

Exploring the Cemetery – Stained Glass, Part 5: The Ladies Aid Society



The large stained glass window to the left of the altar at the front of the church was a gift of the Ladies Aid Society.

I was not sure how much information I could locate about this particular group until Pastor Oplinger showed me a manuscript she had found in her desk when she arrived at Jerusalem.

The manuscript is a history of the church compiled by Robert Franklin Doster in 1957-58 for a history class at Lebanon Valley College. Mr. Doster had recourse to sources that probably no longer exist, including the records of the Ladies Aid Society, which were then held by Daisy Hoffman. I decided to delve into Church Council minutes.

Council meetings demonstrate that the women of the church have always had an active, although sometimes informal, role in the spiritual and financial affairs of the congregation. The following record is from a meeting held on Sept. 28, 1902:

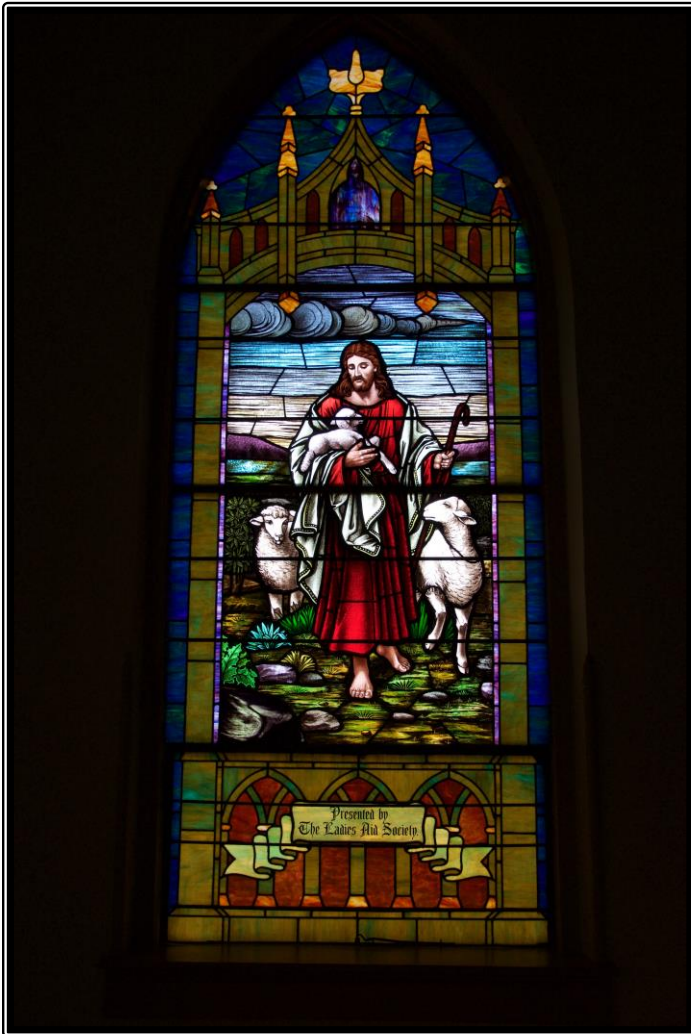
[The] "Ladies of the congregation have remaining money from buying carpet and wishing to buy sand stone to lay a stone walk in front of the Church, a motion was ordered that the Ladies can have the priveledge [*sic*] of buying the stones [to] be laid."

The first group given formal permission to organize was the Women's Missionary Society in 1902. The purpose of this group was to assist the Foreign Missionary Movement, a late 19th and early 20th century expansionist movement of evangelical Protestantism. After a long board meeting with the ladies, the Council granted permission to organize and be known as the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society. Throughout the years, the group reported regularly to council. In 1929 the group had 25 members and an income of \$169. That same year, Church Council gave the group permission to publish a congregational paper. I assume this to be the forerunner of the current bulletin.

And in 1903 there is a record of the Ladies Aid Society being given the "Priveledge [*sic*] of Sowing grass seed along north Side of Church Building."

This early Ladies Aid Society must have been an informal group. At a Church Council meeting on October 28, 1915, Church Council granted the women of the church permission to form a lay group to be known as the Ladies Aid Society. Within a week, the group had organized for the purpose of offering spiritual and material aid to the church community. Their fundraising activities consisted primarily of banquets, turkey dinners, bake sales, and the like.

But those cakes sure must have been good, because by 1920, the ladies had enough money to ask council for permission to buy a pipe organ and have it installed. On August 21, 1920, council readily agreed, and the job went to the M. P. Möller Organ Company in Hagerstown, Maryland. The cost was \$2,000, and the job was completed for dedication on May 7, 1922.



The ladies clearly went back to work for purchase of the window, but I could find no specific reference to that project in any of the existing church council records. However, I did find a report from May 1931 in which the Ladies reported that they had a trust fund of over \$2,650!

Three years later, on January 6, 1934, the Ladies Aid Society reported to council that they had 45 members who had raised over a thousand dollars in the prior year. At the same meeting it was moved and seconded that the Ladies Aid Society would henceforth have charge of the organ and organist.

By 1954, these groups were subsumed into the United Lutheran Church Women.