

## REV. EDITH H. WOLFE



The Edith H. Wolfe Scholarship Fund is for the specific purpose of granting scholarship monies for women studying and/or working in the Pacific Islands. Rev. Wolfe always desired to give support for women who desire to earn degrees so they can build a stronger and more vibrant community.

The Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands called Rev. Edith Helen Wolfe to be its third salaried Executive Director. She came highly recommended from the Rehobeth Congregational Church in Massachusetts. Rev. Wolfe graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York, and following World War II she ministered in England where she was loved for her straight forward presentation of the scriptures, her excellent preaching quality and her New England upbringing. Previous to going into the ministry she was a Physical Education teacher.

Rev. Wolfe came to us with the gifts of unbounded energy, enthusiasm for missions and empathy for everyone she met. She had a love of history and during her years in Massachusetts she became enthralled with Henry Opukaha'ia, or as most know him - Henry Obookiah. She even made a rubbing of his grave in the Cornwall, Connecticut cemetery. In 1968, she led a group to Cornwall to observe the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. Among the group were Annie Kanahale, Edith's dearest friend, Annie Palakiko, a full-blooded Hawaiian and Fe' Nebres who later was ordained and served in many capacities in the Hawaii Conference. In remembrance of Henry Opukaha'ia's death that year Rev. Wolfe also republished *The Memoirs of Henry Obookiah* which had not been published in over 100 years. Few people in Hawaii at that time had ever heard of him, yet he was the key person instrumental in bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Hawaii. Edith was so moved by his life and untimely death that for the rest of her time in ministry she spoke of him - almost - as her son.

In celebration of the Sesquicentennial (150 years) of the first missionaries coming to Hawaii, she was the energy, inspiration and organizer in publishing a new Hawaiian hymnbook - *Na Himeni Haipule Hawaii* working with, again Annie Kanahale, Rev. Samuel Saffery Sr., Rev. William Kaina, Louise Tolles, Robert Graham and Martha Hohu. It was at this time that Rev. Wolfe enlisted artist and WBM member Doris Milotta to design the Hawaiian Cross that has since graced the hymnbook, paraments, clothing, church windows and so much more with its unique and Hawaiian beauty.

Edith Wolfe had the gracious gift of hospitality and opened the Aloha Apartments at 21 Craigsides for the primary use of missionaries and ministers coming to Honolulu. Over the following 30 years, the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands and the Hawaii Conference connected with so many of our Wider Church Missionaries - missionaries from many various denominations as they sought a respite and way station between their post and their destinations. They were used by the Hawaii Conference when meetings and events required overnight lodging, they were a haven for medical patients and their families coming from neighbor islands and beyond. Edith used to say in regard to the Aloha Apartments what Jesus had once said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Storytelling was one of Edith's great gifts she gave to the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands and the entire fellowship of believers. Whether during sermons or sitting around the living room, Edith told her stories of the poignant and often humorous ministries in which she found herself. At one point she was asked to apply to be a professor of preaching at Princeton Seminary, but she turned the offer down choosing rather to remain in the employ of the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Island where she could care for the "widows and orphans, those in need, and to support the missionaries in the field."

Traveling may not have been a spiritual gift, but it was a love Edith used to broaden the perspective of the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands. During her 23-year tenure, she led mission trips to India to care for those at the Family Village Farm, to Japan to bring joy to the Christians there, to Micronesia where she participated in the SHINE workshops that are still talked about, to the Philippines to encourage the Christian community and support those in need there, and to South Africa where the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands took books and love and compassion to the girls at Inanda Seminary. She instilled in us the need to reach out to our brothers and sisters in the faith around the world because the ministry of presence is very powerful.

It was the Rev. Edith H. Wolfe who found creative ways to care for one another that strengthens the bonds of service. She established the motto: "Never Underestimate the Power of a CHRISTIAN Woman" and incorporated the award by the same name to honor those who are an integral part of the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands and the Christian community at large. In honor of Edith Helen Wolfe, a memorial scholarship fund was established to carry on her unequalled gift of generosity. Edith gave to all those in need, she cared for the sick, she took in the lost and the lonely, she fed the hungry and supported many in their educational endeavors. She established the Mother Alice Fund to help support UCC women seminarians that continues to this day.

"E. Wolfe," as she was fondly called, was a giant among women. Her reputation continues to follow her and she is remembered in most of the churches in our Hawaii Conference fellowship and beyond. We are most grateful for her presence among us at the Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands and honor her memory with this scholarship fund.