

Mrs. J. D. Chapman - courageous to be first!  
She was God's person, destined to build a steady base for women who would hear the urgent message and respond to its powerful impact. She was restricted only by the years that passed the work of Woman's Missionary Union to those of the next generation. Her source of strength belongs also to today as Jesus promised, "Lo, I am with you always ..." (Matt. 28:20)



Awaken to Missions!

*Prepared by Mrs. Mary Foster, Greenville*



## Awaken To Missions!

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"Empowering churches and believers to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission"

*A brief biographical sketch of*

### **Mrs. J. D. Chapman**

First president of Woman's Missionary Union of South Carolina for whom the state missions offering is named. Become acquainted with a woman who awakened many to missions through her leadership.

Woman's Missionary Union  
Auxiliary to South Carolina Baptist Convention

The project proved the value of an organized plan for giving. The Cooperative Program was launched in 1925 and again Mrs. Chapman led the women to support the effort.

Many state institutions saw tangible results of Mrs. Chapman's relentless directives. A chapel at Connie Maxwell Children's Home was built in 1924 and dedicated, debt-free, ten years later. Furnishings and equipment were purchased for North Greenville Academy Girl's Home, a classroom at the WMU Training School and at Morris College, and the Webb Infirmary at Furman University.

When Mrs. Chapman spoke, the message and thrust of missions left the women inspired with an indelible call to awareness. She often identified the purpose and power of WMU: "Spiritual power is the greatest power ... The object of our work is soul saving at home and abroad."



Women were constantly awed by her presence. Both her physical appearance and her personal relations projected a person of strict discipline. Her inner strength and gentle spirit beckoned women to offering was named "The Mrs. J. D. Chapman Offering for State Interests." It was at her request that the offering was given this name rather than the Janie W. Chapman Offering.

Prior to her death at 81 years of age in 1948, this tribute was recorded: "No woman has contributed so much to the organization of the WMU as has Mrs. Chapman, and no other woman has been so closely associated with and actively contributing to its onward progress for so long a time."



During her presidency, when Woman's Missionary Union celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WMU, Mrs. Chapman prepared a 51-page historical report entitled, "Our Jubilate: Twenty-five Years of Building for the Master." She wrote: "We do not want to live too much in the past - just an occasional reminder of the stalwart and true souls who dared to blaze new trails."

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a separate date and place from the state convention. The first Season of Prayer for State Missions was planned, then observed the following year, 1908.

Fresh ideas came quickly to Mrs. Chapman, and she remained fearless in implementing them. However, each became timeless as she incorporated within the planning process her keen insight into the future. She had a natural personality for promotional work and knew well the power of persuasion. Seldom did she permit the answer, “no,” to be an acceptable one.



During her second term of office which began in 1913, camps for young people were started in Greenville in cooperation with the Baptist Summer Assembly at Furman University. On opening night of GA camp, Mrs. Chapman sent word to the music director to have the girls sing for the assembly. The reply stated that the GAs had not rehearsed but would sing at a later time. Mrs. Chapman sent a more urgent message; the answer was repeated that the girls were not ready. The third message: “You tell her I expect her to do it.” And do it she did, ready or not!

The years between 1913 and 1930 when her second tenure ended produced many changes as WMU leaders kept pace with the growing organization. Mrs. Chapman gave direction to selecting department superintendents for age-level organizations, personal service, and mission study. She encouraged the employment of the first corresponding secretary (presently termed executive director) in 1923, having fulfilled the duties herself in 1922.

The 75-Million Campaign of 1919 provided still another challenge to WMU. Mrs. Chapman compared the past work of Woman’s Missionary Union to leaven saturating the churches in preparation for this task. She called WMU to respond; they agreed to supply one-fifth of the state goal of \$5,500,000. If WMU could raise \$1,100,000 in the five-year period, it would exceed the \$817,540.24 they had given during the preceding 45 years. WMU surpassed the goal, giving a total of \$1,487,647.74!



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Enthusiastic and confident, Mrs. J. D. Chapman addressed the Baptist women of South Carolina and stirred their vision of missions. Her 22 years of service as president of Woman’s Missionary Union is characterized by the continued challenge to enlist and equip women for missions opportunities. The stability of her leadership provided the sturdy base on which the future of South Carolina WMU would be built.

One of the earliest records of her leadership role identifies a meeting of 30 representative Baptist women in Florence in 1901 where Mrs. Chapman read a paper entitled, “The New Century Movement.” She awakened the women to the need for a larger representation from each association; she reminded them that although South Carolina had been first to start the work, they were among the last to adopt a formal organization. The women voted to allow two delegates from each association to attend the following year.

At the 1902 meeting, Mrs. Chapman was asked to read a paper on the question, “Is It Advisable to Adopt a Constitution and By-laws?” So contagious was her energetic spirit that the sixty-member group unanimously elected to organize with Janie Watson Chapman as their first president.

First Corinthians 15:58 became her personal motto: “... be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ....” She once wrote of herself: “Have had WMU interest in my mind and on my heart every day in the year.” She worked tirelessly and was often described as a person of dignity, gentleness, and kindness.

What brings a woman to this strategic place of service at the turn of the century to serve with such dedication and commitment? Mrs. Chapman cited three women as main sources of encouragement and influence in her young life:

First was her mother, a woman of culture whose life exemplified a strong background in Bible study. Second was a Jewish teacher at a private preparatory school who valued and taught loyalty to one’s religion and faith. Third was a missionary-hearted teacher at Wesleyan College where Mrs. Chapman enrolled at age sixteen.

Born May 5, 1867, Janie May Weston became a Christian at age fourteen and a member of the Methodist church where her father served for 45 years as steward. Her girlhood was spent in Albany, Georgia, as the only daughter in a family of seven children. Later, she made known her commitment to Christian work in places wherever God would lead.

Two years after college graduation, she was baptized by immersion into the Baptist denomination by her new pastor-husband of two weeks, the Rev. J. D. Chapman. For 34 years they served as a team in ministry in the church as well as in their home. Four of their six children grew to adulthood. The family moved to South Carolina in 1900 when Mr. Chapman became pastor of First Baptist Church, Anderson.



Mrs. Chapman's outstanding leadership qualities and love for missions were matched by her skill in teaching and her deep concern for people. Evidences of these can be traced to churches where she was the pastor's wife and to the local communities alike. She taught Sunday School, other Bible classes, and mission studies. She focused on work with women and developed young people's groups. She maintained a close and working relationship with her black friends and helped them to organize a Women's Missionary Society. She was the first woman trustee of Anderson College and remained active in clubs such as UDC and DAR.

From 1902 to 1907 as Mrs. Chapman filled her first term as state president, her executive skill brought rapid growth to the new organization. Amendments to the constitution demanded attention; modifications were necessary to allow for expansion. New officers needed training and committees awaited appointment. An executive committee replaced the former Central Committee, a unifying force which had linked together the women's mission societies in Baptist churches.



Mrs. Chapman placed great emphasis on mission study. She alerted the women in 1906 as to its importance: "What better advancement can we plan for than that we do more through mission study? To know is the first step to praying and giving."



In the presidential message at the annual session of 1907, Mrs. Chapman challenged women with a scriptural basis for personal study and awareness: "Larger things in study. Would you be an intelligent missionary worker? Then, 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.' Study God's word. 'The entrance of Thy Word giveth light.' Study missions ... We shall hope that Mission Study classes shall spring up everywhere."

The following year, Woman's Missionary Union adopted the recommendation of the Executive Board: "That we emphasize the importance of Mission Study, making our aim a Mission Study class in every church." The action was clearly an echo to Mrs. Chapman's compelling lead.

By the close of 1907, the steady growth in organizations totaled 234 new Woman's Missionary Societies, 165 new children's bands, 110 new young women's circles, and offerings that had tripled. Mrs. Chapman had worked diligently to form missionary circles among the younger women and girls and pled often for the women of maturity to assume responsibility throughout the state.

She stated: "Are there not many women here who will make it a labor of love to organize and lead such a circle in their church during the coming year? Is there not some woman in our ranks who will take the oversight of this work and do for our girls and young women what another has done so successfully for our children?"

Young Woman's Auxiliary soon emerged as an official WMU organization. Mrs. George E. Davis, who became superintendent of YWA and GA state work, wrote: "Mrs. J. D. Chapman, president of the WMU in 1903, in her annual address urged the enlistment of girls and young women in work for missions, giving at least a third of her address to this subject. Cold facts in minutes tell so little of warm love, willing sacrifice and tender interest. Mrs. Chapman awakened these in the hearts of our South Carolina women for our girls and young women."



As president, Mrs. Chapman implemented methods conferences during the annual sessions and arranged for the meetings to be held at