

# Social Activism & Ecumenism

How ministering to welfare needs  
influenced interdenominational  
cooperation

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# Social Activism & Ecumenism

# Introduction

Migratory labor began after the Civil War, when farming became more commercialized and less focused on the family farm. Following the crops, many migrants even now traipse across the United States, moving everywhere from Florida picking oranges, to Idaho harvesting potatoes. Today, labor laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and the Immigration and Nationality Act are enforced in attempts to protect migrant workers, both domestic and national, from unscrupulous employers.<sup>1</sup> However, up until the mid-1900s, very little was done to rectify the problem of migrant labor mistreatment. Those who did attempt to help these workers were mainly religious groups, which tried to meet the needs of the migrants not fulfilled by the government or the growers.<sup>2</sup>

Mainstream Protestant denomination and Catholic missionaries spread out across the United States attempting to aid migrant welfare. In Michigan, the two predominant religious groups focusing on migrants were the Michigan Migrant Ministry (MMM), made up of various Protestant denominations, and Catholic Ministry groups such as the Mexican Apostolate from the dioceses in Grand Rapids and Saginaw. Both had their own agendas when it came to the religious side of ministering to the migrants, but both maintained similar social stances when it came to the welfare of the migrant workers and the education of their children. In this thesis I argue that latter focus among social welfare

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Labor, *Summary of the Major Laws of the Department of Labor*, <http://www.dol.gov/opa/aboutdol/lawsprog.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights: Michigan, 1948-1968* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 171.

advocates of different religious faiths was the foundation for which on-the-ground ecumenical interaction began in Michigan.

It seems contradictory in some ways that these two groups, which clashed at many points throughout history, could ever end up agreeing to jointly oversee the Michigan Migrant Opportunity. Worldwide, it was commonplace for strict separation of religious sects due to ideological differences; it wasn't until the twentieth century that interfaith dialogue between most Protestants and Catholics became tolerable and it wasn't until the latter half of that time period that ecumenism became an accepted movement between the religions. A key reason for religious separation stemmed from conversion, which played a main role in missionary work for both Protestants and Catholics. Many authors such as Vicki Ruiz, David A. Badillo, Howard Clark Kee, Emily Albu, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost, and Dana L. Robert examined ideas about Americanization and Christianization by Protestant missionary groups, while others like Angela Dries observed proselytizing by Catholic missionary groups, demonstrating that conversion was part of various denominations' missionary work.<sup>1</sup>

I will touch those topics as they relate to both the MMM and the Catholic Mexican Apostolate. However, as missionary work began to focus on serving those in need, social Christianity evolved, and in turn played a major role in both groups' decisions to minister to the migrant laborers in Michigan. Eventually many Protestants and Catholics found themselves involved with migrant legislation and policy in Michigan

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<sup>1</sup> Vicki Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Howard Clark Kee, Emily Albu, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost, and Dana L. Robert, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998); Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998).

through the Michigan Council of Churches (MCOC) and the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC) respectively. I argue that the MCOC's and the MCC's similar goals in regards to migrant welfare, coupled with an already growing call to ecumenism from the top, ultimately enabled the joint venture between the Protestant and Catholic organizations known as the Michigan Migrant Opportunity (MMOI).

In Chapter 1 I will explore the idea of Protestant missionary work on a broad scale both domestically and globally. I will illustrate how socialism impacted Christianity and created a "social Christianity" that influenced the creation of welfare-minded missionary groups like the Michigan Migrant Ministry. Starting with a brief look at Protestant missionary work in 1730s, I will draw a timeline of major events through the 1960s that illustrate the changing mindset of mainstream Protestantism, which I argue aided the social movement in missionary work and ecumenical movement with Catholics.

In Chapter 2 I will briefly timeline missionary work starting in the late fifteenth century. I will show how that work moved from solely proselytizing to an emphasis from Church hierarchy on social teaching and welfare as progress and modernism impacted religion, which led to the creation of groups like the Mexican Apostolate in Michigan. Through these changes, I argue, the Catholic hierarchy began to focus on ecumenical outreach. Eventually they solidified their viewpoints in the Second Vatican Council, enabling Catholic missionary workers to officially join hands with other religious and secular groups on social welfare initiatives.

Finally in Chapter 3, I will discuss the venture that I argue was the beginning of the ecumenical movement between Catholics and Protestants in Michigan. I will illustrate

how the focus on migrant welfare, coupled with both religious groups' social ideals, enabled the creation and joint oversight of the Michigan Migrant Opportunity (MMOI).

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to create an understanding of how two religious groups, with known dislike for one another, managed to overcome decades of intolerance to join hands and oversee an organization that did not espouse religious views. I argue that social welfare in missionary work aided interdenominational cooperation among Catholics and some of the mainstream Protestant religions, because they realized it would enable them to expand the reach of their social engagement. This is the central line that I argue led to on the ground ecumenical undertakings such as the MMOI in Michigan.

# Chapter 1

## Social Activism and its Influence on the Ecumenical Movement in Protestantism

### **Introducing Protestantism to the Doctrine of social Christianity: 1784-1900**

The beginning of a Protestant culture that embraced inclusiveness started with the Great Awakening in the 1730s and 1740s. Before that time, Calvinists dominated the realm of Protestantism. Created by John Calvin, Calvinism focused on Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, emphasizing the grace of God and the doctrine of predestination that regarded the salvation or damnation of each soul as preordained.<sup>1</sup> The Great Awakening, however, refocused the way Protestants approached their place in the Church. Detachment during services changed to personal conviction and emotional response. Many people's God fearing focus turned towards private self-awareness, moving away from the authoritative nature of the traditionalist doctrine. Thomas Coke, sent to the colonies as the first superintendent of the Methodist Church, advocated for the establishment of a missionary board in 1784 that advocated interdenominational inclusiveness.<sup>2</sup> Less than a decade later, the London Missionary Society encouraged "an increase of union and friendly intercourse among Christian denominations at home."<sup>3</sup> As the eighteenth century came to a close, the changes that occurred within Protestantism

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<sup>1</sup> "Definition of Calvinism in English," *Calvinism: Definition of Calvinism in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co. Inc., 1966), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (London: H. Frowde, 1899), as cited by David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co. Inc., 1966).

triggered small, albeit significant, gains to a more parishioner-focused church that aimed to bring new members to Christianity.

Moving into the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening reaffirmed the goal of bringing non-believers into the Christian faith through missionary movements and groups. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) began in 1810 as an independent interdenominational agency. As the first, officially recognized, interdenominational missionary group in the United States, the ABCFM targeted non-Christians worldwide and at home. But the ABCFM focused on more than just Christianization, projecting itself into the political realm as it attempted to spread social welfare, accepting funds from the government to continue its work.<sup>1</sup> The ABCFM's emphasis on the importance of social welfare eventually became one of the burgeoning priorities for missionary groups around the world. Although proselytizing was still important, it was no longer the sole motivating factor for many missionary groups in the nineteenth century.

Missionary societies grew steadily as more and more Christians felt compelled to Christianize and provide welfare, which in turn aided the cause of ecumenism. In the United States, the American Bible Society (1816) and the American Tract Society (1825) were founded on an interdenominational basis. Similarly, the American Education Society (1815), the American Sunday School Union (1824), and the American Home Missionary Society (1826) accepted the cooperation of all Christians.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, "Memorial to the Senate and the House of Representatives," in American Society for Improving Indian Tribes, First Annual Report, 1824, 66-68. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, as cited by Digital History, *The Missionary Impulse*, [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=681](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=681)

<sup>2</sup> David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History*, (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co. Inc., 1966), 7.

Across the world, attempts at ecumenism also became more prominent in missionary work. Formed in Great Britain in 1846, the Evangelical Alliance's first meeting centering on missionary work encompassed hundreds of representatives and denominations from around the world.<sup>3</sup> The Bombay Missionary Union formed in 1825 "to foster Christian fellowship and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on ways to extend Christianity in India."<sup>4</sup> Discussions of interdenominational cooperation slowly turned into action. At the Third North India Conference in Lahore (1862), Baptist deacon's received elements from Presbyterian celebrants as they celebrated the newfound understanding that the "united action of Christian men who prayed conferred and worked together [would] advance the interests of their Master's Kingdom."<sup>5</sup>

As decades passed and missionary work increased, the demand for joint Christian initiatives grew as missionaries recognized the importance of religious cooperation to expand the reach of their message. In Japan for instance, numerous conferences spanning three decades promoted unity among Christian groups and missionaries, while praying for "corporate oneness". In China, the conferences focused on similar stances of togetherness, with speakers urging foreign missionaries to change "this blind and absurd" policy of the denominations developing their forces independently of one another.<sup>6</sup> These missionary workers realized that independent, non-communicative efforts would hinder goals of expansion.

Students became key as the missionary movement sought to spread its reach. Mainly from colleges and universities, many young men and women took part in groups

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<sup>3</sup> Gaines, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Gaines, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Gaines, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Gaines, 8.



such as the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.), the American Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association, the Interseminary Missionary Alliance, and the Student Volunteer Movement.<sup>7</sup> Founder of the Geneva Chapter of the Y.M.C.A. Henri Dunant felt it was the group's duty "to spread abroad that ecumenical spirit which transcended nationalities, languages, denominations, ecclesiastical problems, ranks and occupations: to realize, in a word, and as far as possible, that article in the Creed which we all adhere to – 'I believe in the Communion of Saints and in the Holy Catholic Church.'"<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, at a time when Catholicism and Protestantism were at odds with each other, there were some small acceptances of the other religion in parts of the missionary world. However, these positive exchanges did not become more pronounced until the middle of the twentieth century.

Aside from ecumenism, another cause for the increase in the size of missionary movements was the Christian Social movement, which brought issues such as poverty and politics into the realm of the religious groups. Emerging in Great Britain around 1830, social Christianity was only "socialist" in that it tried to emphasize the need for society to come together as one through the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. In other words, these Christians hoped to solve the problems created by industry through the Church.<sup>9</sup> At a time when socialist movements like Marxism began attracting numerous followers, social Christianity became a center for those who sought to aid the social calamities of the world through religion.

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<sup>7</sup> Gaines, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Gaines, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Gaines, 31.

## **Moving Forward with the Ecumenical Social Mission into the Twentieth Century: The 1910 Conference at Edinburgh**

Ideas about the need for societal change introduced in the nineteenth century started to heavily influence attitudes within the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, including those within Christian fellowship, and in turn the culture of missionary work among the Protestant denominations.<sup>10</sup> This Social Christian Movement complemented religious ideals with the changes evolving in contemporary society.<sup>11</sup> Social Christians reinterpreted the Bible and views of God, attempting to make both closer to the individual person. They focused on progress instead of sin, described the Bible as a historical product of the people who wrote it, and attempted to show that science was attuned to religion, with each supreme in a separate sphere.<sup>12</sup> Social Christians believed that God's teachings were summarized in the commandments to love God and one's neighbors. They saw disunity among Christian groups as problematic because they believed that it weakened Christianity and their ability to reach people in need of welfare assistance. In turn, they worked to create denominational unification.<sup>13</sup>

Spreading the word and ministering to people in need of welfare assistance became a major focal point for Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century, resulting in the 1910 World Missionary Conference (also known as the Conference at Edinburgh). Held from June 14<sup>th</sup> until June 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year, it was preceded by five interdenominational conferences that focused on foreign missionary work. However, the World Missionary Conference differed from previous events due to its international

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<sup>10</sup> I use the term modernity to illustrate the move away from conservative ideals. I also use it to show that there is not a strict dichotomy between liberalism on one side and Christianity on the other.

<sup>11</sup> The Social Christian Movement began in the 1830s in England and appeared in the US in the 1880s; Gaines, 30 & 33.

<sup>12</sup> Kee, 482 - 483.

<sup>13</sup> Kee, 483.

nature; there was a much larger focus on ministering to people outside the United States and Britain than in the previous conferences.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, the World Missionary Conference emphasized ministering to minorities:

We are only beginning to understand that the beliefs and customs and capacities of the coloured races are in future to be regarded as worthy of attention, not only on account of the sympathy with them which our common humanity inspires, but also on account of the influence which these races are beginning to exercise and will increasingly exert on the interests of the human race in general, and on the western races in particular.<sup>15</sup>

This conference also stressed the need for religious denominations to continue to work together in order for the missionary movement to be successful, reaffirming ideals of ecumenism. During the nine-day conference multiple discussions revolved around the problem of Christian unity. A correspondence read to the Conference from Archbishop Nicolai of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Tokyo noted that there was “no real and full unity between us and other sections; more than that, we are far from such unity because we are divided in the Christian doctrine.”<sup>16</sup> Part of the Conference’s purpose was to address the discord that had also been discussed at the Missionary Conference held in London in 1888.<sup>17</sup> Those in conversation about the situation commented on the issue specifically in the volume compiled during the Conference, noting that “the work is a campaign of allies, and yet many of the allies are ignorant of what the others are doing.”<sup>18</sup> Though missionaries ministered with good intentions, the separations between Christian

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<sup>14</sup> World Missionary Conference Records, Edinburgh, 1910, Burke Library Archives, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

<sup>15</sup> World Missionary Conference Commission I-VIII, *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910) 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> World Missionary Conference Commission I-VIII, 4.

<sup>17</sup> World Missionary Conference Commission I-VIII, 20.

<sup>18</sup> World Missionary Conference Commission I-VIII, 5.

denominations hindered their ability to work together, and in turn hurt their ability to provide welfare assistance. Church leaders at the Conference understood the need for ecumenism because it would enable them to expand the reach of their missionary work and aid more people in need.

It was also made clear during the Conference of 1910 that under no circumstances should churches attempt to steal members of other churches, nor should they attempt to draw missionaries away from their missions without speaking to the mission leader first. In Delhi and China, similar statements made by missionary establishments reiterated this idea. At the 1902 Decennial Conference in India for example, the common view reflected the “opinion that no worker should be received into another Mission as an agent, without reference to the Mission of which he was formerly a member.”<sup>19</sup> This decision reflected the growing acknowledgment of the importance of interfaith cooperation.

The Conference of 1910 acknowledged that the advantages gained from collaboration among the missionaries would outweigh the exclusiveness of individual religious groups. The cooperation among churches on the missionary field reinforced the ecumenical movement as a growing part of Christianity moving into the twentieth century. Coupled with ideological transformations towards Christian Social Doctrine in many Protestant churches, missionary movements continued to rapidly expand around the world as Church leaders began to understand that cooperation would enable them to expand their reach of the social engagement.

### **The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ: The Ecumenical Social Center of the U.S. Missionary Movement**

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<sup>19</sup> World Missionary Conference Commission I-VIII, 20 (capitalization as in the original).

Two years before the 1910 Conference at Edinburgh, various Protestant denominations formed a group known as the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (FCCC). It eventually became the focal point for ecumenism and the beginnings of social Christianity in the United States. Instrumental in its creation was theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, who emphasized the religious necessity behind the social movement, and in turn legitimized it in mainstream Protestantism in the United States.<sup>20</sup> In 1907 he wrote *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, imploring American Christian leaders to act upon the social discrepancies:

No one shares life with God whose religion does not flow out, naturally and without effort, into all relations of his life... Whoever uncouples the religious and social life has not understood Jesus. Whoever sets any bounds for the reconstructive power of the religious life over the social relations and human institutions, to that extent denies the faith of the Master.<sup>21</sup>

The official creation of the FCCC in 1908 solidified Rauschenbusch's pleas. Three years previously in 1905, 30 Protestant denominations adopted the Constitution of the Federal Council of Churches at the Interchurch Conference on Federation held in New York City at Carnegie Hall. When the Constitution was officially ratified in 1908, the fourth of its five objectives stated that its focus was to "to secure a larger combined influence for the Churches of Christ in all matters affecting the moral and social condition of people" through the laws of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> During their first meeting, the FCCC discussed the issues plaguing the public, including the distance between many

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<sup>20</sup> Kyle Potter, *Walter Rauschenbusch and the Social Gospel*, <https://spider.georgetowncollege.edu/htallant/courses/his338/students/kpotter/>

<sup>21</sup> National Council of Churches. *History*. <http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/about/history.php>

<sup>22</sup> David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co. Inc., 1966), 34.

Americans and religion. The majority of concerns revolved around destitution and greed. Many felt that the Churches needed to take measures to catch up with the conditions created by industrial progress. They created a set of aims that came to be known as the Social Creed of Churches. Adopted on December 4, 1908, the Creed stated the following:

We deem it the duty of all Christian people to concern themselves directly with certain practical industrial problems. To us it seems that the Churches must stand:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safeguarded against encroachments of every kind.

For the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crisis of industrial change.

For the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the suppression of the "sweating system."

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.

For a release from employment one day in seven.

For a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford.

For the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury.

For the abatement of poverty.

To the toilers of America and to those who by organized effort are seeking to lift the crushing burdens of the poor, and to reduce the hardships and uphold the dignity of labor, this council sends the greeting of human brotherhood and the pledge of sympathy and of help in a cause, which belongs to all who follow Christ.<sup>23</sup>

The FCCC made it clear that Christians needed to be concerned with the potential problems industrialism caused, for it was their “profound belief that the complex problems of modern industry can be interpreted and solved only by the teachings of the New Testament, and that Jesus Christ is the final authority in the social as in the individual life.” Protestants needed to live by Jesus’ example, and focusing on social welfare engaged that principle. Furthermore, the FCCC believed “in the interest of the kingdom of God, [that] the Church must not merely acquiesce in the movements outside...but must demonstrate, not by proclamation but by deeds, its primacy among all the forces which seek to lift the plane and better the conditions of human life.”<sup>24</sup> It became a Christian duty to ensure that the lower and working classes obtained what they deserved, and if they did not, Christians needed to step in and help them.

By 1910, the FCCC launched a campaign to shorten the hours worked per day and the hours worked per week. They also labored to change the notoriously dangerous conditions within factories. One of their greatest successes in this sphere occurred when then president Warren G. Harding was able to convince the American Iron and Steel Institute to abolish the “long shift” in 1923, which the Council had begun working on in 1910.<sup>25</sup> That same year they held 22 conferences on industry, addressing ministers’

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<sup>23</sup> Federal Council of Churches of Christ, *"The Social Creed of the Churches,"* (December, 1908), as cited by David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Federal Council of Churches of Christ, *The Church and Modern Industry*, as cited by David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History*, 34-35.

<sup>25</sup> David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches, a Study of Its Background and History* 37.

meetings, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, councils of social agencies, labor temples, colleges, universities, and other organizations that proclaimed Christian ideals. They focused on topics about the industrial realm, social programs, housing, church relations, social movements, religion and labor.<sup>26</sup> As the FCCC (consisting of Protestant denominations such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Protestant Episcopal) aimed to help the mistreated industrial working men and women in the United States, they eventually found themselves overseeing the missionary groups providing welfare to another type of laborer: the migrant field worker.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Beginnings of Protestant Missionary Work with Migrant Laborers**

It was also during this early period of the twentieth century that the organizations focusing on ecumenical ideals and humanizing religion through missionary work developed within the United States. Not wanting to impose minute theological distinctions on potential foreign converts, Social Christians felt that cooperation among the various Protestant denominations would make these people more comfortable.<sup>28</sup> They believed that coupling Christianity, social services, and education would foster the economic and political development of these foreign peoples. With the Immigration Act of 1924 keeping many Eastern Europeans, Italians and Asians from emigrating, the missionary focus in the United States, which had centered on migrant laborers and their

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<sup>26</sup> Gaines, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Edward T. Devine, "Statement to the Presidents of the Constituent Companies of the United States Steel Corporation," *American Journal of Sociology*, 25, 6 (1920): 769.

<sup>28</sup> Howard Clark Kee, Emily Albu, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost, and Dana L. Robert, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998) 483.



families, converged on mainly the Mexicans and Mexican Americans who became the main source of labor working the fields and farms.<sup>29</sup>

Established the same year as the FCCC, the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions (men's and women's groups respectively), promoted similar rhetoric in calling for religious unification, for they also understood that interdenominational cooperation would enable them to expand their reach of social work. The Home Missions Council (HMC) focused its efforts "to promote fellowship, conference, and cooperation among organizations doing missionary work in the United States and its dependencies."<sup>30</sup> The Council of Women for Home Missions (CWHM) also propped the unification of denominations, citing in their constitution that their goal was to "unify the efforts of the national women's home mission boards of the United States and Canada by consultation and cooperation in action and to represent Protestant church women in such national movements as they desire to promote inter-denominationally."<sup>31</sup> The FCCC, the HMC, and the CWHM worked on similar projects and on occasion met to discuss their work and progress. *The Federal Bulletin* documented one such meeting in December 1921.<sup>32</sup> These three groups along with the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, the Federation of Women's Boards of Foreign Missions, the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations, and the Council of Church Boards of Education met at the headquarters of the Y.W.C.A. in New York to discuss the question

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<sup>29</sup> Kee, 488; I will acknowledge that migrant workers also consisted of blacks and whites, but due to the majority being Mexican, and because the Michigan Migrant Ministry papers and Mexican Apostolate focused on the Mexican laborers, I will not make them the main focus of my discussion.

<sup>30</sup> Home Missions Council of Women for Home Missions Home Missions Council of North America Records, Interchurch Center in New York City, New York.

<sup>31</sup> Home Missions Council of North America Records, 1903-1951, Group 26, Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>32</sup> The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ, *Federal Council Bulletin*, Volumes 4-6 (1921).

of cooperative church work. Together and separately these groups promoted ideals of Christian fellowship and helping their fellow man.

By 1940, after years of joint meetings and collaborations, the HMC and the CWHM merged to form the Home Missions Council of North America (HMCNA).<sup>33</sup> Within that same year, they established a missionary branch in Michigan, which came to be later known as the Michigan Migrant Ministry (MMM).<sup>34</sup> The formation of this group represented another implicit push towards ecumenism, for it combined various Christian groups in ministering to the migrant workers within the state (the majority of which were Mexican). As the 1940s progressed, the HMCNA sent more and more missionaries to Michigan. Coupled with those from the Michigan Council of Churches and the Council of Church Women in Michigan, the move to spread faith and welfare grew as more and more migrant workers came to the state.

Archival records from the HMCNA during the 1940s emphasized the need for Migrant welfare, but also underscored a more predictable focus of Americanization within the education they provided. It is widely known that Protestant ideas of Christianization reflected the furthering of Americanization, especially for foreigners coming into the United States. Although the focus of the HMCNA and the MMM never explicitly stated that this was one of the purposes, many people associated Protestantism with Americanization in the United States because Protestantism was (and still is) the dominant religion in the country.

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<sup>33</sup> Home Missions Council of Women for Home Missions Home Missions Council of North America, Interchurch Center in New York City, New York.

<sup>34</sup> Letter to Chairman of State Migrant Committee to Galen R. Weaver, Chairman of the National Migrant Committee, Division of Home Missions, National Council of Churches.

In 1920 the CWHM started four child-care centers in New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware, providing for the spiritual, educational, and welfare needs of migrant worker children through ecumenical means. As they expanded across the country, the CWHM continued to work with and through people from all denominations of Christianity. When they merged with the HMC under the umbrella of the HMCNA, various Christian groups came together and developed offshoots of the group in different areas around the United States. These organizations advocated American values while providing religious workshops and welfare help. The centers created by the MMM, for example, provided various activities “consisting of pledge to the flag, singing of patriotic songs, learning patriotic poems, and becoming better acquainted” with the United States. Coupled with those lessons, missionaries held classes and worship services.<sup>35</sup> Protestant groups worked together to provide these programs to migrant workers, but for decades up until the 1960s those feelings of ecumenism did not span beyond their own borders. Sometimes activities came to a standstill among the local churches that were supposed to be at the forefront of the unification movement.

Pushback against thought among Protestant denominations did affect the efforts of groups such as the MMM, illustrating that the conversations among religious officials weren’t necessarily trickling down to those in the Church trenches. Some denominations merged in an effort to heal divisions created during the nineteenth century by merging with United Methodists, the United Presbyterian Church in U.S.A., the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Church of Christ.<sup>36</sup> However, these actions

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<sup>35</sup> *Report of Mid-West Work in Michigan, Elkton, July-August 1942*, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Clark Kee, Emily Albu, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost, and Dana L. Robert, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 507.

left some people irritated and they refused to join the ecumenical movement, making missionary work on the ground level more difficult.

Despite these obstacles however, people from the various churches came together to move forward with the ministry. For the HMCNA, this led to further expanding its reach. Their documented migrant work alone stretched as far West as California, reaching other states like Arizona and Idaho, and as far south as Florida and Louisiana. Their work in the Midwest spanned Illinois throughout Indiana, with a major focus in Michigan. Interestingly enough, it was the female parent organization of the HMCNA, the CWHM, which started the ministry initiative for migrant workers in Michigan.

### **The Council of Women for Home Missions**

The CWHM was one of the first official ecumenical groups within the United States who sought to spread social welfare. As noted in the previous chapter, women had been part of the Protestant missionary movement in the United States as early as 1812, and continued to play a major role within that space as ecumenism in the country became more prominent in the early 1900s. Similarly to every other women's mission board, the CWHM was founded on prayer and self-sacrifice.<sup>37</sup> They supported the HMC in both internationally and domestically. Within the United States, they focused on educating immigrants about Christianity and American Citizenship. By the 1920s, their efforts concentrated on the marginalized peoples within the United States, including Native Americans, Mexicans and migrant workers.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1996), 271.

<sup>38</sup> Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Marie Cantlon, *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2006).

CWHM documents, from as early as 1936, discussed the importance of aiding migrant workers in Michigan, with major focuses on ecumenical practice in order to expand their social activism. In a letter to a Miss Ione Catton of the Michigan Council of Religious Education, executive secretary for the CWHM assured her that they were “very eager...that we follow the procedure that will insure the inclusive departments of the Church.” The letter went on to discuss how the International Council of Religious Education, Church Boards of Christian Education, FCCC, HMC, and CWHM “have agreed to make a united approach to the field...and would lend their support and cooperation but would consider the CWHM as the organization to take the lead and carry the primary responsibility.” The letter continued saying, “This is logical as in 1920, following the Interchurch World movement, responsibility for the migrant workers in farm and cannery areas was allocated to women’s home missions boards.”<sup>39</sup>

It was also reasonable due to the fact that the CWHM oversaw committees for migrant projects in eleven other states in the 1930s. Maintaining similar standards made sense for the migrant project in Michigan, since many of the migrants who made their way to the state for various harvests also migrated to other states to harvest their seasonal crops. The migrants would be able to receive similar welfare and spiritual aid wherever they went. It also enabled the CWHM to cultivate relationships between state and national groups, assuring more similarity in the work with the migrants across counties. Instead of having a multitude of Christian organizations, they all worked together under one umbrella within Michigan. As noted in that aforementioned letter to Miss Ione Catton, “the program on the field is one in which the emphases and methods vary

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<sup>39</sup> Interchurch World Movement discussed in Chapter 1; Letter to Miss Ione Catton of the Michigan Council of Religious Education from Executive Secretary of the Council of Women for Home Missions (March 5, 1936), 1.

according to the situation.”<sup>40</sup> The CWHM instituted plans that would create local committees to cover their area of the state, but they would follow similar standards and agendas, and would make adjustments based on the needs of the migrants within their respective communities.

By the time the CWHM became involved with migrant ministry work in Michigan, the majority of Mexican migrant laborers brought their families.<sup>41</sup> With parents both working in the fields, young children spent most of their time alongside them (see Figure 1). The Council of Women for Home Missions recommended building community centers, where babies and small children could be brought for the day while their parents and older siblings labored in the fields.<sup>42</sup>



Figure 1. Photo from 1950s Division of Home Missions pamphlet: *If...then*.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Letter to Miss Ione Catton, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Before 1900, mainly single men came to the United States to work the fields and build railroads, but with the culmination of the Civil War in Mexico in 1910, more and more families began to travel with their men; PBS, *Mexican Immigrant Labor History*, <http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/17.html>

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Miss Ione Catton of the Michigan Council of Religious Education 532 Mutual Building 208 North Capitol Avenue, Lansing Michigan from Executive Secretary of the Council of Women for Home Missions (March 5, 1936), 2, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>43</sup> Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 21.



Figure 2. Marshall, Michigan – Nursery-age tots nap under Home Missions Council Supervision, while their migrant parents work in nearby cucumber pickle fields.<sup>44</sup>

The CWHM did not stray from their ecumenical roots with their move into Michigan. By 1937, they established the first center in Mount Pleasant Michigan (see Figure 3). By 1938, they had fifty-seven children in attendance (see Figure 2). Open from June 6<sup>th</sup> until August 5<sup>th</sup> of that summer, the CWHM also established an interdenominational Mexican Church called “The Mexican Church”, with services held by a Mexican Methodist preacher named Reverend Moreno.<sup>45</sup> The first initial report on

<sup>44</sup>The Migrant Ministry (1950s), National Council of Churches Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>45</sup> *Report of Michigan Migrant Center, June 6, to August 5, 1938, Mount Pleasant Michigan*, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.



the center emphasized the interchurch dynamic, mentioning, “When services are held near Breckenridge, a Presbyterian Church opens its doors for the services. When they are held near Barryton, a Christian Church becomes the church home for the Mexicans.”<sup>46</sup> The CWHM continued to develop their ministry in Michigan, and it grew even more when they merged with the HMC.



Figure 3. Michigan Migrant Center Staff in Mount Pleasant, Michigan (1938).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Report of Michigan Migrant Center, June 6, to August 5, 1938, Mount Pleasant Michigan, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.*

<sup>47</sup> Staff: Alicia Fisher of Titusville, PA (Supervisor), Margaret James of Cleveland Ohio (Director), Helen Baxendale of Detroit, Michigan (Boys Work), Mildred Robinson of Mount Pleasant, Michigan (Nursery), Trinity Aleman of Shepherd, Michigan (Interpreter); Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.



### **The Physical Beginnings of Protestant Missionary action in Michigan & the Problems they encountered; The Home Missions Council of North America**

After years of working together, the HMC and the CWHM furthered their beliefs in the ecumenical movement and joined together in 1940 to form the Home Missions Council of North America (HMCNA). By the end of the year, they established two other centers in Alma and Blissfield in conjunction with the Michigan Council of Church Women, the Michigan Council of Churches (MCOCC), and locals in both areas. Along with the center established in Mount Pleasant, the HMCNA brought educational, religious and recreational projects to the children of migrant workers in Michigan.<sup>48</sup>

Just one year later, six more centers opened. In Benton Harbor, as one account put it, “one well known fruit grower said that the center had done more to bring about a feeling of mutual sympathy between migrant and native residents than any other single factor.”<sup>49</sup> Engaging locals and churches of all denominations was a priority. During a Michigan State Migrant Committee meeting on January 24, 1941, Else White presented the “three fold purpose” of the meeting, stating that it was of utmost importance for the organization of the committee to promote interdenominational unity. Given the choice to maintain the organization as an autonomous group, a motion was made that day to “approve the setting up of a State Migrant Committee, composed of denominational representative and representatives of Michigan Council of Church of Woman, and any other members that might be selected.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Home Missions Council of North America, Michigan State Migrant Committee Meeting*, October 10, 1941, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>49</sup> *Migrants on the Move*, Center at Benton Harbor, Michigan (1940), Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Migrants on the Move*, Center at Benton Harbor, Michigan (1940), 2-3, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

However as meeting notes from an October 10<sup>th</sup> Michigan State Migrant Committee meeting suggest, focusing on Christian unification to spread welfare aid wasn't enough. As more workers began to descend upon the state, the more problems migrants faced came to light. As centers continued to spring up, the interdenominational Christian group entered into conversations about Michigan State legislation that affected migrant workers.

One of the advocates who worked closely with the group was Michigan State University Assistant Professor of Sociology J.F. Thaden, who focused his work mainly on the migratory beet workers in Michigan. Appearing in several documents from the Home Missions Council of North America archive (and later the Michigan Migrant Ministry archive), Professor Thaden's main concern was the health and living conditions that the beet workers dealt with.<sup>51</sup> In his 1942 book, *Migratory Beet Workers in Michigan*, Professor Thaden illustrated through his study not only the nature of the particular agriculture business, but the way growers hired labor, the changes within the industry over the past three years, and the people who picked the sugar beets. He did note that although the Sugar Act of 1937 said no children under the age of fourteen should be permitted to work on the farm, 129 farmers in the state of Michigan alone were charged with violations of the law in 1939.<sup>52</sup> He finished his book discussing the Home Missions Council of North America and their formation of a Michigan State Migrant Committee in the fall of 1940 to aid the migrant laborers welfare.

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<sup>51</sup> Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA; Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>52</sup> J.F. Thaden, *Migratory Beet Workers in Michigan* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College Agricultural Experiment Station, 1942).

One of the major welfare issues the HMCNA attempted to deal with was that problem of child labor. Although the Sugar Act was passed in 1937, this did not affect other types of agricultural farming. A human-interest piece written in 1940 by ministry worker Merle Farni brought a personal view of the child labor situation. A fourteen-year-old named Pete told Farni “that when the children went to ‘cherries’ or ‘beans’ they would have to work.” He said that “someday there will be a law to keep the children away from work like in sugar beets. Miss Merle, children had back hurts and don't grow good when they have to work too hard." Many children ended up behind their peers in school. At least fifty percent of the children contacted by the centers in 1940 never attended school and another fifty percent could not speak English.<sup>53</sup> This was a pattern that they continued to find throughout the years despite increasing the number of centers. Reports noted that around 7,500 "Mexican" children under the age of sixteen come to Michigan with their parents in April or early May every year.<sup>54</sup> They also discussed the school attendance laws that were “not enforced for Mexicans.”<sup>55</sup> A report at the Blissfield migrant center pointed out that some children who spoke Spanish could not even read or write in their native language.<sup>56</sup> Other stories like these fueled the HMCNA’s involvement with labor legislation and ignited its efforts to create more centers that kept migrant laborers’ children out of the fields.

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<sup>53</sup> *Minutes of the Michigan State Migrant Committee Meeting* (January 24, 1941), 1, Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>54</sup> I put Mexican in quotes because many of these children were American citizens.

<sup>55</sup> Edgar O. Johnston, *The Education of Children Of Spanish – Speaking Migrants in Michigan* (University of Michigan, March 28, 1946), Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20; The Home Missions Council performed their own study and received numbers from earlier studies: *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan* (Childrens Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Publication No. 115, Washington, 1923). Elizabeth S. Johnson, *Welfare of Families of Sugar Beet Laborers* (Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Publication No. 247, Washington, 1939).

<sup>56</sup> Home Missions Council of North America, *Report of Blissfield Migrant Center* (1941), Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Another problem appeared as migrant worker children started showing up dirty to the centers. The HMCNA began investigating the sanitary conditions and housing of migrants, furthering discussions about the necessity for changes in legislation among members of the HMCNA. Surveys of towns such as the one done by Orlando Tusler in Hart, Michigan in 1940 weren't uncommon:

Three hundred people were found on one acre of land, tents, trucks, and some were sleeping on the ground. Only one house for the men and one for the women. Water was carried from the farm house, which is two blocks from the migratory group. Nothing is being done for the health of these people in Hart.<sup>57</sup>

A report titled *Abuses Connected with the Seasonal Migration of Mexicans to Michigan* discussed how growers ignored children in order to place enough workers in a territory, and families were packed in like sardines.

Various people connected with the HMC throughout Michigan brought up similar reports. Professor Thaden spoke at one of the meetings about how he “visited five camps (in one afternoon) where eight and ten families were living together without toilets, or water near at hand. . . In other localities, there were diphtheria epidemics that threatened to spread to the general communities.”<sup>58</sup> The pandemic ended up spreading throughout Saginaw County and into the Blissfield area. Van Buren County also faced an

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<sup>57</sup> Orlando Tusler, *Report of A Survey Made Of Hart, Michigan* (1940), 4, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>58</sup> Home Missions Council of North America, *Michigan State Migrant Committee Meeting* (October 10, 1941), 2, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

epidemic of bacillary dysentery. The Michigan Department of Health investigated and revealed the cause as a severe sanitation problem.<sup>59</sup>

In beet worker camps, growers used abandoned farmhouses that often had inadequate screen doors and windows, little or no sanitation, and unsafe drinking water.<sup>60</sup> In a report by Winnie Lende of the HMCNA, she wrote about one doctor tried to “show the growers that if they [didn’t] improve the conditions in the area, there [would] be harsh criticism on the part of the neighboring communities, and the local residences as well as endangering the life and health of the pickers who [came] to work in the area.”<sup>61</sup> Mr. Ross Robins, part owner of a pickle company, told them at a meeting he’d never thought about fixing the living conditions before, saying “Don’t these people live in filth all the time? They don’t expect any better.”<sup>62</sup> After the meeting he said he would suggest to other growers better ways to house their workers. However, not all people showed a quick change of heart like him, and not much could be done without the help of community members.

One of the struggles that the HMCNA faced in Michigan were the varying responses from communities and churches throughout the State. As one of their early 1940s reports stated, “Frankly, the attitude toward these folk, generally speaking, continues to be one of ‘use and let go!’”<sup>63</sup> In the town of Hart, Michigan, some farmers confused the HMCNA with the Council of Social Action. Many farmers felt the latter

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<sup>59</sup> The University of Michigan, School of Education Bulletin, Volume 15, Number 1, (October 1943).

<sup>60</sup> Brooks, Florence, *Abuses connected with the seasonal migration of Mexicans to Michigan* (February 1, 1943), 3, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

<sup>61</sup> Winnie W. Lende, *Home Missions Council of North America, Work in Mid-West, Michigan Territory* (June-August, 1942), Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

<sup>62</sup> Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>63</sup> Home Missions Council of North America, *Report of Mid-West Work Michigan* (1943), Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

group was “communistic” so they were hesitant to support the HMCNA. Ignorance was also a problem the HMCNA faced. In a memorandum prepared by Florence Brooks of Brown City, Michigan, she wrote, “only rarely does a church show evidence of any awareness of the needs of these people, either spiritual or temporal.” She also noted that the average community made few or no attempts to aid the social and recreational needs of its migrant workers. Normally “the store where these people trade and the local beer gardens are usually the only places where Mexicans feel free to gather.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Growing the Ministry in the 1940s**

Still, despite the initial lack of enthusiastic response from the communities in Michigan, the HMCNA continued to move forward. They created multiple centers across the state and promoted their Protestant ecumenical agenda. Though a focus on conversion was not explicitly stated in its archives, the HMC did assert that part of its mission involved ministering to the spiritual needs of the migrant workers. Prayers and religious hymns were part of the daily routine at the children’s centers. A report from the Hawkhead area in 1942 by Annie Powlas discussed the several attempts made “to get the parents of our children to attend church,” although “many of them were not members of the Church.”<sup>65</sup>

Though the parents may not have been as eager, the HMC made an effort to ensure that Christianity was promoted as all encompassing, focusing much of their

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<sup>64</sup> Florence Brooks, *Abuses connected with the seasonal migration of Mexicans to Michigan*, 1 February, 1943, 5, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

<sup>65</sup> Annie Powlas, *The Report of Mid-West work in Michigan, Hawkhead area*, June 10-August 28, 1942, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

religious work within the children's centers. In *A Program of Work For A Community Migrant Project*, Mrs. S. L. Durham of the Lansing Council of Church Women discussed how migrant families came from many different religious backgrounds, making it necessary to refrain from teaching doctrinal lessons. "Controversial subjects in religion should be avoided," she wrote. She also said that concrete stories about Jesus should be taught to the younger ones because those narratives were easier to understand. Mrs. Durham also provided weekly curriculum themes for centers such as "God's love for everybody, God's care, Helpers of Jesus, Dependability, Sharing, and God – the Giver of all."<sup>66</sup> Daily routines for most of the centers consisted of outside activity, naptime, English class, singing period, and worship service.

In areas without Sunday schools, ministers from various churches provided religious services. Reverend Albert Moreno was one of the leading figures in providing this to migrants in the Alma area. Even before his involvement with the HMCNA, he worked with the CWHM in Isabella County. In 1936 Reverend Moreno assumed leadership of the Methodist Mexican Mission. He held services on most nights, many with baptisms and conversions because they were frequent among the migrants.<sup>67</sup> He also ran a boy's program, where he "tried to make them realize that we need to be close to God." He told these young men "how Christ had chased out of the temple all those who made it a 'den of thieves,' " trying to make them understand the importance of respecting worship and being reverent in the House of God. In attempts to dissuade the boys from

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<sup>66</sup> S. L. Durham, Lansing Council of Church Women, *A Program of Work For a Community Migrant Project* (early 1940s), 5-6, located in the Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>67</sup> Charles William Mackenzie, *Michigan's "Grapes of Wrath", Mexican Mission* (1941), Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

practicing bad habits, he gave talks on morals and behavior using Bible subjects as examples.<sup>68</sup>

Church youth groups also worked with the younger generations of Mexican migrant workers. In Brown City, Michigan, for example, young people from various churches entertained the Mexican youth. The Methodist Epworth League hosted a wiener roast, while the Mennonite Endeavor invited them to an inter-racial meeting. Worship services were provided at all the events. Youth from the various churches also helped out in the child-care centers, mainly in the nurseries. Emphasis throughout the documents from the HMCNA maintained that these and other services were “not one(s) of pity but rather one(s) of love.”<sup>69</sup> Young Christians supported the social agenda as they worked to aid the welfare of Mexican migrant laborers and their children in local communities.

Moving into the mid-1940s, the HMC slowly relinquished more and more control to the Michigan Migrant Committee (MMC). They focused their efforts on not only ministering, but also on trying to attract people to minister and donate to the cause. They sent out various pamphlets emphasizing in writing the numerous programs and the ways in which the local communities could help. In 1944 a leaflet about the MMC circulated, briefly describing the purpose of the group and those who benefited. A year later, a pamphlet entitled *The Church Through the Michigan Migrant Committee Serves the Agricultural Migrant* emphasized “The Christian Fellowship in Action,” the areas where projects were held, and what people could donate to the cause, including photos with pictures of migrants and their children. In 1946, another brochure titled *The Agricultural*

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<sup>68</sup>Gertrude Herman, The Council of Women for Home Missions, *Report of the Mexican Children’s Center, Alma, Michigan (1940)*, 9, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 19.

<sup>69</sup>Justa Carmen Campa, *Brown City, Michigan, July 28 to September 7, 1943*, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.



*Migrant and The Church in Michigan*, delivered a similar message, but in a much more pointed way (see Figure 4). Discussions of brotherhood, Christian influence, and redeeming the souls of men were among the topics covered. As they moved into the late 1940s and early 1950s, the discourse within the pamphlets and the written records kept by the MMC illustrated a more public focus on ecumenical thought and Christianity. Moving their dialogue into the political sphere, the MMC reaffirmed the Social Creed that the Federal Council of Churches of Christ initiated forty years previous.

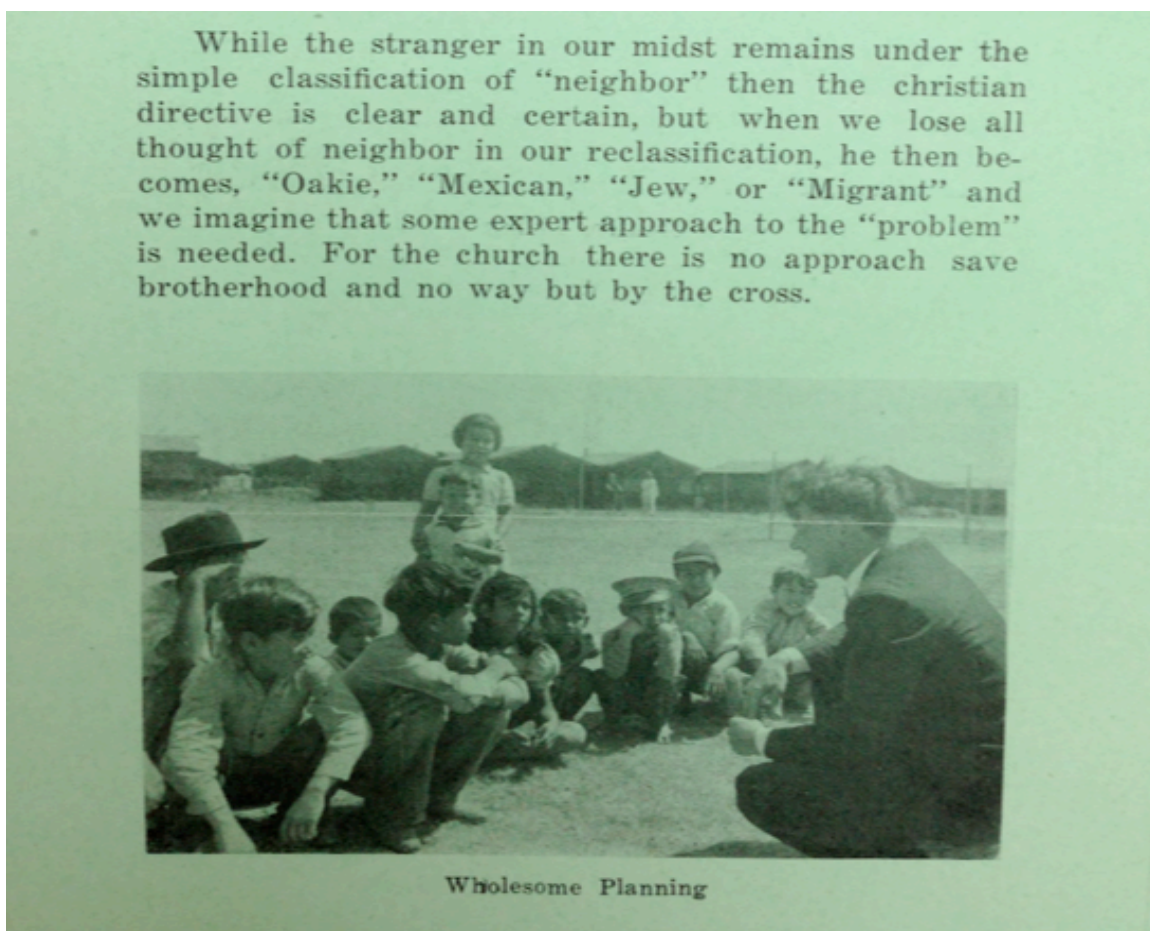


Figure 4. Excerpt from the Agricultural Migrant and the Church in Michigan.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

### **The 1950s – The Michigan Migrant Ministry, Politics & Ecumenical Evangelism**

With nearly a decade under their belts, the ministry in Michigan began to see some changes starting with the formation of the National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCC) in 1950. The HMCNA merged with the NCC (where its activities were assumed by the Division for Home Missions), which also subsumed the FCCC that same year. Made up of 29 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox denominations, the NCC resulted from a merger between twelve interdenominational agencies.<sup>71</sup>

Child-care centers continued, but the organization began to focus more on ministering to the parents of the children. Some reports took on an evangelical overtone, changing some of the dynamics within a once welfare driven space. Whereas discussion of being a Christian neighbor and helping one's fellow man did occur in the 1940s, the move into the 1950s revolved around a worldview that placed religion first, welfare and education second. In a 1949 report from Grand Junction, Michigan missionary worker Rodger H. Delman made this change very obvious:

It is felt by the staff that this project is lopsided. It is a little too much social and not enough spiritual. We appreciate the fact that the nursery is an essential part of the project, but with the present size of the staff, it is too tiring and time-consuming on the spiritual emphasis...It has been the policy this year to place personal work and sick visitation on the level of higher importance...By personal work we mean Personal Evangelism.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Planning Committee for the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America Records (1941-1951), Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>72</sup> Delman, Rodger H., *The Home Missions Council of N.A. Report: Grand Junction, Michigan, June 18 – September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949*, Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

Other missionary workers preached similar ideas. Mrs. Bernice Phillips of the Migrant Committee in Saginaw County said: “Only God can estimate the real value of our project, but those of us who were close to it feel sure it is one more step to the building of His Kingdom.”<sup>73</sup> Many missionaries began to exult God in their writings, and as mindsets within the ministry changed, the focus on what the migrants received changed too.

Discussions moved from Americanization to those that reflected Christianization. In the summer report for Marshall Migrant Work, the three and a half page document espoused Christian principles saying that “the Christian faith demands the most of a man in every situation”, and that typical summer meetings were “informal, aimed to meet the situation of the people and to give them Christian nurture.”<sup>74</sup> Many people told similar stories throughout the state that focused on devotions, Bible studies, and Sunday worship. Emphasis on opportunities for Christian service encouraged locals to get involved. In Sanilac County, work under the leadership of Florence Latter included ministering to families with Bible stories, songs, and handwork for the children. Similarly in the Grand Junction project in Van Buren County, a large child-care center, Sunday worship services, family nights, Bible studies, and prayer services were held. Notes from a 1950 MMC meeting told a story “about 1000 persons were contacted and served, a number accepted Christ as Saviour and many others rededicated themselves.”<sup>75</sup> Many other

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<sup>73</sup> Michigan Migrant Committee Meeting, YWCA, Lansing, Michigan (November 1, 1950), 5, Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Northey and Bernice Reynan, *Summer Report for Marshall Migrant Work* (August 21, 1950), located in the Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>75</sup> *Michigan Migrant Committee Meeting*, YWCA, Lansing, Michigan (November 1, 1950), 5, Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

county reports talked about religious revivals that “swept through the migrant populations.”<sup>76</sup>

Although the group continued to emphasize spirituality during interactions with the migrants, the top level of the hierarchy accepted that some people would not be able to convert and that it was not necessarily their place to convert them. In a 1952 report from the Midwest Area Migrant Conference Minutes, the discussion of Catholic migrants came up. Despite anti-Catholic rhetoric by Protestant groups in previous years, the NCC and the Division of Home Missions seemed to be moving in a different direction:

...approximately 10% of the Spanish-speaking groups [in Michigan] are active Catholics, and that with tact and an open minded approach, it has been found possible to allocate responsibility so that the Division of Home Missions staff is in charge of Protestant services and the local priest conducts masses. Both groups can work together in carrying out recreational activities. Since the goal is to provide a Christ centered program rather than one of proselytizing, in cases where the local priest is cooperative, a mutual agreement can be reached.

As discourse became more inclusive and accepting, the Division of Home Missions also began pushing for changes in migrant welfare within the political sphere. One committee report talked about the hearings of President Truman’s Migrant Labor commission held in Saginaw. The hope was that it should result in some sort of legislation. That same report reminded fellow ministry workers of the “recommendation passed a year ago by this (Migrant Ministry) State Committee asking for some minimum legislative standards for migrant workers. If this legislation [was] not recommended by

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<sup>76</sup> Potterville, Grand Traverse County, Sanilac County; *Michigan Migrant Committee Meeting*, YWCA, Lansing (November 1, 1950), Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

the Special Interim House Committee on Migrant Labor, we may need to ourselves get some bills drafted and introduced.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, another more detailed report on the Saginaw hearings discussed the writer’s own testimonials during the session. Ellis Marshburn voiced his recommendations to the men on the President’s Committee, which included “recognizing and facilitating voluntary cooperation between migrants, employers, Public agencies, Churches, and other community resources so as to meet migrant needs more adequately.”<sup>78</sup> Similar reports, discussions of changes within policy, and emphasis on Christian duty continued within the discourse during the 1950s and into the 1960s.

Discussions of ecumenism continued to grow alongside the move to improve migrant social welfare. In 1955 the MMM became associated with the Michigan Council of Churches (MCOCC) as an independent department, with delegates from the Department of United Church Women, United Church Men, and the Division of Christian Missions and Services. Started in 1928 with an impetus from the Detroit Council of Churches and the HMC (which aided the beginning of the MMM), the MCOCC developed to “(1) realize essential unity among the Christian forces of the State on a basis of mutual respect; (2) develop an aggressive cooperative program for the churches in the interest of the Kingdom of God; and (3) encourage and assist in the formation and development of local councils.”<sup>79</sup> Thirty years later, the mission evolved in a broader context, with the MCOCC’s main intention “to exert spiritual and Christian leadership and to bring churches

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<sup>77</sup> C.R. Mueller, Standing Committee Chairman, *Michigan Migrant Committee Meeting*, YWCA, Lansing, Michigan (November 1, 1950), 5, Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>78</sup> Ellis Mashburn, Letter to Miss Edith E. Lowry (September 18, 1950), Home Missions Council of North America Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, Box 12, Folder 20.

<sup>79</sup> The Bylaws of the Michigan Council of Churches (1928), Michigan Ecumenical Forum Records, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor.

into living contact with one another for fellowship, study and cooperative action.”<sup>80</sup> As the MCOC continued their work into the 1960s, their objective continued with the Michigan Migrant Opportunity (MMOI), the somewhat surprising joint venture with the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC).

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<sup>80</sup> *Michigan Ecumenical Forum Records* (1916-2002), Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor Michigan.

## Chapter 2

### Social Activism & its Influence on the Ecumenical Movement in Catholicism

#### **Introducing Missionary Work in the Catholic Church: Brief Overview of its Roots**

The late fifteenth century marked the beginning of missionary work within the Catholic Church. Missionary work at this time however focused more on evangelization and conversion than social welfare. At a time when religion and politics were deeply intertwined, the Catholic ministry came mainly from European explorers and missionaries who hoped to spread the faith across the world. Catholicism dominated the European realm, especially at the end of the fifteenth century when Pope Alexander VI granted all newly discovered lands to Spain and Portugal in the papal bull *Inter cetera* on May 4, 1493.<sup>1</sup> With the *patronato real* system later in place, accountability for the spiritual life of the people in Spain, Portugal, and the colonies fell to the crown.<sup>2</sup> However, due to the lack of responsibility by some of those in charge overseas, the *patronato real* eventually ended in 1622 with Pope Gregory XV's centralization of the Church through the establishment of the *Propaganda Fide*.<sup>3</sup> Bands of Catholic brotherhoods such as the Jesuits and Franciscans began to take over missionary work, as

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, Mariano Delgado, and Roland Spliesgart. *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The *Patronato Real* was the juridical institution from the Middle Ages that regulated the relations between the church and the monarchies of Spain and Portugal and their respective overseas possessions.

<sup>3</sup> By lack of responsibility, I mean a lack of focus on the native peoples and their religious conversions/cruel treatment; Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 6.

well as sisterhoods of nuns from various convents. Most of their focus centered on the conversion of the native peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas. The missionary direction of the Catholic Church continued solely that way for another two hundred plus years until the end of the nineteenth century, when the outcomes of the Industrial Revolution transformed religion, economics, and politics.

### **The Catholic Church in the Face of Industrialism and Socialism: The Beginnings of a more Social Conscious Church**

The Industrial Revolution drastically changed the landscape of everything from politics to religion, including Catholicism. The once dominant Church lost its stronghold on the world with the destruction of the Papal States. Nations governments oversaw activities that used to be overseen by the Church (i.e. marriage, education, and charity). As economies grew and divergences between the wealthy and the poor emerged, the focus on progress and development became important in people's lives. For many, Catholicism no longer retained its position as the center of the home. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Church found itself in a position where it could no longer avoid progress.

This development was not something the hierarchy of the Church was initially willing to accept. Pope Pius IX made this quite clear in his 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*, condemning previous propositions and statements made in church doctrine that he felt were flawed in their claims. Especially in an age of progress, the Church hierarchy would not accept modernity. In the last section of the *Syllabus of Errors* entitled "X. Errors



Having Reference to Modern Liberalism”, the statements reflected beliefs that Pope Pius XI condemned:<sup>4</sup>

77. In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship. -- Allocution "Nemo vestrum," July 26, 1855.

78. Hence it has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship. -- Allocution "Acerbissimum," Sept. 27, 1852.

79. Moreover, it is false that the civil liberty of every form of worship, and the full power, given to all, of overtly and publicly manifesting any opinions whatsoever and thoughts, conduce more easily to corrupt the morals and minds of the people, and to propagate the pest of indifferentism. -- Allocution "Nunquam fore," Dec. 15, 1856.

80. The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.--Allocution "Jamdudum cernimus," March 18, 1861.<sup>5</sup>

Pope Pius IX’s sentiments reflected what was considered common knowledge by the beginning of the twentieth century: modernity was anti-Catholic and that Catholicism was anti-modern. On September 1, 1910, Pope Pius X issued the *Oath Against Modernism*, mandating it “be sworn to by all clergy, pastors, confessors, preachers, religious superiors, and professors in philosophical-theological seminaries.”<sup>6</sup> The Church saw modernity as a threat to the Catholic tradition as secularism became more and more prominent among public institutions (states, universities, etc.).

From an outsider’s perspective, it seemed as though the Catholic religion completely ignored the ideals of progress and modernity, and for the Catholic laity, this

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<sup>4</sup> Read each statement with an unspoken “Not!” after it.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Pius IX, *The Syllabus of Errors* (December 8, 1864).

<sup>6</sup> Pope Pius IX, *Oath Against Modernism* (September 1, 1910).

meant they either chose to abstain from the public realm or align themselves to the language of progress. Secularists and Protestants always represented the Catholic Church as the epitome of anti-progress, but their claims, as illustrated by the above-mentioned papal decrees, were not completely unfounded.

However, as the nineteenth century came to a close, the idea of progress as more than just a complete ignorance of Catholic tradition and more as a road to improvement changed the tune of many Catholics on the ground as well as in the hierarchy. Modernity was still an issue due to the fear of secularization. However, the Church began to change its view of progress as it aligned the term with societal improvement and civil allegiance. In Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Immortale Dei*, he made it clear that he was willing to work with non-Catholics, acknowledging that the Church's people needed to practice loyalty and obedience to the state of which they were citizens.<sup>7</sup> In Leo XIII's May 15, 1891 encyclical titled *Rerum Novarum* or *Rights and Duties of Capital Labor*, he reiterated this change from the top and he also addressed the conditions of the working classes. In an open letter to the bishops around the world, Leo XIII urged his fellow Catholics to take issue with the injustices practiced by greedy men: "...some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class."<sup>8</sup> He went on to discuss the problem of pitting class against class, how "the great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* (1885).

<sup>8</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891).

<sup>9</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891).

Leo XIII still renounced socialism throughout the encyclical. At one point he stated, “socialists may in that intent do their utmost, but all striving against nature is in vain. There naturally exist among mankind manifold differences of the most important kind; people differ in capacity, skill, health, [and] strength”. Socialism, he argued, would generate more problems than solutions for the workingman.

Americanism also created issues for it promoted the sin of indifferentism, and Pope Leo XIII denounced it saying the teachings attempted to modernize the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> Whereas people deemed “Americanists,” by the Catholic Church, felt that the Church and State should be separated, at that time, the Catholic Church still believed that Church and State should be unified.<sup>11</sup>

However, Leo XIII did encourage what came to be known in Catholicism as social teaching, and I argue the faint beginnings of a more open Church:

It cannot, however, be doubted that to attain the purpose we are treating of, not only the Church, but all human agencies, must concur. All who are concerned in the matter should be of one mind and according to their ability act together. It is with this, as with providence that governs the world; the results of causes do not usually take place save where all the causes cooperate.<sup>12</sup>

Though the ecumenical movement was not something the Church seemed ready to acknowledge, Leo XIII’s statement in *Rerum Novarum* illustrated that the church hierarchy was more willing to allow Catholics, with certain limitations, to work with

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<sup>10</sup> Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 66.

<sup>11</sup> This denouncement did cause some tension, for some clerics were involved with the group, including Archbishop John Ireland, Archbishop John J. Keane, Monsignor Denis J. O’Connell, Paulist Father Walter Elliott, and the French Abbé Felix Kleiné.; Dries, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891).

secular agencies and Protestant groups to achieve social objectives. Moving into the twentieth century, Catholic Social Teaching progressed, yet there were still concerns about melding religious thought and teaching to a constantly progressing world.

### **Moving into the Twentieth Century: The Beginnings of Catholic Social Teaching**

Many members of the Catholic laity around the globe especially felt the divide between their religion and what the world termed progress. As Brian Porter-Szücs wrote in his book *Faith and Fatherland*, many Polish respondents to a 1905 survey in the Catholic magazine *Przegląd Powszechny* viewed progress as “the most important [of the] challenges facing Catholicism today.” Progress was something that was undeniably occurring, but for Catholics, learning how to distinguish progress from that of seculars and socialists took time. There were some priests and Catholic intellectuals who felt that progress was key to improving society. In Poland, for example, where Catholicism was the dominant religion, Father Adam Kopyciński made it clear that modernity was corrupted by the idea of “survival of the fittest” but believed that progress could lead mankind out of its present chaos. Polish intellectual Kazimierz Łyskowski argued “It is appropriate to call on Catholics today, as they formulate their objectives, to take into account new trends in human relations.” Porter-Szücs noted that the Catholic scholars and priests who believed progress distinguished it from secularists and socialists in that the truth within the Church did not change, and that progress could move mankind to a more positive outcome. However, it could not lead to an “earthly utopia.”<sup>13</sup> As the Church began to embrace that idea more and more, many of the laity felt more comfortable with the idea of accepting progress.

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<sup>13</sup> Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 100-01.

Reassurance also came in the form of an encyclical by Pope Pius XI on May 15, 1931, 40 years to the day of Leo XII's *Rerum Novarum*. Entitled *Quadragesimo Anno*, or *In the 40<sup>th</sup> Year*, Pius XI talked about the economic changes that could potentially undermine the freedom of all people. In regards to capitalism and the labor force, he said "Whatever was produced, whatever returns accrued, capital claimed for itself, hardly leaving to the worker enough to restore and renew his strength." He continued to discuss fair wages and how "the abundant fruits of production will accrue equitably to those who are rich and [should] be distributed in ample sufficiency among the workers." When it came to social order, Pius XI said:

The social policy of the State, therefore, must devote itself to the re-establishment of the Industries and Professions. In actual fact, human society now, for the reason that it is founded on classes with divergent aims and hence opposed to one another and therefore inclined to enmity and strife, continues to be in a violent condition and is unstable and uncertain.<sup>14</sup>

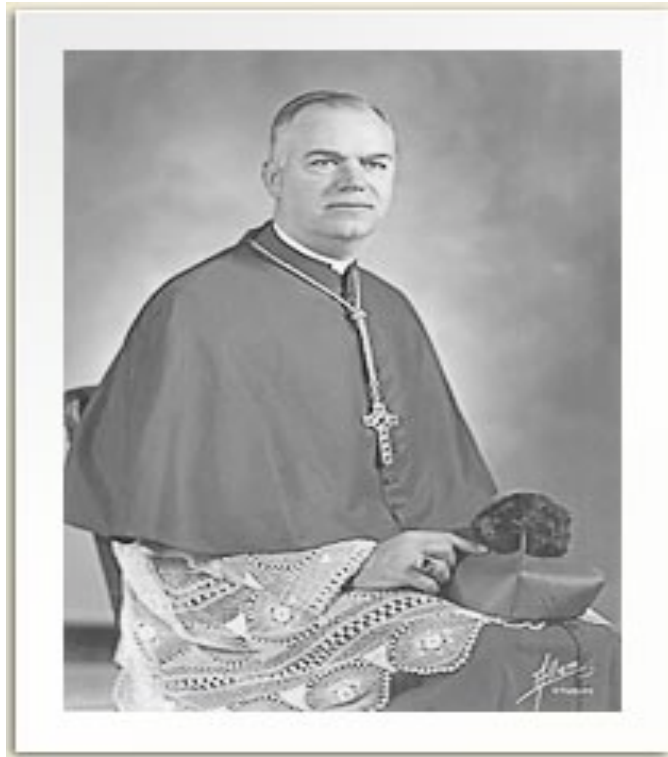
This strife he argued, would continue unless classes came to respect each other. He talked about governments and how it was their job to enforce labor laws. Similar to Leo XIII, he did not believe that socialism would solve any problems within the capitalist society, especially since he believed it had sunk into communism. Coupled with that, he felt socialism could not be "reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth." Still, Pius XI argued that Catholics needed to be aware of the societal issues stemming from unrestrained capitalism and selfish greed. In some ways, it became a Catholic duty to ensure that those

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, (May 15, 1931).

in lower classes received what was duly theirs, and if not, it was the Catholics' Christian duty to make it happen.

In Michigan this occurred about 30 years later in 1963 with the creation of the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC). Archbishop of Detroit John Cardinal Dearden (see Figure 5 below) envisioned a unified Catholic voice that would bring the Church's economic and social justice message to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the state and federal government.<sup>15</sup> The MCC ultimately became the voice in public policy for the Catholic Church in Michigan. Within a year after its creation, the MCC joined hands with the MCOC in an ecumenical venture that sought to bolster the welfare of migrant workers in the state.



(Figure 5: John Cardinal Dearden, found of the Michigan Catholic Conference)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Michigan Catholic Conference, *History*, <http://www.micatholic.org/about/history/>

<sup>16</sup> Michigan Catholic Conference, *History*, <http://www.micatholic.org/about/history/>

### **Moving Towards Development in Missions: Emphasis on the Social Teaching**

Moving into the twentieth century, the number of Catholics interested in social teaching through missionary movements increased. Missions abroad took off during the middle the nineteenth century. The men's religious congregations, societies, and religious orders, which sent the most Americans overseas, included the Jesuits, Maryknollers, Franciscans, Redemptorists, Divine Word Missionaries, Marianists, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Capuchins. Women's religious orders also played a major role in missions abroad. The Maryknoll sisters, Marist Missionaries, Medical Mission Sisters, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and Sisters of Mercy were just a few of the many women's religious congregations that sent people abroad. The laity became more involved with groups such as the Maryknoll and the Columban Fathers, which actively responded to the missionary call abroad.

At home, missionary movements in the rural United States struggled as attention focused on urban immigrants, but this changed with the organization of the Catholic Church Extension Society in 1905. Founded by Francis Clement Kelley of Lapeer, Michigan, and Bishop John Francis of Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Catholic Church Extension Society initially began as a way to build churches in the rural parts of the United States and minister to the poorer dioceses in the nation.<sup>17</sup> Most missionary societies continued with this focus into the mid-twentieth century.

Students also became involved with missionary work through the creation of Catholic Students Mission Crusade (CSMC) in 1917. After hearing about the success of John Mott's Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, two members of the Society of the Divine Word Seminarians, Clifford J. King and Robert B. Clark, decided

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<sup>17</sup> Catholic Extension, *Our History*, <http://www.catholicextension.org/about-us/our-history>

to start a similar organization in the Catholic context. They held the first conference in Techny, Illinois, just outside Chicago in 1918. Within a few years thousands of college-age students joined CSMC. Unlike the Student Volunteer Movement that prioritized recruitment, the CSMC mainly promoted missionary study and prayer.<sup>18</sup> As the CSMC continued to grow, they focused on reaching out to fellow countrymen with their faith and service.

Most of these missionary movements continued to concentrate on spreading the faith, and it wasn't until the mid-twentieth century that the idea of service beyond evangelization in missions occurred. Until then, the implicit missionary goal of the Catholic Church in the United States centered on making the Church more visible. This mainly stemmed from Pope Benedict XV's *Maximum illud* in 1919 and Pope Pius XII's *Evangelii Praecones* in 1951, which both focused on continuing the growth of the Church.<sup>19</sup> However, especially as missions overseas increased, missionaries recognized the need for moving beyond just proselytizing and into the realm of social service. That's not to say missionaries didn't already provide welfare aid. Male and female missionaries alike tended to the sick and helped improved the infrastructure of the communities they visited. However, as Angelyn Dries said in *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*, the idea of development aligned with earlier missionary goals of civilization, meaning a well-ordered, faith-based life. But as many missionaries soon began to realize, those who were illiterate and lacked economic security could not grasp the missionary concept of civilization.

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<sup>18</sup> Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> To read to the full texts, see Vatican: The Holy See.



Discussion about focusing missionary work more largely on socioeconomic betterment started to become a much larger topic of conversation. One of the proponents was Father John J. Considine. Ordained in 1923, he received a licentiate in theology from Catholic University in Washington D.C. in 1924, and a decade later was appointed to the governing board of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. He began to emphasize the socioeconomic betterment approach in the 1940s, commenting in 1943 on the work of missionary monks in the west who “examined the entire social condition of the people....[and] sought to train the people to better living in the field of economics and to better government in the field of politics.”<sup>20</sup> His comments helped spark movement within his own community of Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers; in 1958 in Ossining, New York, they sponsored a four-day conference examining the idea of socioeconomic betterment as a missionary focus.

Cooperatives were one source of economic self-sufficiency for the poor. People considered them to be both character building as well as economic outfits. Catholic missionaries from the United States established cooperatives years before the discussion took place on a national stage. They enabled the poor to be financially self-sufficient, and they were not dependent on prevailing economic systems in order to function.<sup>21</sup> Coupled with education, they emphasized learning skills so that young children had a means to support themselves as they got older.

The focus on ministering to both social and religious needs continued in the United States, and in the state of Michigan it moved outside the realm of just the churches in what came to be known as the Mexican Apostolate. The state of Michigan

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<sup>20</sup> Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 91-209.

<sup>21</sup> Dries, 210.

was one of the largest agriculture states as well as one of the highest users of migrant workers. Most of the migrants came from Mexico or Texas, following crops around the United States. Few had cars in Michigan, and most lived on the farms where they worked. Priests realized that they needed to find a way to bring themselves to the laity. The then Dioceses of Grand Rapids and Saginaw organized the Mexican Apostolate, recruiting priests or members of religious orders on leave from Latin America and Spain to minister to the migrant workers. They established six missionary centers, staffed with a Spanish-speaking priest and a few seminarians. They visited families throughout their areas and said Sunday masses.<sup>22</sup>

Servicing migrant workers eventually expanded to the Diocese of Lansing, but in that area they faced some push back from growers. Many prohibited the diocese from conducting any sort of programs for the migrants on their farms.<sup>23</sup> This forced the outreach programs to find other ways to gain the farmers' and growers' cooperation. In conversation, they began to stress religious aims over social ones. In practice, the diocese still provided recreation, and in some areas free medical care to migrant workers in need.<sup>24</sup> Though the older form of missionary work still occurred through the administering of communion, baptism, and marriage validation, the message established by Catholic Social Teaching became an obvious part of the services provide by the Mexican Apostolate in Michigan.

### **Catholic Social Teaching: Moving towards Ecumenism with *Mater et Magistra* & *Pacem in Teris***

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<sup>22</sup> David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2003), 39.

<sup>23</sup> I connect this reasoning to fear of rebelling or striking from the migrant worker.

<sup>24</sup> David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2003), 40.

By the 1960s, monumental changes occurred within the Catholic Church, starting with Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, or *Mother and Teacher* on May 15, 1961. In a 264-point document, John XXIII discussed matters relating to scientific advances, new social systems, and economic and political problems. Almost immediately he addressed the idea of saving souls, saying "the Church's first care must be for souls," but he qualified that, saying it was necessary that "she concerns herself with the exigencies of man's daily life, with his livelihood and education, and his general, temporal welfare and prosperity."<sup>25</sup> He talked about the importance of social teaching and activity, making it clear to Catholics everywhere that as members of the Church they held the responsibility of championing the poor. He addressed the problems within the economic structure, and the large disparities between the rich few and poor majority. John XXIII honored private ownership of property as a right, but made it clear that the benefit came with obligations. He said it was the government's job to be involved with economic matters, to ensure that its people, especially its weaker members, were protected. He also acknowledged that social progress and economic development was an inherent part of life, and that as man developed social relationships they "ought to be realized in a way best calculated to promote its inherent advantages and to preclude, or at least diminish, its attendant disadvantages."<sup>26</sup> Individual acts were important to create change, but alone they were not enough; political and social institutions also needed to take action. He championed the agriculture laborers, urging governments all over the world to find incentives to keep farmers farming, so that they could maintain a similar standard of living to those in cities. He closed by reaching out to his fellow Catholics,

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<sup>25</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (May 5, 1961), Number 3.

<sup>26</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (May 5, 1961). Number 64.

urging them to think about the messages from his predecessors and himself in order to handle the various problems of the modern world.

Less than two years later on April 11, 1963, John XXIII issued a new papal encyclical, entitled *Pacem in Terris*, or *Peace on Earth*. It represented another major step towards ecumenism for the Catholic Church in that he addressed “all men of good will” rather than Catholics alone. Starting with the rights of man, John XXIII illustrated the importance of seeing “that every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life.”<sup>27</sup> Social welfare for all of mankind became a mantra; he continued to talk about the right for man to work without coercion and the right for workers to be paid in wages deemed justified and sufficient. He talked about the dignity of the worker, and the importance for the laborer to maintain a reasonable standard of living. John XXIII’s declarations demonstrated more fully the Catholic Church’s feeling on the importance of societal humanity.

Evangelizing in this papal encyclical wasn’t a priority. Instead, John XXIII continued to focus on the need for equality among men, and the state’s importance in maintaining that equality. In a space the Church used to dominate, he urged “governments [to] take [steps] in order to make it possible for the citizens more easily to exercise their rights and fulfill their duties in every sector of social life.”<sup>28</sup> John XXIII did discuss God’s role, but it was more from the perspective of equality among all being God’s will, than using the Church as a means to enact God’s will upon governments.

The end of *Pacem in Terris* gave the biggest indication that the Church was finally beginning to embrace the ecumenical movement:

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<sup>27</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), Number 11.

<sup>28</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), Number 66.

The doctrinal principles outlined in this document derive from both nature itself and the natural law. In putting these principles into practice it frequently happens that Catholics in many cooperate either with Christians separated from this Apostolic See, or with men of no Christian faith whatever, but are adorned with a natural uprightness of conduct.<sup>29</sup>

Though he warned fellow Catholics to be aware of their interactions so that they did not stray from their religion, he made it clear that working with non-Catholics for the greater good of humanity was completely acceptable. For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, a pope gave the okay for the laity to work on social service initiatives with non-Catholics, and set a standard for future popes to be more amendable in their decisions regarding individuals outside the Church.

### **The Second Vatican Council: Affirming the Ecumenical Movement**



Figure 6. Roman Catholic prelates stand as Pope Paul VI is escorted through St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City to address the last meeting of the Ecumenical Council's second session on December 4, 1963.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), Number 157.

<sup>30</sup> Washington Times, *Looking Back on Vatican II*, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/multimedia/collection/looking-back-vatican-ii/?page=7>

On October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII finally solidified the Catholic Church's acceptance of the ecumenical movement through the declaration of the Second Vatican Council, which changed worldviews on, and the face of, the Catholic Church, as well as its relationships with other Christian religions. Although it was deemed the Twenty-First Ecumenical Council, the Second Vatican Council differed from previous ones in that ecumenism spoke to cooperative relations with other Christian religions, and even non-Christians (in previous Councils, it referred to relations within the Catholic Church itself). Instead of issuing new dogmas or convicting heresies, the Second Vatican Council renewed the Catholic Doctrine through a series of constitutions, declarations, and decrees to better align with changes in the modern world and to change the world's view of the Church.

The last of four apostolic constitutions (which are the highest level of decrees issued by the Church Councils) drafted during the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium Et Spes* or *On the Church in the Modern World*, summarized Catholic Social Teaching and its relationship to the greater society as more open accommodating than before. The first few chapters focused on man's place in the world, reiterating previous papal encyclicals with the need for equality among humankind. The constitution then talked about the Catholic Church's role in the "modern world" and the duty of Christians within it. Noted in Section 3:

...the duty most consonant with our times, especially for Christians, is that of working diligently for fundamental decisions to be taken in economic and political affairs, both on the national and international level which will everywhere recognize and satisfy the right of all to a human and social culture in conformity with the dignity of the human person without any discrimination of race, sex, nation, religion or social condition.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium Et Spes* (December 7, 1965), Number 60.

No longer did the message apply to just Catholics, but to all those practicing Christianity. The Church felt all Christians had a duty to help people who could not help themselves, experienced oppression, or violations of their rights as human beings. The Church's ecumenical approach to solving social welfare situations also continued into its own relationships with other Christians. Understanding the desire of many to see unification, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church acknowledged not only these bonds, but also embraced those "not yet living in full communion."<sup>32</sup> Interpreting this constitution, the Catholic laity felt most of the strict limitations give way to a more unified camaraderie with the non-Catholic population.

During the Second Vatican Council a number of declarations were made on topics such as religious freedom and education in relation to progress, reiterating the Church's move towards changing its actions. *Gravissimum Educationis, On Christian Education*, discussed the importance of education as a means for social mobility, and man's inalienable right to it. Children, the declaration stated, "must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral, and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility."<sup>33</sup> The Church felt learning would benefit progress in a positive manner, illustrating its change in mindset as it began accepting aspects of modernity in the world.

In *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, the Church hierarchy set a precedent for acceptance. It reproved "any

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<sup>32</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium Et Spes* (December 7, 1965), Number 92.

<sup>33</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis* (October 28, 1965), Number 1.

discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life or religion.”<sup>34</sup> This declaration affirmed the Church’s new, more open-minded policy on interactions with other religions. Instead of focusing on conversion, the Catholic Church hierarchy focused on embracing relationships with their brethren, making it clear that Catholics could not call on God for help or solace if they refused to treat all men in a brotherly way.

In the last declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Church reaffirmed its ideas about human dignity and religious acceptance by declaring that every person had a right to religious freedom. Pointing the finger at governments, the declaration made it clear that religious communities should not be hindered by any legal or administrative action, for it was their right to practice their faith. This included governments imposing specific faiths on their people. However, the Church did acknowledge that society had the right to protect itself from abuses committed under religious auspices, another new declaration from the normally critical Church.

Finally, the Second Vatican Council ended with its decrees speaking directly to the laity’s role in the Church, the ecumenical movement, and missionary work. *Ad Gentes, On the Mission Activity of the Church*, did state that evangelization was a priority of missions, but in order to aid the needs of all human beings, the Church acknowledged that it would be necessary to coordinate information with other Christian faiths and cooperate with national/international agencies.

Moving into the decrees on ecumenism entitled *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Second Vatican Council emphasized the importance of restoring cooperation among all

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<sup>34</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis* (October 28, 1965), Number 5.



Christians as a primary concern.<sup>35</sup> The ecumenical movement meant that in regards to other Christian religions, respect would be given. This was of great importance to missionaries since Catholics worked in the same territories as other Christian religions. Though the Catholic Church made comments indicating its differences, it did remain committed to the ecumenical movement throughout the decree, illustrating to the laity the importance of interfaith cooperation.

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* directly addressed the laity and their importance to the apostolate, which enabled the Church to minister to people everywhere. The Second Vatican Council entitled the apostolate to the laity, saying it was the duty of Catholics to go out into the communities and spread God's will. It was also their responsibility to bring goodness to the world of men. While the clergy spread Christ's message through ministry of the word and the sacraments, the laity spread his word through good works. The decree noted:

...new problems are arising and very serious errors are circulating which tend to undermine the foundations of religion, the moral order, and human society itself, this sacred synod earnestly exhorts laymen to be more diligent in doing what they can to explain, defend, and properly apply Christian principles to the problems of our era in accordance with the mind of the Church.<sup>36</sup>

By creating an apostolate made up of clergy and laity, it was easier to service the spiritual and welfare needs of Catholics throughout the world.

As the Second Vatican Council came to a close on December 8, 1965, the changes it evoked played an integral role in the future views of the Catholic Church. Acceptance of believers and non-believers and Christians and non-Christians through an ecumenical

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<sup>35</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (November 21, 1964).

<sup>36</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (November 18, 1965).

spirit, illustrated to not only Catholics, but to the rest of the world that the Catholic Church was committed to its Social Teaching as well as its statements to accept progress as a means to improve humanity.

## Chapter 3

### Social Activism and its Influence: a joint ecumenical venture between Catholics and Protestants

#### **The Michigan Migrant Opportunity**

Major changes impacted Christianity in the early 1960s, especially as ecumenism continued to grow among Protestant religions and was acknowledged as a practice among Catholics with the memorandums from Vatican II. On the ground, Protestants and Catholics slowly began to recognize one another's work, albeit with hesitancy. This was not surprising considering the decades of dispute between the two groups. Especially in the United States, Protestantism reigned as the predominant religion and hostility towards Catholicism had always been endemic. However as ecumenical dialogue grew, some Catholic and Protestant groups in the United States publicly joined hands to further improve social welfare in areas they once independently administered.

In Michigan specifically ecumenical dialogue from above turned into action on the ground. Understanding that it would enable them to spread the reach of their social activism, the MCOC and the MCC started discussing the possibility of working together to improve services to Michigan migrant workers in the spring of 1964.<sup>1</sup> One year later, they officially joined hands and applied for a grant under the Economic Opportunity Act to fund their joint venture known as the Michigan Migrant Opportunity (MMOI). The Office of Economic Opportunity awarded more than \$8 million in antipoverty grants for

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Gertrude Herman, Director of the Michigan Migrant Ministry, to Hazel Bullion of Traverse City, Michigan (July 13, 1965), Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

various public and private migrant worker aid projects under the Title III-B of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. The second largest grant totaling \$1.3 million went to the private non-profit Michigan Migrant Opportunity, incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan in 1965.<sup>2</sup> The venture was considered to be the first statewide program involving joint custody by Protestant and Catholic groups.<sup>3</sup> This outward sign of cooperation between the MCOC and the MCC reflected the newly acknowledged ecumenical movement between the two religious denominations, enabling them to further their similar social goals in regards to migrant welfare.

To adhere to the grant's conditions, which forbid any sort of proselytizing or religious action, the MMOI created a sixteen member corporate board with equal numbers of members from the MCOC and the MCC to serve as the statewide policy committee for the organization. Dr. Wendell Bassett, Executive Director of the MCOC and Francis J. Coomes, Executive Director of the Michigan Catholic Conference, led the organization as chairman of the board and president respectively.<sup>4</sup> Other members of the board represented various professional and vocational areas, while central staff consisted of people from various economic backgrounds. Part of the MMOI employment policy required the employment of disadvantaged persons. Besides providing social services to migrants and ex migrants, the MMOI hired many of them as staff members for the

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<sup>2</sup> *Fact Sheet: Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc.* (November 14, 1966), located in the Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>3</sup> NCWC News Services (Domestic), *Migrant Worker Anti-Poverty Grants Awarded* (March 19, 1965), 11, Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>4</sup> Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc., Statement of release (March 19, 1965), Michigan Migrant Ministry Archive, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

various programs around the state.<sup>5</sup> Once they developed the organizational phase, the MMOI put its plan to serve the hundreds of thousands of migrants into action.

The MCOC and the MCC continued to upgrade education, healthcare, and living standards for Michigan migrants and ex-migrants under the auspices of the MMOI. They provided social services to ex-migrants settled in Michigan and migrant workers who were residents of Michigan.<sup>6</sup> The MMOI created four major welfare centers within Michigan that also divided the state into regions. Located in Traverse City, Blissfield, Saginaw, and Benton, each center provided training, healthcare, and recreation activities for the migrant workers.<sup>7</sup>

The grant given to the MMOI also enabled the sponsoring agencies to provide the much-needed extended services in youth and adult education. Centers statewide opened during the summer months, providing programs for pre school and school age migrant worker children. Within one month of opening, 1,051 children ages 2 through 11 enrolled in the 23 education centers. By the end of that first summer in 1965, 6,150 children enrolled in the day care and youth education programs. The numbers drastically increased one year later with 1,330 children enrolled in day care and 9,400 children enrolled in youth education. Similarly with the adult education courses, numbers rose from 901 to 2,250.<sup>8</sup> For migrant workers, the adult education courses enabled them to improve their English improvement, phonics, reading, and arithmetic.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter to Theodore M. Berry, Director of the Community Action Program at the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D.C. from James F. McClure, Executive Director of the Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (June 14, 1965), 2, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>6</sup> *Progress Report April 12, 1965-December 10, 1965* (December 13, 1965), 1, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>7</sup> NCWC News Services (Domestic), *Migrant Worker Anti-Poverty Grants Awarded*, (March 19, 1965), 11, located in Michigan Migrant Ministry Records, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>8</sup> Fact Sheet: Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (November 14, 1966), Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

The passing of S.B. 118 by the Michigan Legislature on July 22, 1965 further supported MMOI goals. The legislation directed the Michigan Department of Public Instruction to spend \$15,000 in setting up experimental programs for migrant youth education. MMOI staff assisted with the setup of these efforts.<sup>9</sup> Churches, Catholic schools, and public schools were used for summer activities as numbers increased. These facilities provided indoor space as well as outdoor areas for basketball leagues, driver's education courses, and other recreational activities.<sup>10</sup> The biggest problem the MMOI faced during the first year was the underestimated response of the program itself.

In an attempt to gain support for the overwhelming migrant response, the MMOI began to focus on members of the surrounding communities, including the growers. A key to the success of the program was ensuring community support. Many residents needed "to be educated to look upon these migrant men, women, and children as having dignity and worth, the right of equal opportunity and pursuit of happiness, and to live in the total society as an equal, with all the rights and privileges of a citizen of the United States."<sup>11</sup> The MMOI felt that by involving the growers, positive relationships could be built between employers and workers.

Migrant housing was one of the most important projects headed by the MMOI with grower involvement. Oftentimes, the MMOI would furnish the labor and the grower would provide materials. Migrants who usually arrived before the harvest season would paint, complete any repairs, and finish building renovations. The MMOI also tried to

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<sup>9</sup> Progress Report, Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (April 12, 1965-September 30, 1965), 9, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Theodore M. Berry, Director of the Community Action Program at the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D.C. from James F. McClure, Executive Director of the Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (February 28, 1966), 3, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing Michigan.

<sup>11</sup> Region IV General Information, MMOI, 11, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan. 1

negate housing problems through public denouncement of anyone who overcharged rent and they also kept an updated list of properties that met the safety, health, fire, and sanitation regulations for migrant workers.<sup>12</sup> Besides generating community interest in economic opportunity possibilities for the disadvantaged migrants, the MMOI also used 200 underprivileged youths to work with the migrants, hoping “to knit together the rural and urban aspects of poverty problems.”<sup>13</sup>

The poverty problems also created a need for improved medical services. The MMOI developed a physical examination and related health services program for children entering the day care centers throughout the state. Public health officials, doctors and nurses volunteered to help with these exams. In the Saginaw area, a doctor in private practice mobilized 14 other doctors and 40 registered nurses to work on a volunteer basis with the migrants. Through medical work, the MMOI was also able to integrate members of the community with migrant workers, furthering their success as an organization.

Though seemingly united in their mission to involve the community and improve migrant welfare, the MMOI did run into slight issues at the beginning of their venture on the ground level. In most of the MMOI reports, problems revolved around acclimating teachers to students with sporadic education. Young people deemed “upper-middle class” struggled as aides to acclimate to the setting where needs went beyond core subjects. People who worked with migrant children before tried to instill the importance of a nurturing environment and a well-rounded education that included lessons on subjects

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<sup>12</sup> Letter to Theodore M. Berry, Director of the Community Action Program at the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D.C. from James F. McClure, Executive Director of the Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (November 7, 1965), 5, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive.

<sup>13</sup> Francis J. Coomes, Executive Director of the Michigan Catholic Conference. Quoted in a memo written by staff correspondent on the upcoming project, For Release Week of June 6, 1965, 2, located in Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

like cleanliness and sewing. The MMOI tried to re-focus their aides and teachers by holding open discussions about education goals for the short term, and encouraged personal interactions between teachers, aids, and students.<sup>14</sup>

The only problem ever reported about religious tensions came from Alma, Michigan. There was a “constant undercurrent of suspicion between the two groups” which led to a few misunderstandings Catholic and Protestant MMOI workers. However, the report did note that the exchanges did “nothing serious enough to affect the positive impact” of the program.<sup>15</sup> Later reports in Alma never mentioned any other issues in regards to religious tensions. Reports from other areas never revealed conflict between the two religious groups, making it appear that this was a short period, area issue. With no other documented drama between Catholics and Protestants, the MMOI continued to work towards its goal of improving migrant housing, healthcare, and education.

Members of the MMOI did discuss the religious question in regards to the program, as well as the relationship of Church and State, illustrating its commitment as an interdenominational agency. Moving beyond the no proselytizing rule set by the federal government, the MMOI created a clause that enabled all people to join its programs regardless of race, religion, or ancestry.<sup>16</sup> With little beyond the aforementioned documented religious tension, the MMOI maintained its dedication to improving the social welfare of migrant workers over the next two and a half years, reaffirming its ecumenical roots and the cooperation between the Protestant MCOC and Catholic MCC.

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<sup>14</sup> Regional Reports by Regional Supervisors, Letter to Theodore M. Berry, Director of the Community Action Program at the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D.C. from James F. McClure, Executive Director of the Michigan Migrant Opportunity, Inc. (July 26, 1965), 3, Michigan Catholic Conference MMOI Archive, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Theodore M. Berry, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Memo from James F. McClure to Dr. Wendell C. Bassett and Mr. Francis J. Coomes, *Recommended MMOI Policy: MMOI Regional Programs and Religious Instruction by Church Groups*, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor Michigan.



## Conclusion

In 1954, a Detroit Free Press reporter commented that migrant workers in Michigan had “less legal, sanitary and economic protection than medieval serfs.”<sup>1</sup> Many lived in decrepit housing, lacked sanitation, and had very little access to welfare resources. Few employers attempted to better their workers’ situations, and few migrants had the means to ask for help. Although the Michigan State Legislature eventually enacted policy to protect the laborers, their main source of help until then came from religious missionary groups such as the Michigan Migrant Ministry (MMM) and the Mexican Apostolate. The need to help these people culminated in competing religious organizations working collaboratively together to aid these and other laborers in various industries across the United States.

Missionary focus on social welfare however, wasn’t always there from the start. In Chapters 1 and 2, Catholics and many mainstream Protestant groups took years to move from solely proselytizing to ministering as social advocates. While Protestant denominations realized ecumenism would benefit their missionary work by expanding their reach, they also recognized the need for ministering to welfare needs with the social Christianity movement. Reaffirmed at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Protestant denominations worldwide came to the understanding that interdenominational cooperation would be necessary to expand social welfare reforms

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<sup>1</sup> Detroit Free Press (August 25, 1954), Bentley Historical Library as cited by Sidney Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights: Michigan, 1948-1968* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 163.

Catholic missionary workers around the globe also faced similar realizations that turned into actionable outcomes with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* or *Rights and Duties of Capital Labor*. These and other papal encyclicals mentioned in Chapter 2 called on Catholics to defend their fellow man in his time of need, regardless of whether or not other people helped too. Leading up to Vatican II in the 1960s, ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants flourished.

In this thesis I observed that much of the ecumenical dialogue stemmed from carrying out and observing social welfare work. Taking a closer look at the cooperative venture between the Michigan Catholic Conference and the Michigan Council of Churches, we saw two opposing religious groups join hands to oversee an organization aimed at making improvements in the lives of migrant workers. They developed programs to aid migrant children and adults in education, as well as sanitation and healthcare. Their ability to accomplish these acts with little documented tension shows us a desire to cooperate for the greater good.

Social welfare activism played a role in ecumenical dialogue that occurred not only between Protestant groups, but Catholic and Protestant groups too. Very few have explored this idea, and further research can be done for those interested in the role social welfare groups played in the ecumenical movement. One might consider looking into sermons from local priests and ministers in Michigan that positively affirmed interdenominational dialogue. Another course of action could be to potentially look at other religious groups across the United States that were similar to the Michigan Catholic Conference and the Michigan Council of Churches. It would be interesting to see if any other Protestant and Catholic groups oversaw a joint venture before or during the same

time period as the Michigan Migrant Opportunity. If instances were found, it would open up a new realm of questions about the influence of social welfare activism on Catholic/Protestant ventures worldwide in the mid-1900s. Furthermore, it would add a new dynamic to the study of the ecumenical movement and implications for further ecumenical ventures.

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