



Dorothy C. Wagner CoL
December 5, 1917 — December 29, 2008

Dorothy Wagner came to know the Loretto Community through Mary Luke Tobin SL when they both worked in New York City for Church Women United, an organization dear to both of them. Also working at CWU was Ann Patrick Ware SL who says of Dorothy that she had “an extraordinary lifestory” and that she was “the soul of hospitality.” Others who knew Dorothy could attest to her generous and welcoming spirit. Dorothy was a Presbyterian Elder and was elected to serve in the Church of the Master in Harlem, a congregation to which she belonged for more than 25 years.

Dorothy was born in St. Louis and was one of five children. In her autobiography she says that their big family had modest resources but that their home was always open to friends and neighbors, visiting missionaries and ministers. She said, “. . . so from a very early age I was aware of the global Christian community.”

Dorothy served as a missionary in China in the 1940s. After returning from Missions working with women’s groups from Alaska to New Mexico “interpreting the overseas mission of the church and doing leadership training

for Presbyterian women.” In the 1980s she took groups of church people to China to visit and continue the work in which she had participated earlier.

In 1956 Dorothy became Eastern Area Secretary in the national office in New York City. She planned and implemented international seminars and study tours, working with women of several denominations. In 1973 she began work with Church Women United in the area of global relations. Her first assignment was to implement a Christian Causeway to Asia, “which was already in the planning and in which Sister Mary Luke Tobin was deeply involved.” As part of their work, they went to a conference on peace building in Japan. Other Christian Causeways followed, again involving both Dorothy and Mary Luke.

From 1974 to 1986 Dorothy was director of The World Day of Prayer, in which she was in contact with “women of prayer in the 170 countries and regions which observe this day of prayer initiated and carried out by lay women.” She was also liaison for church women in the U.S.A. with the Fellowship of the Least Coin, another global movement of prayer carried out by women.

Ministries in Korea, Lebanon, Ireland, South Africa, and The Caribbean were testaments to Dorothy’s global awareness and sincere wish for international peace and understanding. In May 1978 she was given the Human Rights Award at the 12th Annual conference of the Association of Korean Christian Scholars in North America.

In 1986 Dorothy retired to do volunteer work including working with persons with disabilities and babies born with AIDS. A few years later she moved to California to a retirement home in Pasadena. She became part of the Loretto Community Group in Monrovia, having become a Loretto Co-member in 1988. In her mutual commitment she stated that Loretto “provides an opportunity to be part of a community of Christian women with whom I share a common faith and concern for peace and justice in our global society.” She further commented that knowing Mary Luke Tobin, Ann Patrick Ware, and Alice Cochran “makes me think my horizons will be widened and my ministry enriched by membership in the community.”

We are grateful for the membership of Dorothy Wagner and her contribution to the work of Loretto.

Memorial by Martha Alderson with input from the archives and Ann Pat Ware