

## ORGANIZATION OF THE MAINE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

**October 31, 1938:**

### **The Maine Council of Churches is Organized**

The Maine Council of Churches formally came into existence on October 31, 1938, at the United Baptist Church, Lewiston, Maine. The Rev. John Woolman Brush, pastor of First Baptist Church, Waterville, was elected the Council's first president.

The founding denominations of the Maine Council of Churches were the Congregational-Christian Conference of Maine, the Maine Annual Conference of the Methodist Church the Northeast Region of the American Unitarian Association, and the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.

### **Growing Diversity**

From its inception, the Maine Council of Churches has looked for opportunities to welcome new member denominations. In the early years the membership grew quickly: The Universalist State Convention joined the Council in 1939. Both the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) and the Salvation Army became Council members in 1943. In 1944, the Presbyterian Church (Newburyport Presbytery) was received into membership. The A.M.E. Zion Church in Portland joined in 1951, and in 1952, the Evangelical United Brethren became members of the Maine Council of Churches.

In 1953, an invitation was extended to the Episcopal Diocese to join the Council. In his measured response letter, Episcopal Bishop Oliver L. Loring declined the Council's invitation with the hope that language in the Council's statement of purpose would one day conform to that of the National Council of Churches with regard to "the Lordship of Christ."

The issue was revisited in 1965 and 1966, under the leadership of MCC Executive Secretary Luther Allen. In an effort to draw the Episcopalians and the American Baptists into the Council and with their active participation, a new constitution was drafted, but with a problematic preamble attached. It quickly became apparent that the language of the preamble would force the Unitarian Universalists to withdraw. A headline in the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, February 20, 1966, screamed "Unitarians Face Ouster from Church Council." The question became, would the Council adopt language "bringing the churches who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ into living contact with one another?"

The answer was "no." By a final vote of 24-4, the new constitution was adopted but the preamble was not. The Unitarian Universalists would stay; the Baptists would again withdraw, and it would be twelve years before the Episcopal Diocese again would consider Council membership. Luther Allen soon bowed out as executive secretary. With the Council's resources dwindling in a conciliar age, the handwriting was on the wall.

### **The Ecumenical Commission**

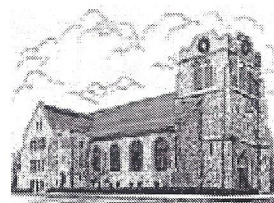
In 1968, in the spirit of Vatican II, the Maine Council of Churches joined the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland the Episcopal Diocese of Maine to form the Ecumenical Commission of the State of Maine.

A year later the Council voted to give its energies to the Ecumenical Commission and to vote itself out of existence. It nearly happened.

As will be seen on the pages that follow, the Maine Council of Churches was reborn and reconstituted in 1974, thanks entirely to a bequest by Elsie L. Libby of Wells.

In 1978, the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, under the leadership of Bishop Frederick B. Wolf, became a member of the Maine Council of Churches. In 1982 Bishop Edward O'Leary led the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland to Council membership. A year later the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, led by Bishop Cyril Wismar, was welcomed as a Council member.

In 2006, the Council welcomed the Maine Association of the Church of the New Jerusalem as its ninth member denomination.



United Baptist Church,  
Lewiston

### **Executive Secretaries**

**Rev. Harry E. Titus**  
1938-1939

**Marion Ulmer**  
1940-1963

**Luther L. Allen**  
1963-1967

**Rev. Philip G. Palmer**  
1968-1970

**Rev. Canon  
Joseph "Ray" Bolger**  
1980-1986

### **Executive Directors**

**Thomas C. Ewell**  
1986-2005

**Rev. Jill Job Saxby**  
2005-present

### **Maine Council of Churches Members 2008**

Episcopal Diocese of Maine  
Maine Association of the Church of the New Jerusalem  
Maine Conference, United Church of Christ  
New England Annual Conference, United Methodist Church  
New England Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
New England Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends  
Northeast District, Unitarian Universalist Association  
Northern New England Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

**SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.**



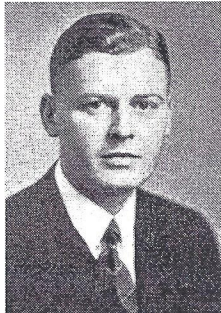
## THE EARLY YEARS

### 1938-1940



Rev. John Woolman Brush  
MCC President  
1938-1940

John W. Brush, first president of the Maine Council of Churches, was, at the time of his presidency, pastor of First Baptist, Waterville. He went on to become a professor of church history at Andover Newton Theological School, where he served from 1940 until his retirement in 1964.



Rev. Franklin P. Cole

1938

- The Maine Council of Churches is organized at United Baptist Church, Lewiston.
- Reverend Harry E. Titus is appointed Executive Secretary, and offices are established at 178 Middle Street, Portland.

#### Founding Members

#### Congregational-Christian Conference of Maine

#### Maine Annual Conference of the Methodist Church

#### American Unitarian Association Northeast Region

#### New England Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

1939

- MCC secretary Rev. Harry E. Titus serves as Dean of the 18th Session of the Eastern Maine Summer School at Machias, June 18-24. Faculty includes Rev. Ellis J. Holt, Calais, Rev. J. Wesley Prince, Kennebunk, and Miss Mary Sherman, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

- Universalist State Convention is elected a member of the Council.

1940

- Maine Baptists vote to "withhold any condemnation of those individuals who might desire to participate in the work of the Maine Council of Churches from personal choice." (Walter Cook, *The Story of Maine Baptists, 1904-1954*, p 114)
- "News on the Religious Front" first airs on WGAN Radio (8:30pm Saturdays) with Rev. Franklin P. Cole as commentator.



Maine Council of Churches Board of Directors at Waterville (1942)

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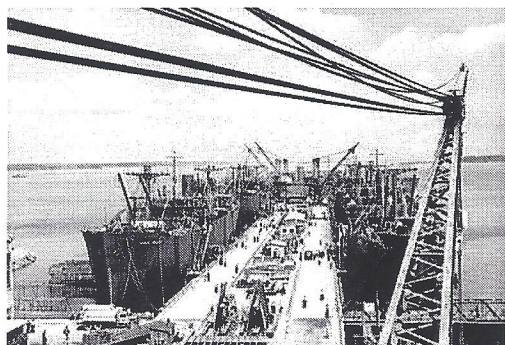


## THE WAR YEARS

### 1941-1945

1941

- MCC studies industrial defense needs in coastal Maine. As a result 6 full-time social workers are hired to coordinate religious services and activities in defense housing areas. Five will be supported by member denominations, one by the Maine Council of Churches.



Liberty Ships in Portland Harbor, 1942

1942

- September: "Spiritual Foundations of Freedom," a weekly newspaper series is published in 20 weekly and daily Maine newspapers.
- The "United Education Alliance" forms in order to raise concern for un-churched children and youth.

1943

- Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) becomes a Council member.
- The Salvation Army is elected to Council membership.
- A religious survey is conducted in Admiralty Village, Kittery, Maine, under the direction of MCC representative Miss Esther Jakcsy to identify needs in the defense housing project.

1944

- The Presbyterian Church USA (Newburyport Presbytery) is elected to Council membership.
- "Church School of the Air" first airs at 10:30am on Sunday mornings on the radio stations of the Maine Broadcasting System (WCSH, WRDO, and WLBZ).

1945

- 1st Annual World Order Essay Contest for high school youth statewide is organized by the Maine Council of Churches.
- MCC begins an Audio-Visual Library to assist church schools.
- "Book of Books" (a Bible Study) first airs on Sunday mornings on three radio stations of the Maine Broadcasting System.

#### Miss Marion L. Ulmer

Executive Secretary  
Maine Council of Churches  
1940-1963

From 1921 to 1938, Miss Marion Ulmer served the Council of Religious Education. She is first listed in the *Portland Directory* as Council "secretary" in 1935.

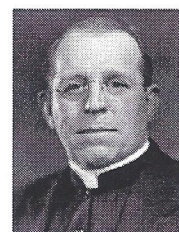
In 1940, Miss Ulmer succeeded Rev. Harry E. Titus as executive secretary of the Maine Council of Churches. A devout Universalist, it was her friendship with Elsie L. Libby of Wells (and Elsie's admiration for Miss Ulmer's "Church School of the Air" radio broadcasts) that are credited as the reasons why, in 1961, Mrs. Libby named the Maine Council of Churches as the principle heir to her estate.

Upon retirement from the Council, Miss Ulmer moved to Florida with her sister Madelyn. Marion became a volunteer for the USM Florida Chapter Alumni Association. Today, a scholarship is offered by the Association in honor of Marion and Madelyn Ulmer. Marion Ulmer died in Brandon, Florida in May 1985.

In 1979 the Marion Ulmer Fund of the Maine Council of Churches was created in her honor. The Fund made possible nine biennial Seeds of Promise religious education events, from 1983 to 2001.



Rev. Percy L. Vernon  
MCC President  
1944-1945



Rev. Louis A. Dole  
Church of the New  
Jerusalem  
Bath



Miss Marion Ulmer  
Executive Secretary  
1940-1963

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## THE POST-WAR YEARS

### 1946-1950



**Rev. Frederick D. Hayes**  
MCC President  
1946-1947



**Charles H. Blatchford**  
MCC Treasurer  
1938-1954

1946

- MCC's Social Action Committee launches a Negro Friendship Project.
- 1st World Order Caravan for high school students is initiated - to the temporary UN headquarters at Lake Success, New York.

1947

- 1st Churchmen's Legislative Seminar brings together Protestants in Augusta to study the work of the Maine State Legislature and their responsibilities as Christian citizens.
- Four workshops are held for church school leaders of summer church schools at Dover-Foxcroft, Houlton, Machias, and Westbrook.
- MCC helps to organize the Maine Council of Church Women (subsequently Church Women United).
- Chaplaincy Program begins at Camp Hines Boy Scout Camp.

1948

- Chaplaincy Program is launched at Bomazeen Boy Scout Camp.
- Rev. Lindley J. Cook is hired as an MCC field worker to counsel with and assist in the development of community inter-church programs. (In September, his son, 19-year old Ralph Cook, a pre-divinity student at Earlham College, is sentenced to two years in prison for refusing to register for the peace-time draft.)
- The Council's radio broadcast, "Book of Books," enters its fourth season on the stations of the Maine Broadcasting System.

**November 1947:**

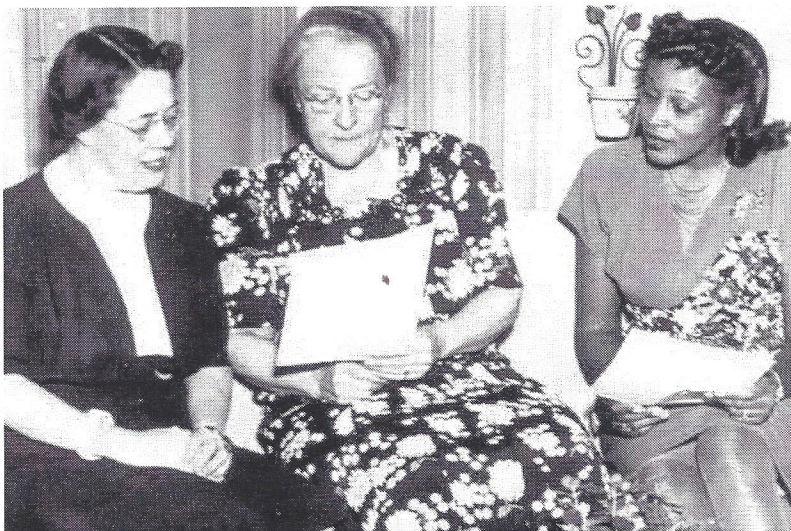
**Maine Council of Churches Sponsors  
World Order High School  
Essay Contest**



**The United Nations in session at Lake Success**

Six young people competed in the Greenough Chapel (at Immanuel Baptist Church, Portland) in the Southwestern Maine semi-finals of the third World Order High School Essay Contest. They are: Miss Aphrodite Doukas and Allen Cook (Portland HS), Barbara Gee (Deering HS), Sarah Packard (Gorham HS), Tolford Young (Westbrook HS), Ronald Schutt (Lisbon HS).

One boy and one girl will be picked here, at Waterville, and at Bangor to accompany the Rev. and Mrs. Robert C. Whitehead, Windham Hill, to Lake Success, NY, to observe the United Nations at work in the Winter.



**MCC Negro Friendship Project - 1946**

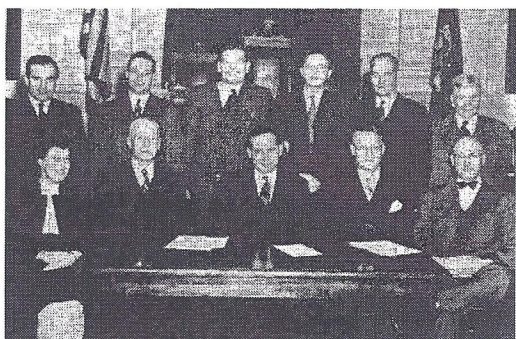
**SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.**



## THE POST-WAR YEARS

### 1946-1950

1949



**3rd Churchmen's Legislative Seminar**

- Rev. Gladys York initiates religious education classes for children confined for long periods of time to Maine General Hospital.
- 5th Season of "Book of Books" wins another "First Award" from the Protestant Radio Commission's Religious Radio Workshop.
- MCC administers the Boy Scouts of America God and Country Award
- Women of the Council sponsor a World Day of Prayer, World Community Day, and a drive for overseas relief.
- Religious Education Workshops, conducted by MCC staff and volunteers, are held.



**Interviewing God & Country Award Candidates**

1950

- "News on the Religious Front" (heard on WGAN) "is a favorite of those seeking accurate information on the day's religious events."
- Mrs. Carl Kingsbury is hired as a Field Worker to contact families in rural communities (where no church schools exist), help mothers with plans for religious education in the home, helping them use the MCC broadcast "Church School of the Air" as a weekly resource.
- MCC president represents the Council at the constituting meeting of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, in Cleveland, Ohio.
- The Maine Council of Churches and the Christian Civic League of Maine abandon conversations about a formal relationship.
- 71 young leaders from Washington and Hancock Counties attend the 29th consecutive session of the Eastern Maine Summer School at Machias, sponsored by the Council.



**Rev. Chauncey Wentworth**  
MCC President  
1949-1951  
District Superintendent  
The Augusta District  
Maine Annual Conference  
of the Methodist Church



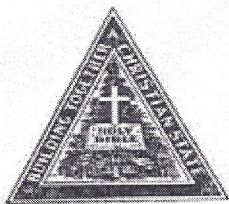
**Church School of the Air Discussion Group 1949**

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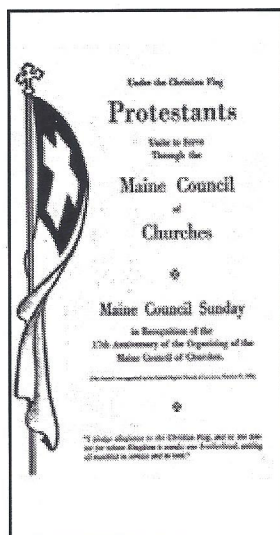


## THE COUNCIL IN THE FIFTIES

### 1951-1955



The MCC logo in the 1950's



#### The Friendly Beggar



**When you've given  
threads and pins,  
Just put me on the door,  
So prowling ghosts and goblins  
Will ring your bell no more.**

1951

- A.M.E. Zion Church is welcomed as a new member of the Council.
- MCC publishes "Our Maine Indians," encouraging congregations to provide direct services to Indians and encouraging more equitable legislation.
- Rev. Robert Mayhew is appointed Legislative Agent for the Council.

1952

- Revised Constitution and By-laws formally unites the former Maine Council of Religious Education with the Interdenominational Commission of Maine.
- Evangelical United Brethren denomination joins the Maine Council of Churches.
- MCC opposes Universal Military Training.

1953

- "Christian Youth Speak" begins broadcasting on television.

1954

- MCC sponsors a Churchmanship Conference at First Parish Church, Gorham, and School Street Methodist Church, Gorham.
- MCC sponsors a one-day conference on religious programming on television, led by Rev. Charles H. Schmitz of the National Council of Churches Broadcast and Film Commission.

- MCC sponsors "The Friendly Beggar" program for Hallowe'en, encouraging children to go door-to-door gathering sewing supplies for mothers overseas.

1955

- 1,791 church school teachers attend MCC's annual Christian Education Workshops.
- "The Door Is Open," a panel show moderated by Rev. W. Lloyd Williams, is televised over WCSH-TV. "Window on State Street" also airs on Channel 6, co-sponsored by the Council.
- MCC's School of Religion is held in Portland (State Street Church, Immanuel Baptist, Chestnut Street Methodist, Woodfords Congregational).



1954 World Order Caravan to the United Nations

Maine teens, winners of the World Order Essay Contest sponsored by the Maine Council of Churches, pause for a picture in the rotunda of the new United Nations Building.

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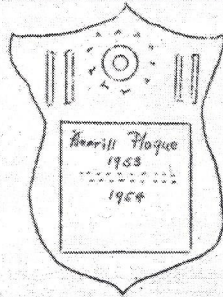


## THE COUNCIL IN THE FIFTIES

### Teenagers Dorothy Woods and S. Clifton Ives are Named 1955 Averill Award winners by the Maine Council of Churches

In 1945, the Maine Council of Churches began sponsoring the World Order Essay Contest for Maine high schoolers. Each year, statewide contest winners were awarded with trips to the United Nations in New York City. Beginning in 1950, the Averill Plaque was awarded to one boy and one girl who made the best report on the contacts they made following their trip. The 1955 winners were Dorothy Woods of Kittery Point and S. Clifton Ives of Lewiston.

TO THE MEMBERS of the MAINE COUNCIL of CHURCHES 1954 WORLD ORDER CARAVAN



This is a picture of the Maine Council of Churches' Averill Plaque. It COULD be won by you and held by your church for one year, or until the completion of the next World Order project sponsored by the Maine Council of Churches.

#### H-O-W ?

When you joined the World Order Caravan, you pledged yourself to share with other Maine people, so far as you could, the experiences you yourself enjoy during the trip. You will do this by accepting such opportunities as you can to speak to youth fellowships, high school classes, clubs or assemblies, church schools, service clubs, granges and any other organizations interested.

On January 31, 1955, you will prepare a report of the ways in which you have shared the experiences of your trip to the United Nations Headquarters with others since your return to Maine October 1. In addition to the above-listed speaking opportunities, perhaps your local newspaper, radio or TV station may give you a chance to spread the information and enthusiasm the trip gives you.

Your report is NOT to be a report of the trip itself, but of your contacts with others in our state on your return. Do not make it a diary of the days in New York, please. Be sure that the report includes specific information about the group to whom you speak, the approximate numbers in each group you contact, any specific reactions to discussions you carry on, and an outline or summary of your message. The report should be sent to the office of the Maine Council of Churches, 97A Exchange Street, Portland, Maine, on or before February 2, 1955. All reports become the property of the Council, so you may wish to retain a carbon for yourself.

Each of the reports will be carefully reviewed by a group of impartial judges who will not know the names of the person whose report is being studied. From the total, two will be chosen, one by a girl and one by a boy, the ones who, in the opinion of the judges have most benefited personally and through whom the state has most benefited from the trip. To the winners' churches there will be presented the beautiful brass and walnut plaque pictured above, with the names of the 1954 winners added to those it already bears. The plaque will be in the possession of the church until the Council requests its return so that it may be presented to the winner of the 1955 World Order project.

WE SUGGEST that you keep careful notes of your trip, so that you may be able to make the best possible presentation to the groups you will address in the coming months. This diary will not only help you share your experiences more effectively, but will be a souvenir of the five thrilling days that will long inspire you as you work with others to build a world of peace and goodwill.

#### Cliff's Notes

On the right are five handwritten note cards by high schooler S. Clifton Ives of Lewiston, Maine, that he used in giving his talk to church groups upon his return from the 1954 World Order Caravan.

(1)  
In Sept. 54  
Member World Order Caravan  
Visit UN. Idea first started 1945  
Essay written winners went to N.Y.  
1950 Plaque given to Church  
Brought home information  
Now Arrived  
Wed. 1st Ave. Fall holidays Flggs  
About to enter organization for Peace  
World ever Seen I Think

(2)  
Took Tour - Breeding.  
Happy this Evening  
Charter San Francisco June 26, 1948  
Purpose international peace,  
friendly relations, cooperation  
in solving problems.  
Six Major Organs.  
Security, Trusteeship, Court  
Economic Social, Secretariat & GA

(3)  
General Assembly all 60 million  
Next 1 year. Main Body  
5 Delegates Henry Cabot Lodge  
Heard Deligate from Cuba Education  
We Sat in Back-Up  
How they looked to us  
Tell them apart  
Look for U.S.

(4)  
Seats are Chasin New Zealand  
General Assembly Room  
San Radio City  
Seats - 2000 550 Delegates  
Earphones 5 Languages  
Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish, English  
Interpreters 20 seconds.

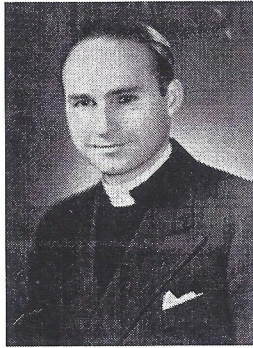
(5)  
I would like to suggest if it  
should be sure to visit UN.  
Sure you would enjoy  
it and be thankful you  
didn't leave NY without  
going there

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## THE COUNCIL IN THE FIFTIES

### 1956-1960



**Rev. Shirley B. Goodwin**  
MCC President  
1955-59  
Rector of  
Trinity Episcopal Church,  
Portland



**Phyllis Mosman Cobb**  
AAGO  
MCC Church Music  
Consultant



**The Church Lady:**  
**Caroline M. Kingsbury**  
Rural Church Worker

1956

- Disciples of Christ Church in Bangor joins the Council.
- MCC helps as Maine becomes the third state to introduce the Girl Scout "God and Country" Award.



**The Hungarian Revolution of 1956**

The Hungarian Revolution was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the Stalinist government of Hungary and its Soviet-imposed policies. In November 1956, a large Soviet force invaded Budapest, crushing the revolution. An estimated 2,500 Hungarians died, and 200,000 more fled as refugees. The Maine Council of Churches, working on behalf of Hungarian Relief for Refugees (a program of Church World Service), recruited Hungarian-speaking translators to aid refugees as they found their way to Maine in search of homes and jobs.

1957

- 14th Annual Christian Education workshops are held (Greenville, North Leeds, Sanford, West Scarborough, and Waterford).
- Town and Country Committee initiates a study of rural church standards.
- Dr. Krister Stendhal addresses ministers' conferences in Bangor and Portland on "Successful Marriage and Family Living."
- On behalf of the Maine Council of Churches, Phyllis Mosman Cobb, AAGO, conducts a Church Music Workshop to train organists and choir directors.
- "Radio Church of the Air" and "Book of Books" continue to be heard on the stations of the Maine Broadcasting System (WCSH, WLBZ, and WRDO).
- Rev. Mrs. Mildred Huffman is the Council's Christian Education Field Worker. Rev. Harvey Ammerman is the Council's Legislative Agent.



**MCC Leaders 1956**

Left to right: Miss Marion Ulmer, Rev. Lester Boobar, Rev. Shirley B. Goodwin, Rev. Charles R. Monteith, Mrs. N. Wesley Haynes

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