883-1983



WESLEY CENTER OF RELIGION  
(Formerly Wesley College)

Compiled by  
Wesley Sheffield and J. Carleton Green

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1983

WESLEY CENTER OF RELIGION  
Grand Forks, North Dakota  
(Formerly Wesley College)

A Brief Historical Account

Compiled by  
Wesley Sheffield

In 1892 Methodists launched a one-building liberal arts school in Wahpeton, N.D., under the name, "Red River Valley University." Within not too long a time, the undertaking was in severe financial straits. There were just not enough Methodists in North Dakota to support such an ambitious venture. (Even today, in 1965, there are only 20,000 Methodists in North Dakota).

Fortunately, as it turned out, there was something else happening in Grand Forks. There a struggling state university was trying to present a well-rounded program to the young men and women of North Dakota. But hard-working dirt farmers around the turn of the century obviously felt that state funds should be used to teach their children "practical" subjects such as business administration, law, medicine, etc. State funds should not be used for such frills as "elocution, drama, music--or religion." As a result, a strong invitation went from the UND President to Dr. Edward P. Robertson, President of Methodism's Red River Valley University:

"WHY NOT move your work from Wahpeton to Grand Forks, buy land adjacent to our campus, leave the traditional academic subjects to us--while you offer music, elocution, drama and religion? That way we will each contribute to the other's effort! We will give university credit for your courses, and we will both participate in the awarding of degrees."

After much deliberation, the invitation was accepted. In 1906 the Methodist work was moved from Wahpeton to Grand Forks under the new name of "Wesley College." Leading North Dakota families--Corwin, Larimore, Sayre, Hancock--showed their approval of the venture by contributing generously to the work across the years. In due time one dormitory for men was built and another for women. Later a music conservatory was added, and still later an administration building was constructed.

Many Changes Occur

Time, however, wrought changes. In 1926 Roman Catholic officials in North Dakota established a teaching center at UND, offering credit courses in religion on the same basis as Wesley College. In 1946 North Dakota Lutheran authorities made a similar move. In 1962 Wesley College had three instructors in religion on its staff, while the Roman Catholics had two and the Lutherans one. In that year UND President Goerge W. Starcher brought all three teaching centers under closer university control by forming a UND Department of Religion. While the salaries of the professors continue to be paid by the religious groups, the program is under the administrative control of the university.



Meanwhile other changes were in the making. The university steadily improved its program, finally absorbing all speech and drama work. It also made rapid forward strides in its efforts to establish a Department of Music, and in 1952 Wesley College discontinued its Music Conservatory. Wesley College's annual budget was reduced to a point under \$50,000 with this change.

For many years Sayre Hall (men) and Larimore Hall (women) offered excellent housing to students desiring a serious religious setting. Other UND housing was very limited at the time. However, the years necessitated increasing need for repairs.

#### The Wesley Development Program

By 1959 it was obvious that a major financial campaign would need to be undertaken if the Methodist work was to continue. North Dakota Methodists and other supporters responded generously, and \$155,000 was contributed across a three-year period for Wesley College. Some \$50,000 was used to pay past and present bills. Another \$50,000 went into the repair of the buildings. Another \$50,000 was put into endowment funds. The Wesley Development Program, as it was called, put the college back on its feet; but it was soon obvious to college officials that major changes in the program were still imperative.

As UND built increasing numbers of fine dormitories to house a growing student enrollment, Wesley's buildings became less needed, and more costly to maintain. In May, 1964, President Sheffield proposed to the Wesley Trustees that the Wesley buildings (Sayre, Larimore, Corwin, and Robertson) be sold to the University (which especially wanted the land for future building plans) and concentrate in the future on Wesley's skills in campus pastoring and teaching credit courses in religion. After long consideration, this plan was adopted, and UND paid Wesley \$175,000 for the four buildings. Wesley retained ownership of a strip of land on University Avenue, on which a new Wesley Student Center might be built.

With decline in the use of other student centers at UND, Wesley determined to move its Wesley Foundation program to its house at 406 Harvard Street. Wesley Trustees voted unanimously to approve this plan. On September 9, 1965, such was done, and the name "Wesley College" was changed to "Wesley Center of Religion."

Up-Date--Compiled by J. Carleton Green

From 1965 to 1970, Wesley continued to support one faculty position in the UND Department of Religious Studies, and to maintain support of a student center program which merged into the United Christian Ministry on campus (Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, United Church of Christ, and American Baptist). After 1970, UND funded the Department of Religious Studies, and our campus student program has been supervised by the United Ministries in Higher Education in North Dakota.

Since Wesley Trustees determined that past patterns of service at UND no longer were needed, the University offer to purchase Wesley's remaining

property was accepted. On July 1, 1968, the University Avenue strip was sold for \$50,900. On July 1, 1973, Wesley's Harvard Street property was sold for \$150,000. And our Trustees charted a new direction for Wesley activity. A Wesley Center office was secured in the building of Wesley United Methodist Church, and Wesley's endowment funds were invested with Northwestern National Bank and the Lionel D. Edie Investment Company. At the present time (1981) Wesley's assets total nearly \$700,000. Only the interest or dividends from Wesley's investments are used to maintain Wesley's current program.

Wesley's Trustees have formulated a number of programs in recent years which center in continuing education for United Methodist clergy and laity, and for student scholarships in United Methodist Colleges. Also, support is given to several annual projects related to the University in Grand Forks. Wesley helps support the Grand Forks Communiversity. It gives a number of scholarships each year for the International School of Alcohol Studies at UND. In former years Wesley funded the establishment of The Human Potential Affirmation Seminar in North and South Dakota. National leaders have been brought to the University and Grand Forks community such as Dr. Elmer Homrighausen, Dr. William Glasser, and Dr. William Sloan Coffin. Six of our clergy have attained Doctor of Ministry degrees with help from Wesley Center. Five others are "in process." Preaching workshops have had Wesley sponsorship here in Grand Forks.

With the generous legal assistance of Trustee Chairperson Lorene Larson, our By-laws were up-dated to provide for a smaller and more efficient number of Trustees. In 1978 the Wesley Board was to consist of 12 members, six elected by the U.M. Annual Conference, and six elected by the Wesley Corporation. In addition, the Dakotas Area Bishop and the Conference Council of Ministries Chairperson are ex-officio members without vote. At the present time, May, 1983, the following comprise the Wesley Center Board of Trustees:

Rev. Norman Neumann	Dr. Cecil Miller	Mrs. Linda Bates
LeRoy Meier	Dr. Eldon Gade	Dr. David Knecht
Dr. Robert Paul	Lloyd Jarman	Dr. Gordon Henry
Mrs. Lorene Larson	Rev. Robert Worner	Dr. J. Carleton Green
Bishop Edwin Boulton		Mrs. Kathleen Bellamy

To have some idea as to Wesley Center's current operation, the 1983 Program Budget is listed below:

Center for Growth in Ministry	\$2000.
College Scholarships (Wesleyan, Rust, Westmar)	7500.
Continuing Education:	
Clergy	700.
Laity	700.
Retired Clergy and Spouses	700.
Youth	700.
Pastoral Counseling Seminar	2500.
Grand Forks Communiversity	1000.
International School of Alcohol Studies (UND)	1200.
Mentally Retarded Camp	150.
UND CENTENNIAL	2500.
Grant for assistance in searching for funds, Open Door	
Satellite Ministries (Beulah, Hazen, N.D.)	500.
Undesignated Programs	500.

In the above and other grants, Wesley Center of Religion seeks to further the best interests of Church leadership (present and future). Wesley is most grateful to all who have shared in Wesley's history.

Author Jan Struther has Mrs. Miniver observe:

"In the convex driving-mirror she could see, dwindling rapidly, the patch of road where they had stood; and she wondered why it had never occurred to her before that you cannot successfully navigate the future unless you keep always framed beside it a small clear image of the past."

(Chapter XV)