



Institute Archives

If you would like to donate items you have to the permanent Kansas Area United Methodist Archives Institute collection, please contact Jen McCollough, Kansas Area and Baker University Archivist, 785-594-6451, or Kurt Cooper, Centennial Coordinator, 620-757-7802.

INSTITUTE CENTENNIAL FUND

Summer 2011, UMY Institute celebrated 100 years of gathering at Baker University. The Institute movement was a brain child of the Epworth League and was designed to train young people to be leaders in their Epworth League chapters and local churches. This grand tradition continues to shape young people's lives for Christian service.

As a way to provide continuing financial support, an Institute Centennial Fund is established to further this legacy as this ministry begins its second century. Managed by the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, yearly interest will be available for scholarships and to underwrite annual costs.

Local churches, UMY groups, Sunday school classes, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, other church groups, and individuals are encouraged to support the fund.

If Institute has touched your heart or has impacted your local church, please consider making a gift to the Institute Centennial Fund to help insure that sessions continue to reach young people. Make your gift payable to Kansas East Conference, write "Institute Centennial Fund" on the check notation line, and mail to:

Kansas East Conference
 Attn: Institute Centennial Fund
 PO Box 4187
 Topeka, KS 66601-0187

(clip and send with contribution)

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Origins of the Epworth League Institute

Multiple threads formed the Epworth League Institute Movement and the Institute held at Baker University. The Epworth League itself was a patchwork quilt of young people's organizations that came together under a common

banner in Cleveland, Ohio, in May of 1889. The Epworth League, now known as United Methodist Youth Fellowship and the United Methodist Student Movement, was a response by the church to the great loss of young peoples' lives during the Civil War. The story of Institute began with the church's having a new understanding of young people's worth.



Beginning in May of 1900, Baker University hosted its first Epworth League Training School as part of its annual commencement programming. Similar gatherings were held in 1901 and 1902. These events, initiated under the direction of Baker University President Lemeul Murlin, were the first precursors to the Epworth Institute movement.

A second precursor was an editorial by Joseph F. Berry, General Secretary of the Epworth League and later a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His editorial appeared in the January 26, 1901, issue of the Epworth League Herald. Entitled "Epworth League Extension," Berry's editorial proposed the Epworth Institute as a model for training young people and adult leaders which might benefit local chapters.

The third precursor was a training school meeting that also was proposed in Berry's editorial. The meeting was held in Delaware, Ohio, in March of 1901.

The dominant question this gathering struggled with was, "How can we train our young people for real leadership?"

During the early 1900's, a variety of district Institute gatherings were occurring throughout Epworth League Chapters. There was distinction between these early Institutes and the work of the Epworth League Conventions.

Into this Epworth League tapestry Edwin M. Randall (BU 1886) became the Secretary General of the Epworth League in 1904. Randall held the first week-long Epworth League Institute at the Des Plaines Campground outside of Chicago during the summer of 1906.

In 1907 the General Office of the Epworth League offered three Epworth League Institutes. One of these Institutes was held at Island Park in Winfield Kansas, home of Southwestern College. In 1907, 1908, and 1909 multiple Institutes were held in addition to the Winfield sessions.

In 1910, seven Institutes were held, including one in Bonner Springs, Kansas, at McDaniel Park. Much-loved Baker University professor Homer K. Ebright (BU 1904) and his wife attended the 1910 Institute in Bonner Springs. They were in charge of a Baker University tent at the event.



The summer of 1910 Baker University's President Lemeul Murlin expressed an interest to have the university host an Institute in Baldwin City. This interest was directly addressed in correspondence with General Secretary Randall and supported by having the Baker University tent at the 1910 Institute.

Young people and faculty lived and took classes primarily in large tents. During this week, Bonner Springs received a great deal of rain and flooding the park. During this deluge Ebright initiated an invitation for the Institute to come to Baldwin City, Kansas, and meet in Baker University's dry classrooms. This invitation and Dr. Ebright's tireless work on behalf of Baldwin Institute gained him the title of "father of the Baldwin Institute."

In correspondence written during the Bonner Springs' Institute week, General Secretary Randall gave President Murlin a commitment to host an Epworth League Institute at Baker University in 1911. Randall stated, "Give us good support and we will give you the best Institute ever."

May strong support continue from generation to generation!