

World Methodist Council Museum Statement

To everything, there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heaven

Ecclesiastes 3:1

The World Methodist Council announces that the Museum contents in entirety will go to Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology and SMU Libraries at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.

The Archival Committee carefully reviewed all the proposals that were received from institutions and individuals, and after prayerful discernment, chose Bridwell Library as it will allow the World Methodist Council Museum collection to continue.

“Having been to the World Methodist Museum of the World Methodist Council several times, I was saddened to hear about its closing. Then I was surprised to be asked to help direct the deaccessioning of the holdings,” explains Robert J. Williams, Retired General Secretary of the United Methodist Church General Commission on Archives and History. “But now I am relieved and excited that the collection will remain intact and under the care of the Bridwell Library. All who care about this collection can be confident that its future impact for faithful ministry in the Wesleyan tradition is assured.”

In addition to Williams, other Archival Committee members included the CEO and General Secretary of the Council, Bishop Ivan Abrahams; recently Retired General Secretary of the United Methodist Church General Commission on Archives and History, Alfred T. Day; WMC Headquarters Coordinator, Jackie Bolden; and other experts as needed throughout the process.

“The long history of the World Methodist Museum and its collections is distinctly vital to the church, and it is important to maintain that historical continuity. We are honored to be chosen as the recipient of the WMCM’s collections and will continue to oversee and curate these items with the highest quality and standards. In this stewardship, we are also committed to expanding public engagement in a major US city like Dallas with as broad a public as possible that reflects the global nature and endeavors of the worldwide church,” Anthony J. Elia, Director and J.S. Bridwell Foundation Endowed Librarian, said upon learning his institution had been chosen as the repository.

Longtime contributors to the Museum also expressed pleasure at the decision. “My family and I are delighted that the collection in its entirety will be maintained at SMU for study and research about the early Methodist movement and its founder John Wesley. I shall continue to support the collection in whatever way I can to help spread Wesley’s Christian message of, ‘The best of all, God is with us,’ said Thelma Barclift Crowder. The Crowders have shared Wesley artifacts, information, and finances with the Museum for many years.

Charlotte and Winston Rhea were excited to hear that the items they and their family had secured for the Museum would soon be only 30 miles from their residence. “My parents, Jimmy and Fleeta Davis enjoyed providing funds to the World Methodist Council under the direction of The Rev. Dr. Joe Hale for the purchase of historical items for the Wesley Museum. Since their death, my husband and I have continued to make donations from the James H. Davis Foundation,” Charlotte explained. “We are very excited that the entire collection will remain intact in the Bridwell Museum at Southern Methodist University. This is especially exciting since we met at SMU in 1955.”

“We thank the many people who have contributed to the life, witness, and ministry of the World Methodist Council Museum at Lake Junaluska for the past 65 years,” Bishop Abrahams said. “This is a historic undertaking that will create a larger footprint for the Council and allow many more people to utilize the collection in a new way. It will allow the Council to become even more global as it moves into the future. We are very pleased and feel this is a great moment for Methodism. The Council is also in final negotiations with the Lake Junaluska Assembly regarding the closing of the Council’s properties there. It will allow Junaluska to enhance their educational opportunities and allow us to broaden the mission and ministries of the Council.”



Bridwell Library