

1 [Planning Code - Landmark Designation - The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples]

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3 **Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate The Church for the Fellowship of**  
4 **All Peoples, at 2041 Larkin Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572, Lot No. 003, as a**  
5 **Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code;**  
6 **affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental**  
7 **Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under**  
8 **Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the**  
9 **eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.**

10 NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.  
11 **Additions to Codes** are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.  
12 **Deletions to Codes** are in *strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*.  
13 **Board amendment additions** are in double-underlined Arial font.  
14 **Board amendment deletions** are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.  
15 **Asterisks (\* \* \* \*)** indicate the omission of unchanged Code  
16 subsections or parts of tables.

17 Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

18 Section 1. CEQA and Land Use Findings.

19 (a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this  
20 ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources  
21 Code Sections 21000 *et seq.*). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of  
22 Supervisors in File No. 230493 and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board of  
23 Supervisors affirms this determination.

24 (b) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, the Board of Supervisors finds that the  
25 proposed landmark designation of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, at 2041  
Larkin Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572, Lot No. 003, will serve the public necessity,

1 convenience, and welfare for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission  
2 Resolution No. 1325, recommending approval of the proposed designation, which is  
3 incorporated herein by reference.

4 (c) On April 19, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission, in Resolution No. 1325,  
5 adopted findings that the actions contemplated in this ordinance are consistent, on balance,  
6 with the City's General Plan and with the eight priority policies of Planning Code Section  
7 101.1. The Board adopts these findings as its own.

8  
9 Section 2. General Findings.

10 (a) Pursuant to Charter Section 4.135, the Historic Preservation Commission has  
11 authority "to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations and  
12 historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors."

13 (b) Planning Department Preservation staff prepared a Landmark Designation Fact  
14 Sheet for The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. All preparers meet the Secretary of  
15 the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for historic preservation program staff, as  
16 set forth in Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Part 61, Appendix A. The report was  
17 reviewed for accuracy and conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the  
18 Planning Code.

19 (c) The Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of April 19, 2023,  
20 reviewed Planning Department staff's analysis of the historical significance of The Church for  
21 the Fellowship of All Peoples set forth in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet dated April 19,  
22 2023.

23 (d) On March 1, 2023, after holding a public hearing on the proposed initiation, the  
24 Historic Preservation Commission initiated landmark designation of The Church for the  
25

1 Fellowship of All Peoples by Resolution No. 1317. Said resolution in on file with the Clerk of  
2 the Board in File No. 230493.

3 (e) On April 19, 2023, after holding a public hearing on the proposed designation, and  
4 having considered the specialized analyses prepared by Planning Department staff and the  
5 Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended  
6 designation of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples as a landmark under Article 10 of  
7 the Planning Code by Resolution No. 1325. Said resolution is on file with the Clerk of the  
8 Board in File No. 230493.

9 (f) The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that The Church for the Fellowship of All  
10 Peoples has a special character and special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest  
11 and value, and that its designation as a Landmark will further the purposes of and conform to  
12 the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code. In doing so, the Board hereby  
13 incorporates by reference the findings of the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

14  
15 Section 3. Designation.

16 Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, The Church for the Fellowship of All  
17 Peoples, at 2041 Larkin Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572, Lot No. 003, is hereby  
18 designated as a San Francisco Landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code. Appendix A  
19 to Article 10 of the Planning Code is hereby amended to include this property.

20  
21 Section 4. Required Data.

22 (a) The description, location, and boundary of the Landmark site consists of the City  
23 parcel located at 2041 Larkin Street (aka The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples), in  
24 Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572, Lot No. 003, in San Francisco's Russian Hill  
25 neighborhood.

1 (b) The characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation are described and  
2 shown in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet and other supporting materials contained in  
3 Planning Department Record Docket No. 2022-003913DES. In brief, The Church for the  
4 Fellowship of All Peoples is eligible for local designation because it is associated with the lives  
5 of historically significant people, specifically, Dr. Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman,  
6 and because it is associated with events that have made a culturally and historically  
7 significant contribution to the broad patterns of San Francisco history. Designation of The  
8 Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is proper for its association with Dr. Howard  
9 Thurman, co-founder and pastor of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples from 1944 to  
10 1953, who was a nationally prominent theologian, religious scholar and educator, renowned  
11 author, prolific lecturer, spiritual advisor to many African American religious and political  
12 leaders, one of the principle intellectual influences shaping the modern, nonviolent civil rights  
13 movement, and a visionary for a new, multi-racial American Christianity. Designation of The  
14 Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is also proper for its association with Sue Bailey  
15 Thurman, author, editor, lecturer, historian, and community organizer, renowned for her efforts  
16 to integrate and progress the lives of Black women, dissemination of African American history,  
17 and advocacy of interracial, intercultural, and international understanding in support of  
18 universal emancipation. Designation of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples,  
19 established in 1943, one of the first inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-denominational churches in  
20 the United States, is also proper as a culturally and historically significant site representative  
21 of African American social, cultural, and intellectual life, and associated with the struggle for  
22 integration and civil rights, as described in the *African American Citywide Historic Context*  
23 *Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*. The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples moved into  
24 its permanent home at 2041 Larkin Street after purchasing the property in 1949.

1 (c) The particular features that should be preserved, or replaced in-kind as determined  
2 necessary, are those shown in photographs and/or described in the Landmark Designation  
3 Fact Sheet, which can be found in Planning Department Record Docket No. 2022-  
4 003913DES, and which are incorporated in this designation by reference as though fully set  
5 forth. Specifically, the following features are character-defining and shall be preserved or  
6 replaced in kind:

7 (1) All those exterior elevations, architectural ornament, and materials of The  
8 Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, identified as:

9 (A) Two-story height;

10 (B) Bell tower, clad in smooth stucco, rising from southeast corner of  
11 structure;

12 (C) Smooth stucco (front façade) cladding with bas relief decoration at  
13 apex of peaked-gable parapet and flanking the upper floor window opening;

14 (D) Window and door openings at front and side elevations;

15 (E) Entrance doors, consisting of three recessed, pointed arch openings  
16 with paired wood doors under wood transom sash with translucent glazing;

17 (F) Wood windows, consisting of:

18 (i) Wood-framed, arched, double-hung, stained-glass, wood sash  
19 at side elevations of second floor;

20 (ii) Wood-framed, multi-lite, fixed, stained-glass, wood sash  
21 window with pointed arched head at front façade;

22 (iii) Wood-framed, arched, single-lite over single-lite, wood double-  
23 hung at side elevations; and

24 (2) The following are character-defining interior features of The Church for the  
25 Fellowship of All Peoples, all of which were historically accessible to the public:

- 1 (A) Entrance vestibule with walls of textured stucco, mimicking travertine;
- 2 (B) Stairs to second floor sanctuary, including mirrored dog-leg
- 3 configuration, wood treads and risers, wood handrails with turned balusters and posts, and
- 4 wood wainscot with chair rail;
- 5 (C) Intermediate and second floor stair landings, consisting of a double-
- 6 height space with walls of textured stucco, mimicking travertine, capped with a picture rail of
- 7 molded plaster, under a curved and arched dome ceiling clad in smooth plaster;
- 8 (D) Sanctuary;
- 9 (i) Painted wood ceiling beams that curve to extend as brackets
- 10 along the sidewalls;
- 11 (ii) Wood-framed, arched window openings;
- 12 (iii) Raised platform at west end of sanctuary bounded by a tall,
- 13 wood-paneled railing with wood corner posts;
- 14 (E) Stained-glass windows and angled, stained-glass and wood-paneled
- 15 walls, at second floor stair landing and east end of sanctuary; and
- 16 (F) Spatial configuration and layout of Thurman Hall (also known as
- 17 Fellowship Hall) at ground floor of building.
- 18

19 Section 5. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after

20 enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the

21 ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board

22 of Supervisors overrides the Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

23

24 APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
25 DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

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By: /s/ Peter R. Miljanich  
**PETER R. MILJANICH**  
Deputy City Attorney

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City and County of San Francisco

City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Tails  
Ordinance

File Number: 230493

Date Passed: June 27, 2023

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, at 2041 Larkin Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572, Lot No. 003, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

June 05, 2023 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED

June 13, 2023 Board of Supervisors - PASSED ON FIRST READING


Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton


June 27, 2023 Board of Supervisors - FINALLY PASSED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 230493

I hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was FINALLY PASSED on 6/27/2023 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

  
Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board

  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

7/6/23  
Date Approved





# ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION FACT SHEET



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, Dr. Howard Thurman in pulpit during service, circa 1950  
Source: The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples

<b>Historic Name:</b>	The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples; Fellowship Church of All Peoples; Fellowship Church
<b>Address:</b>	2041 Larkin Street
<b>Block/ Lot(s):</b>	0572/003
<b>Parcel Area:</b>	3,998 sq. ft.
<b>Zoning:</b>	RH-3 (Residential House – Three-Family) 40-X
<b>Year Built:</b>	1906-1907
<b>Architect:</b>	Unknown Builder: Hugh E. Pynn (per <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> )
<b>Prior Historic Studies/Other Designations:</b>	None

<p><b>Prior HPC Actions:</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Significance Criteria:</b></p>	<p><u>Events:</u> Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. (National Register Criterion A)</p> <p><u>Persons:</u> Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. (National Register Criterion B)</p>
<p><b>Period of Significance:</b></p>	<p>The period of significance for The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, co-founded in 1943-1944 by Dr. Alfred G. Fisk and Dr. Howard Thurman, extends from 1949, when the congregation purchased and assumed occupancy of their building at 2041 Larkin Street, to 1953, when Dr. Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman left their positions with the church.</p>
<p><b>Statement of Significance:</b></p>	<p>The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (also known as Fellowship Church), located at 2041 Larkin Street, is eligible for designation as a San Francisco Landmark for association with significant cultural and historic events, specifically, as the first avowedly inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-denominational church in the United States, and for association with significant persons, specifically, Dr. Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman. Dr. Howard Thurman, one of the co-founders of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, was an internationally known theologian and religious scholar, and one of the principle intellectual influences shaping the modern, nonviolent civil rights movement. Sue Bailey Thurman, who helped establish The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, was an author, editor, lecturer, historian, and community organizer, renowned for her efforts to integrate and progress the lives of Black women, for dissemination of African American history, and for advocacy of interracial, intercultural, and international understanding in support of universal emancipation. The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is associated with culturally and historically significant events and persons under the thematic contexts of “African American Social and Cultural Institutions” and “African Americans and the Political and Legal Landscape,” as outlined in the <i>African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (DRAFT)</i>, as a site important for association with African American social, cultural, and intellectual life, and as a property associated with the struggle for integration and with prominent persons in the struggle for civil rights.<sup>1</sup></p>
<p><b>Assessment of Integrity:</b></p>	<p>The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (2041 Larkin Street) maintains integrity. The seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (2041 Larkin Street) maintains integrity to convey its historic and cultural significance. The building at 2041 Larkin Street was constructed in 1907 following the building’s destruction during the 1906 Earthquake and Fires. The Church for the Fellowship of All</p>

<sup>1</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, prepared for San Francisco Planning Department, 263-264.

<sup>2</sup> “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” National Register Bulletin, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995, p. 44.

	<p>Peoples has occupied the building since purchasing the property in 1949. The building has undergone some alterations over time, though these alterations have been primarily cosmetic. The subject property retains a high degree of all aspects of integrity.</p> <p>Overall, the Department has determined that the building housing The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (2041 Larkin Street), inclusive of the interior of second floor sanctuary and ground floor Thurman Hall (also known as Fellowship Hall), retains integrity to convey its historical and cultural significance.</p>
<p>Character-Defining Features:</p>	<p>(1) All those exterior elevations, architectural ornament, and materials of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two-story height;</li><li>• Bell tower, clad in smooth stucco, rising from southwest corner of structure;</li><li>• Smooth stucco (front façade) cladding with bas relief decoration at apex of peaked-gable parapet and flanking the upper floor window opening;</li><li>• Window and door openings at front and side elevations;</li><li>• Wood windows, consisting of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wood-framed, arched, double-hung, stained-glass, wood sash at side elevations of second floor;</li><li>• Wood-framed, multi-lite, fixed, stained-glass, wood sash window with pointed arched head at front façade;</li><li>• Wood-framed, arched, single-lite over single-lite, wood double-hung windows at side elevations;</li></ul></li><li>• Entrance doors, consisting of three recessed, pointed arch openings with paired wood doors under wood transom sash with translucent glazing, and;</li></ul> <p>(2) The character-defining interior features of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, all of which were historically accessible to the public, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entrance vestibule with walls of textured stucco, mimicking travertine;</li><li>• Stairs to second floor sanctuary, including mirrored dog-leg configuration, wood treads and risers, wood handrails with turned balusters and posts, and wood wainscot with chair rail;</li><li>• Intermediate and second floor stair landings, consisting of a double-height space with walls of textured stucco, mimicking travertine, capped by a picture rail of molded plaster, under a curved and arched dome ceiling clad in smooth plaster;</li><li>• Sanctuary;<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Painted wood ceiling beams that curve to extend as brackets along the sidewalls;</li><li>• Wood-framed, arched window openings;</li><li>• Raised platform at west end of sanctuary bounded by a tall, wood-paneled railing with wood corner posts;</li></ul></li><li>• Stained-glass windows and angled, stained-glass and wood-</li></ul>

	<p>paneled walls, at second floor stair landing and east end of sanctuary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spatial configuration and layout of Thurman Hall (also known as Fellowship Hall) at ground floor of building.</li></ul>
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## Statement of Significance Summary

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (also known as Fellowship Church), located at 2041 Larkin Street, is eligible for designation as a San Francisco Landmark for association with significant cultural and historic events, specifically, as the first avowedly inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-denominational church in the United States, and for association with significant persons, specifically, Dr. Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman. Dr. Howard Thurman, one of the co-founders of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, was an internationally known theologian and religious scholar, and one of the principle intellectual influences shaping the modern, nonviolent civil rights movement. Sue Bailey Thurman, who helped establish The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, was an author, editor, lecturer, historian, and community organizer, renowned for her efforts to integrate and progress the lives of Black women, for dissemination of African American history, and for advocacy of interracial, intercultural, and international understanding in support of universal emancipation. The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is associated with culturally and historically significant events and persons under the thematic contexts of “African American Social and Cultural Institutions” and “African Americans and the Political and Legal Landscape,” as outlined in the *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (DRAFT)*, as a site important for association with African American social, cultural, and intellectual life, and as a property associated with the struggle for integration and with prominent persons in the struggle for civil rights.<sup>3</sup>

### **Events: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (National Register Criterion A).**

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (2041 Larkin Street, also known as Fellowship Church), the first avowedly inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-denominational churches in the United States, was established in 1943-1944 by Dr. Howard Thurman and Dr. Alfred Fisk, who shared a “...belief that religious communion was one of the few venues where people of all races could stand united in fellowship.”<sup>4</sup> The Church of the Fellowship of All Peoples is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A, within the thematic contexts outlined in the *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (DRAFT)*, for association with culturally and historically significant events as a site representative of African American social, cultural, and intellectual life and with the struggle for integration and civil rights.<sup>5</sup> The church was “...a unique idea, fresh, untried. There were no precedents and no traditions to aid in structuring the present or gauging the future.”<sup>6</sup> The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, which is still active, has served as a worldwide model for interracial and interfaith cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, prepared for San Francisco Planning Department, 263-264.

<sup>4</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, 125.

<sup>5</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, 263-4.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company,

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, founded to “create a religious fellowship which transcended race, culture and social distinction,”<sup>7</sup> coalesced as a nascent congregation in late 1943. Efforts to start a new church followed on initial meetings between Dr. Alfred G. Fisk, “...a socialist, pacifist, local Presbyterian minister, and professor of philosophy [at San Francisco State College (now SF State University)]...”<sup>8</sup> and a group of women, known as the Sakai Group, and others. These meetings were probably facilitated “...through mutual contacts at the Fellowship of Reconciliation,”<sup>9</sup> an influential Protestant pacifist organization founded during World War I. Recalling this period, Fisk noted that he “met with a few persons of various races and faiths who were deeply concerned with the absence of bridges of understanding among the varied races, cultures, and faiths presented in American society.”<sup>10</sup>

During World War II, similar conversations, and meetings of concerned individuals, specifically focused on establishing an interracial church movement, were starting across the United States. Historians Quinton Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt note that during World War II from “Detroit to Pasadena, churches of various sorts...started to call themselves interracial.”<sup>11</sup> One such church was the Fellowship Church in Philadelphia, sponsored by the Committee on Race Relations of the Society of Friends, which met periodically and where Dr. Thurman would guest preach in the late 1930s and early 1940.<sup>12</sup> In the Bay Area, another interracial church, organized by a committee of the Northern California Conference of Congregational Churches in the early 1940s, was the South Berkeley Congregational Church, which like The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, had co-pastors, one white and one African American.

Although not organized as churches, there were also conscious communities or housing cooperatives that were exploring these concepts, particularly those that synthesized religion, politics, and nonviolent protest and pacifism. In New York City, The Harlem Ashram (1940-1948), an interracial Christian commune “modeled after ashrams, or Hindu religious centers, that Gandhi had established in India,”<sup>13</sup> served as home and training arena for friends and contemporaries of Dr. Howard Thurman, such as James Farmer, founder of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and an “activist who would become a leader in the 1961 Freedom Rides” and Pauli Murray, “a critical figure at the intersection of the civil rights and women’s movements.”<sup>14</sup> In San Francisco, a similar Gandhian housing cooperative, known as Sakai House or Sakai Group, formed,

... so-called because of their residence in a house formerly owned by the Sakai family before their wartime expulsion with other Japanese families from San Francisco. The Sakai group was a group of women committed to working with the surrounding neighborhood, which was in the process of rapidly becoming

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1979), 148.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Thurman, *The First Footprints: The Dawn of the Idea of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Letters between Alfred Fisk & Howard Thurman 1943-1944 (San Francisco: Self published, 1975), “Foreword.”

<sup>8</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt, *Visions of a Better World: Howard Thurman’s Pilgrimage to India and the Origins of African American Nonviolence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 166.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples website, “About Us,” at: <https://www.fellowshipsof.org/about-us>

<sup>11</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 166.

<sup>12</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 165.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Azaransky, “Harlem’s experiment in interracial, pacifist community,” *The Christian Century* (May 21, 2014) at <https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2014-05/harlems-experiment-interracial-pacifist-community>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

a black neighborhood because the former Japantown was one of the few areas in the city that welcomed black residents. The small prewar black community in San Francisco underwent a sixfold growth during the war years with shipyards. The burgeoning increase in the black population led to the usual social dislocations, and the Sakai group was just one of many efforts to develop programs to assist them. But the basic insight of the Sakai group, which became the basis for the Fellowship Church, was that nothing was more important to the newcomers than basic fellowship and worshiping with them as equals. Sometime in 1943, they felt the need to establish something more substantial than the informal religious gatherings they had been conducting.<sup>15</sup>

In connecting with Dr. Fisk, the Sakai Group and others of similar concerns/interests, met a professor and clergyman “deeply concerned with the problem of reconciliation in [a] city of forty-eight different ethnic groups...” and sensitized to its “...highly volatile social situation...”<sup>16</sup> In describing Fisk’s motivations during the period of the church’s initial organization, Thurman would later note that

Dr. Fisk writes almost with daily anguish and distress. It was his conviction that in the immediate war years, San Francisco must be helped through a challenging religious channel to face the fact of interracial migrations, of unfamiliar faces precipitated by the ship building industry, a great port of debarkation for the Pacific basin and by the bleeding wound caused by the ruthless deportation of the Japanese to “safe” camps in the center of the country. He gathered around him a small group of people with similar concerns and dedication. In time, they became the nucleus of the new church to be.<sup>17</sup>

With shared interests and social concerns, Fisk and representatives of the Sakai Group, along with “about thirty men and women...from a variety of denominations” began meeting “...weekly in the living room of an old house on Post Street, recently converted to a chapel.”<sup>18</sup> Beyond these meetings, Fisk was also encouraging the leadership of Presbytery of San Francisco to support the establishment this new church.

By fall of 1943, with an initial pledge of support from the Presbytery of San Francisco of \$200 per month for pastoral wages, Fisk began seeking an individual to serve as co-pastor for the new congregation, which at that time was simply referred to as a “neighborhood church.” The original intent had been for a religion student or recent graduate to join Fisk as co-pastor and initial outreach to Dr. Howard Thurman, then Dean of Rankin Chapel and Professor of Religion at Howard University, was to inquire whether Thurman might assist by referring an individual for this position. Dr. Fisk described the new church, thusly, in a letter of introduction to Dr. Thurman, dated October 15, 1943:

A.J. Muste<sup>19</sup> may have written to you about the new inter-racial church we are organizing in San Francisco. The Presbyterian Church is giving us the building of the former Japanese congregation, and a budget of

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<sup>15</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 166.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Burden, “Atlantic Portrait: Howard Thurman,” *The Atlantic* (October 1953) at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1953/10/howard-thurman/642978/>

<sup>17</sup> Howard Thurman, *The First Footprints: The Dawn of the Idea of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Letters between Alfred Fisk & Howard Thurman 1943-1944 (San Francisco: Self published, 1975), “Foreword”.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Burden, “Atlantic Portrait: Howard Thurman,” *The Atlantic* (October 1953).

<sup>19</sup> A.J. Muste (1885-1967), friend and mentor to Drs. Fisk and Thurman, was a clergyman and political activist who was an important figure in the labor, pacifist, antiwar, and civil rights movements. Muste joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an



\$200 per month. I have resigned the church I am now serving and expect to become co-pastor of the new enterprise. But we don't want it to be in any sense run by whites "for" Negroes. It should be *of* and *by* and *for* both groups. ... We are committed to a real equality between the races in all aspects of church organization. The boards of the church, the choir, the Sunday School and its staff will all be of mixed character. The co-pastors will have absolutely equal status and will alternate Sundays in preaching and in taking other parts of the service.<sup>20</sup>

When it became clear that the individual originally considered for the position was no longer available, a subsequent exchange of letters with Thurman expressing his desire to serve the new church quickly changed the nature of the search. For Fisk, and, one assumes, his fellow congregants in San Francisco, Thurman's interest was so unexpected they were initially incredulous, not sure that they could "...measure up to the coming of so 'big' a man," and yet also expressing the sense that "...miracles would happen with you [Thurman] here" and that "finances would come, and a bigger building, and a work which would be significant, not only here but also to the whole nation."<sup>21</sup> For Thurman, who had begun to consider the nature and importance of an interracial church during a tour of India, Ceylon, and Burma in the mid-1930s, the opportunity Fisk was describing was providential. In fact, in the years since returning from India, Thurman, along with his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, had reflected deeply on the "...idea of a church that would cross all lines, the genius of which would be a *religious* fellowship, not another settlement house...," and how such an idea could be undertaken in an uncontrolled situation for an unlimited amount of time.<sup>22</sup> Thurman felt that

[i]n a cosmopolitan city like SF...that he could put all his resources and skills into extending the small nucleus from the idea of a "Neighborhood Church," which was seeking community between Negroes who had migrated to SF for defense industries and white people, to a more comprehensive concept—an all-inclusive, international, intercultural, and interracial religious fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

After receiving enthusiastic assurances of a shared vision with "Thurman's leap of faith for a new type of American Christianity"<sup>24</sup> from Dr. Fisk, the question of whether Dr. Thurman would join the new church was mostly settled by December 1943, although many logistical concerns remained to be addressed. With this understanding, Thurman agreed to come to San Francisco to take part in the organizing process for such a church, initially obtaining a one-year leave of absence from Howard University, beginning July 1, 1944.

After some consideration, including consultation with Dr. Thurman, Dr. Fisk and other organizers of the new church elected to move forward with holding services prior to Thurman's arrival in San Francisco. All involved felt that it

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influential Protestant pacifist organization, shortly after its foundation in 1916 and served as the organization's Executive Secretary from 1940 to 1953.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Alfred Fisk to Dr. Howard Thurman, October 15, 1943 – written on letterhead of San Francisco State College, *The First Footprints: The Dawn of the Idea of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Letters between Alfred Fisk & Howard Thurman 1943-1944 (San Francisco: Self published, 1975), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Alfred Fisk to Dr. Howard Thurman, October 30, 1943, *The First Footprints: The Dawn of the Idea of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Letters between Alfred Fisk & Howard Thurman 1943-1944 (San Francisco: Self-published, 1975), 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Burden, "Atlantic Portrait: Howard Thurman," *The Atlantic* (October 1953).

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer* (New York: The John Day Company, 1964), 126.

<sup>24</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 168.

was important to maintain momentum and existing interest in the new church, so “after extensive preparation by Fisk, the Sakai group, and the other early members, the Fellowship Church held its first services on December 12, 1943, with sixty-six in attendance, about one-third of whom were black.<sup>25</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* announced that the first service of “A New Interracial Church” in San Francisco would be held in the “former Japanese Presbyterian Church, at Post and Octavia streets, with a Negro minister and a white minister as co-pastors.”<sup>26</sup> For these first services, during the intervening months until Dr. Thurman would arrive in San Francisco, Dr. Fisk along with Reverend Manley Johnson, a student at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School,” served as co-pastors. Johnson was later replaced as co-pastor by another young African American clergyman, Albert Cleage, Jr.

The church was named “Fellowship Church” on February 14, 1944, with the appellation further evolving to “The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples” later that year. The first church board, consisting of ten Caucasians and ten African Americans, was elected in June 1944. Just before Dr. Thurman arrived in San Francisco, Fellowship Church began its “first community-wide activity... a day camp for children, conducted during July and August 1944 at 1500 Post Street,”<sup>27</sup> financed with a grant from the Rosenberg Foundation and donations from a local labor union, and co-directed by two young women, one African American and one white. The camp, titled “Adventures in Friendship,” focused on intercultural awareness and education with programs that included songs, stories, handcrafts, worship materials, and games from different cultures. Activities like this initial summer camp fell under the church’s Intercultural Committee, chaired by Sue Bailey Thurman. The location at 1500 Post Street (not extant), a property that had formerly housed the Japanese Presbyterian Church and was owned by the Presbytery of San Francisco, had a small chapel on first floor and an apartment on the second floor. This was the Thurman family’s first residence in the city.

Dr. Thurman and his family arrived in San Francisco on July 12, 1944, and he gave his first sermon as co-pastor of this new congregation on July 23, 1944. There followed several months of settling into his new role for Dr. Thurman and of organizational development for everyone involved in the new church. Even under the pressure of many issues facing the fledgling church and its newly arrived co-pastor, Thurman first wanted to

impress upon those participating in the Fellowship Church experiment its importance, its broader significance, its uniqueness, and that it was not simply a local church but the first footstep of a national reckoning with racial inequality.” ... Thurman had modestly outrageous ambitions for the tiny new church, and he wanted its members to embark on the voyage with him, with all its thrill and all of its uncertainty.<sup>28</sup>

On October 8, 1944, the inaugural service for The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples was held at First Unitarian Church (1187 Franklin Street, San Francisco Landmark No. 40) with an

impressive array of religious personages on hand to offer their blessings and support: an Episcopal bishop, Presbyterian officials, a rabbi, Black church leaders, and Chinese Christian lay leader, and the leader of a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “A New Interracial Church Will Open in S.F. Tomorrow,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 11, 1943).

<sup>27</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell: A Life of Howard Thurman* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 219-220.



kindred experiment in interracial religion located across the bay in Berkeley, the South Berkeley Congregational Church.<sup>29</sup>

This was a “service of formal recognition of the church...” as well as “official launching of the church as a going concern.”<sup>30</sup> The service was announced in the *San Francisco Chronicle* as the inaugural address of the new co-pastor, Dr. Howard Thurman, for “San Francisco’s Fellowship Church of All People...” the “...first interracial church in the nation.”<sup>31</sup> The following day, another article provided additional background on the new church and noted that there had been more than 400 in the audience for the inaugural service of Fellowship Church.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Thurman recounts that in addition to giving the keynote address at a 1944 farewell testimonial dinner held in his honor in Washington D.C., First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was also one of the first national members-at-large for The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, signing a commitment card just in time to be included at the formal inaugural ceremony of the church.<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt and Thurman would correspond during and after her White House years spanning Thurman’s deanships at Howard University and Boston University and his time at The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples.

Following its inaugural service, The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, which had started around a “nucleus of some thirty enthusiastic members, both white and Negro...” with “...little in the way of funds and no set creed,” gradually came into being.<sup>34</sup>

The membership grew to over three hundred, with more than a thousand members-at-large in half a dozen countries as well as the United States. Caucasians, Negroes, Jews, Japanese, Chinese, Latin Americans, members of many different faiths or of none, were drawn to Fellowship Church. Membership implied acceptance of the principles upon which the church was founded, and these principles were printed every Sunday as part of the bulletin.<sup>35</sup>

These principles, known as “The Commitment,” were developed by Drs. Fisk and Thurman, in concert with the membership, along with a committee of the Board. Dr. Thurman preached a series of sermons outlining these principles in August 1944.

Realizing that one year was going to be insufficient to his goals for establishing Fellowship Church, Dr. Thurman requested and received an additional year of leave from Howard University for 1945. After two years, Dr. Thurman accepted the offer to remain indefinitely as pastor of Fellowship Church. Around the same time, in 1946, Dr. Fisk elected to leave his position at Fellowship Church, ending its co-pastorship configuration. This original configuration would not be repeated in the same manner, although many guest preachers have occupied the pulpit and numerous religion students have interned with the church. The current arrangement is that of a presiding minister, co-minister, and several ministers-at-large.

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<sup>29</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 220-221.

<sup>30</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 34.

<sup>31</sup> “Negroes, Whites Hear Their New S.F. Co-Pastor Today,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 8, 1944).

<sup>32</sup> “400 S.F. Whites, Negroes Open Inter-Racial Church,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 9, 1944).

<sup>33</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 141.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer* (New York: The John Day Company, 1964), 126-127.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

Even in the correspondence between the two clergymen before the church had truly been established, the lack of a facility for the church was one of the most pressing issues facing the congregation. Dr. Fisk obtained the former Japanese Presbyterian Church building at 1500 Post Street through the Presbyterian Church, but neither he nor Dr. Thurman believed it would be adequate once the fledgling congregation became official. For the church they were envisioning, one that would be unique in its commitment to an interracial, intercultural, and interdenominational membership, the need for a permanent building was especially important and, perhaps, particularly difficult. For one thing, the new church had very little financial security, so purchasing or constructing a new building would be almost impossible although both ministers were confident that pledges for such a purpose would be forthcoming, especially from Dr. Thurman's supporters on the East Coast. For another, the local religious establishment, owners and operators of the types of buildings adequate to Fellowship Church's needs, would not allow their buildings to be used for worship by people of color, even as these same religious institutions were verbally supportive of the new church.

To add to these obstacles, shortly after officially establishing itself, the membership of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples voted to sever their relationship with the Presbyterian Church, thereby forfeiting their connection to that institution's facilities and its financial commitment to the endeavor. Dr. Thurman encouraged this outcome, believing that Fellowship Church would be a different type of church than could be achieved through affiliation with the Presbyterian Church.

For Thurman, [Fellowship Church] was simply the most important experiment in lived Christianity taking place in the United States... The primary interest of the Presbyterian Church was to create a mission church in San Francisco to address the practical and spiritual needs of the city's burgeoning Black community. ... Thurman was certain that the delivery of social services to the Black community was not the purpose of Fellowship Church. If defined as a mission church, it would be seen as (and would likely become) a Black church, one that was at best only incidentally interracial. ... Uplift, for Thurman, was the opposite of integration. If Fellowship Church became... a mission church—a church sponsored by a largely white denomination as a mission to a Black neighborhood—it would to the minds of Blacks, simply recapitulate the deadly disease of condescension.<sup>36</sup>

A further complication was Dr. Thurman's conviction that Fellowship Church should be "located outside of what was rapidly becoming San Francisco's Black neighborhood."<sup>37</sup> For Fellowship Church, deciding whether to move out of a Black neighborhood was a

...disagreement about the nature of interracialism and integration, and a disagreement about the basis of white and Black interaction and cooperation. ... For Thurman, integration and interracialism were as much about where it occurred as about the act of exclusion. ... an integrated church in a Black neighborhood raised the specter of high-minded slumming. Even if it could work, it would prove nothing. ... In fall of 1944 Fellowship Church moved to the former Filipino Methodist Church of San Francisco, in a swap of sanctuaries effected by the Methodist and Presbyterian denominations. It was only slightly to the

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<sup>36</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 225.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

east of Van Ness Avenue, which had become the informal dividing line between white and Black San Francisco.<sup>38</sup>

Until purchasing the property at 2041 Larkin Street, Fellowship Church occupied four buildings between 1944 and 1949.<sup>39</sup> After 1944 all buildings where Fellowship Church held services were located east of Van Ness Avenue. The properties were:

- 1943-1944: former Japanese-American Presbyterian Church, 1500 Post Street (not extant)
- 1944-1946: former Filipino Methodist Church, 1359 Pine Street (not extant)
- 1946-1949: Theater Arts Colony, 1725 Washington Street (not extant)
- 1946-1949: Fellowship Church offices, 2142 Pierce Street (extant)
- 1949-Present: 2041 Larkin Street (formerly St. John's Evangelical Church)

In *Footprints of a Dream*, Dr. Thurman describes that in January 1949, Fellowship Church had the opportunity to purchase 2041 Larkin Street, thereby resolving an itinerate existence that had required moving their place of worship three times over four years, with the cost of the building being \$30,000 and an additional \$6,000 for repairs and refurbishing. Dr. Thurman continues, quoting the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees where the decision to purchase the property was made: "The treasurer's report announced the new deficit for the month as \$275. It was then unanimously voted to buy the new church."<sup>40</sup> In attempting to finance the purchase, the church was rebuffed by several financial institutions, even with "certain property owners...and other responsible persons" in the church willing to co-sign on the loan, with one institution indicating that it could not undertake such a "bad" risk as "...such a church as [Fellowship Church] could not survive in American life."<sup>41</sup> While Fellowship Church was a unique undertaking, such response was typical from financial institutions during these years, part of a pattern that continues to depress property ownership by people and organizations of color across the United States. Forced by lack of support from established financial institutions to pay cash for the purchase, Fellowship Church eventually obtained a private loan from a "fund established by a family in another part of the state," whose individual family members had "maintained a committed interest in the development of the church."<sup>42</sup> Funds to repay the loan were raised through a national committee chaired by Arthur Crosby, a prominent Quaker in Philadelphia, and the three year repayment period was overseen by the Board of Trustees, chaired during this period by Gene K. Walker. In the introduction of his book, *Footprints of a Dream*, Dr. Thurman notes that

all of us at Fellowship Church do express deep appreciation to Arthur U. Crosby of Philadelphia, chairman of the National Committee of Friends and Members-at-large of Fellowship Church during the crucial three-year period in which this group of individuals from far and near purchased the edifice on Larkin Street in which we now worship.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 222-223.

<sup>39</sup> A list of the properties and map showing their locations are included in Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell: A Life of Howard Thurman* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 224.

<sup>40</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 106.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 8.

To celebrate repayment, the mortgage was burned in a special ceremony during a Sunday service, with approximately 500 in attendance, in January 1952.<sup>44</sup>

Shortly after purchase of the church building, in an effort to bolster the church's always precarious financial stability, a group of members-at-large purchased the adjacent property at 2055-2059 Larkin Street on behalf of Fellowship Church. The neighboring building, which contains three apartments and housed the Church's daycare for several years,<sup>45</sup> was lost to foreclosure in the 1980s.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout his time as pastor at Fellowship Church, Dr. Thurman, who was "a mesmerizing preacher whose voice and presence articulated with power his vision of interracial religious community," "...traveled extensively, lecturing and preaching to support the church as well as spread news of its mission."<sup>47</sup> These trips also provided an opportunity for Dr. Thurman to interact with and expand the "nationwide network of affiliate or associate members [Members-at-large]... of visitors and supporters of the church's ideal"<sup>48</sup> as well as bring the church to a national audience. In 1951, Dr. Thurman participated in series of national dinners to publicize the project.

... [T]he most impressive event was a dinner sponsored by the New York Committee for Support of the Fellowship Church that raised almost three thousand dollars, with many Black and white notables in attendance, and Broadway star John Raitt providing the entertainment. Articles on the church in *Time* magazine, the *Christian Century*, and the *Atlantic* helped broadcast Thurman's dreams.<sup>49</sup>

In his biography of Dr. Thurman, author Peter Eisenstadt, states that

Fellowship Church would be, over his long professional life, the summit of Howard Thurman's career, the position he was most fond of, most proud of, and he was sure that it would be his most enduring legacy. But all things come to an end, Thurman never abandoned his dream of Fellowship Church or forgot what he called the "inspiringly heartbreaking privilege" of leading the church for a decade, but by the spring of 1953 it was time to move on.<sup>50</sup>

Following Dr. Thurman's departure in 1953, Fellowship Church's Board of Trustees undertook a series of community meetings to consider their next phase. These meetings reflect a congregation exploring its collective vision for a path forward, considering how, and with what focus, the institution should evolve now that both founders had departed. Without the apparatus of a national denomination for support, and lacking the attention formerly garnered through Dr. Thurman's presence and promotional campaigns, the ensuing decades saw a reduction in the size of the congregation and in the reach and influence of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples.

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<sup>44</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 106.

<sup>45</sup> The 1969-1970 City Directory lists the Fellowship Church Child Care Center occupying 2055 Larkin Street.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Dorsey Blake, personal communication with Pilar LaValley, January 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals & Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 107-108.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 237.

<sup>50</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 243.

The church, which has maintained its arrangement of members-at-large, continues to draw its membership from throughout the Bay Area and beyond. It evolved to function more like a “neighborhood church” in some ways, providing assembly spaces to neighborhood group meetings, guest lectures, and theater and musical performances. In the 1980s, members of the church formed the Fellowship Theater Guild, staging productions such as “I’m Not Rappaport,” “LUV,” “Member of the Wedding,” and “An Evening with Martin and Langston,” with Danny Glover appearing as Langston Hughes and Felix Justice as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 2005 and 2006 these types of productions were resumed with Felix Justice returning in “Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train” and local jazz singer Kim Nalley starring as Billie Holiday in the West Coast premiere of “Lady Day in Love.”<sup>51</sup> The building also routinely serves as an election polling place.

The congregation presently consists of a small number of active supporters, many of whom are longtime members. With closure of the building during the COVID-19 pandemic, the church began offering services via online platforms, which have increased awareness and support in a contemporary version of the congregation’s long-standing practice of including members-at-large, or members located outside the Bay Area. Even with renewal of in-person services, these virtual offerings have continued to grow in popularity.

### **Dr. Alfred G. Fisk (1905-1959)**

Alfred Grunsky Fisk was born in California (probably San Francisco) in 1905, the second of three children of Henry and Clotilde Fisk, a minister and social worker, respectively.<sup>52</sup> Fisk studied at Occidental College (Los Angeles) and Union Theological Seminary (New York) before obtaining a doctorate at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland).<sup>53</sup> In May 1930, when he married Eleanor Adams Millard in Glendale, California, Fisk was serving as a pastor at Union Theological Seminary. By the mid-1930s, Fisk was employed as a college professor at SF State College (now University) where he taught philosophy for over 25 years. Fisk served as Chair of the Philosophy Department in the 1940s. Dr. Fisk passed away in San Francisco on April 6, 1959.

In addition to his teaching position at SF State, Fisk served as a Presbyterian minister, was a pacifist – identifying himself as a “conscientious objector” on his World War II Draft Card – and was active in anti-racism movements. He was a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and American Philosophical Society.<sup>54</sup> In 1946, he was Chair of the Inter-racial Commission of the San Francisco Council of Churches, which worked against restrictive covenants for housing (among other issues).<sup>55</sup>

After leaving the position as co-pastor of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, which he had cofounded with Dr. Howard Thurman in 1943, Fisk continued to teach at SF State while also beginning to travel, often as part of various delegations or while accompanying graduate student trips affiliated with SF State. Fisk would also present lectures on international relations, immigration, democracy, or related topics. Fisk was lecturing about immigration in 1947, particularly that from war refugee camps after assisting in making a survey of displaced

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<sup>51</sup> [Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>52</sup> 1910 Federal Census

<sup>53</sup> “SF State’s Dr. Alfred Fisk Dies,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 7, 1959).

<sup>54</sup> “SF State’s Dr. Alfred Fisk Dies,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 7, 1959).

<sup>55</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 3, 1947).

persons camps in Europe.<sup>56</sup> In 1951, Fisk travelled to India where he met with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders; upon his return to San Francisco, he presented a “Report on India” to Bay Area audiences.<sup>57</sup>

### **Persons: Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (National Register Criterion B).**

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion B for its association with Dr. Howard Thurman, prominent theologian and scholar, who was identified in *Life* magazine in 1953 as one of the twelve greatest preachers of the twentieth century, and whose influence as a philosopher, theologian, educator, author, minister, counselor, and civil rights leader continues today. Author of more than twenty books, Thurman travelled extensively, preaching and lecturing at churches and educational institutions across the country, and was “. . .one of the most prominent black educators of modern times” whose contributions to “education of both the white and black community served to promote and enhance the civil rights movement and cultural revolution of the 1960s.”<sup>58</sup> At The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, Thurman was co-founder of the first interracial pastored, intercultural church in the United States, and when he moved to Boston University in 1953 he was the first black dean at a predominantly white university. Interweaving his studies in interdenominational teachings on nonviolence and pacifism along with experiences in India, where he led a delegation of the first African Americans to meet with Mohandas Gandhi, Thurman was one of the principle intellectual influences shaping the modern, nonviolent civil rights movement and was spiritual advisor to many African American religious and political leaders, including James Farmer, Jesse Jackson, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Thurman “represents a black religious intellectual who worked to actualize the concept of unity in virtually every area of his life. . . .”<sup>59</sup> and was described by a close colleague as “. . .Theologian, mystic, visionary, pastor, and concerned citizen-creator of a new, multiracial American reality.”<sup>60</sup>

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is also significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion B for its association with Sue Bailey Thurman, author, editor, lecturer, historian, and community organizer, renowned for her efforts to integrate and progress the lives of Black women, her work to archive and celebrate African American heritage, and for her advocacy of interracial, intercultural, and international understanding in support of universal emancipation. Bailey Thurman was one of the first African American graduates of Oberlin College and Conservatory, and one of the first African Americans to meet with Mohandas Gandhi during a meeting she attended along with her husband, Dr. Howard Thurman. In the late-1920s, she served as national travelling secretary for the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), established the YWCA’s first World Fellowship Committee, and traveled through Europe as part of one of the first faculty-student Tours of Friendship under the

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<sup>56</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 3, 1947).

<sup>57</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*

<sup>58</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Howard Thurman House, Dayton Beach, Florida, National Register #90000100, 1990, Section 8, page 7.

<sup>59</sup> Zachery Williams, “Prophets of Black Progress: Benjamin E. Mays and Howard W. Thurman, Pioneering Black Religious Intellectuals,” *Journal of African American Men* (March 2001, Vol. 5, No. 4), 29. Accessed at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41819409>.

<sup>60</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell: A Life of Howard Thurman* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021).



auspices of the International Student Service. She was an important member of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), founder-editor of the organization's first publication, *AfroAmerican Women's Journal*, established the NCNW's first archive and library, and founded and led a local chapter of the NCNW in San Francisco.<sup>61</sup> This civic organization achieved much for civil rights and women's rights under Bailey Thurman's directorship. In San Francisco and Boston, she was a leader and founder of organizations dedicated to African American history and culture, establishing the Museum of Afro-American History in Boston in 1964,<sup>62</sup> and publishing two books on Black heritage. Bailey Thurman was a "well-known speaker and ecumenical activist"<sup>63</sup> and an important African American figure in her own right, as noted in the *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Draft)*.<sup>64</sup> A staunch supporter and associate in the founding and operation of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, Bailey Thurman was deeply committed to the church's founding principles and helped establish the congregation, presiding over meetings and committees, including chairing the church's Intercultural Committee and co-leading the church's delegation to attend the annual plenary session of UNESCO in Paris in 1949.<sup>65</sup>

### Dr. Howard Thurman (1899-1981)

Howard Washington Thurman was born on November 18, 1899 (or 1900) in Daytona Beach, Florida. Thurman was the middle child of three children. When Thurman was seven, his father passed away and he and his two sisters were raised by his grandmother, a former slave, while their mother worked to support the family. His older sister died in young adulthood. Thurman's younger sister, with whom he remained close throughout their adult lives, traveled with and lived with Thurman's family for extended periods. Thurman married twice and had two daughters. His first wife, Katie Laura Kelley, was an elementary school teacher who had graduated from Spelman Seminary. Thurman and Kelley married in 1925, shortly after his graduation from seminary, and had a daughter in 1927. Katie died of tuberculosis, possibly contracted during her work as a social worker with settlement houses, in 1930. Thurman and Sue Bailey, who had studied music as one of the first African American students enrolled at Oberlin College and was a former music teacher at the Hampton Institute, married in 1932 and had a daughter the following year.

Thurman was born into a society structured by rigid rules of segregation, a society in which a black person could never be sure when and where they might have to face humiliation, if not outright violence.<sup>66</sup> His childhood home in Daytona, Florida was located in the Waycross neighborhood, a "middle-class" residential enclave that was one of three sections of the city where African Americans were allowed to live.<sup>67</sup> The influence of both his grandmother

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<sup>61</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, prepared for San Francisco Planning Department, 135.

<sup>62</sup> Rachel Schlueter, "Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer," Black Women at BU and Boston, May 5, 2018: <https://blackwomenatbuandboston.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/sue-bailey-thurman-community-organizer-archivist-author/>.

<sup>63</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals & Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 102-3.

<sup>64</sup> *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, 125.

<sup>65</sup> Broussard, p. 185. Quoted in *African American Citywide Historic Context Statement (Final Draft: May 2019)*, prepared for San Francisco Planning Department, 125.

<sup>66</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979, 20-21. Quoted in Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals & Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 98-99.

<sup>67</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Howard Thurman House, Dayton Beach, Florida, National Register

and his childhood home were often referenced by Thurman when considering the roots of his religious interests. These include a focused and sustained interest in the Bible – which from a young age he read aloud to his illiterate grandmother – and to his awareness of the “slaves’ deep religious faith,” a knowledge that “profoundly shaped his vision of the transformative potential of African American Christianity.”<sup>68</sup>

An excellent and devoted student, after finishing the seventh grade, the last grade offered for African American children in Daytona, Thurman studied independently with his elementary school principal to be one of the first in the community to pass Florida’s eighth-grade examinations. Thurman attended high school at the Florida Baptist Academy (later known as Florida Normal and Industrial Institute) in Jacksonville, Florida, graduating in 1919. He then won academic and financial scholarships to attend Morehouse College where he majored in economics, was appointed Literary Editor of the Spelman-Morehouse literary journal, *The Athenaeum*, and graduated as class valedictorian in 1923.<sup>69</sup> Thurman then attended seminary at Rochester Theological Seminary, graduating in 1926. He was ordained a Baptist minister in 1925.

Following seminary, Thurman, along with his first wife, Katie Laura Kelley, moved to Oberlin, Ohio where he served as minister of an African American congregation at Mount Zion Baptist Church. Oft described as a powerful and mesmerizing preacher, a skill that had been recognized and nurtured beginning in his undergraduate years, Thurman’s “...preaching at Mount Zion Baptist Church quickly began to attract a steady stream of white visitors, Oberlin professors, students, and a mixed congregation of auditors, as the whites did not become members.”<sup>70</sup>

After several years Thurman left his position at Mount Zion Baptist Church when he received a fellowship from the National Council on Religion in Higher Education to study with Quaker philosopher and mystic Rufus Jones. Thurman spent the summer of 1928 studying at Haverford College with Jones, where he “...read widely on Christian mysticism...”<sup>71</sup> with this period proving formative, much as had been the case for Thurman’s friend and mentor, A.J. Muste, in “helping [Thurman] to connect the inner life of spirituality with the outer life of social reform.”<sup>72</sup> His studies with Jones also provided opportunities to consider spiritual roots of pacifism and nonviolence, which would also prove deeply influential.

Throughout his life, Thurman kept up a dizzying schedule of lectures and guest appearances in numerous pulpits, crisscrossing the country, and traveling the world, to participate in conferences and symposiums. During the 1920s, these lectures, sermons, and symposia made him

...one of the most articulate and visible theological figures in the national student youth movement. As a regular on the YMCA and YWCA lecture circuits during the height of segregation, he was the student movement’s most popular speaker for interracial audiences. He was also a leading voice on the changing

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#90000100, 1990, Section 7, page 1.

<sup>68</sup> [About Howard Thurman » The Howard Thurman Papers Project | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#)

<sup>69</sup> [Howard Thurman Chronology » The Howard Thurman Papers Project | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#)

<sup>70</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 101.

<sup>71</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 102.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*



ministry of the Black Church. It was through Thurman's experiences during this time that his faith in interracialism began to take root.<sup>73</sup>

During this period, Thurman also became a member of the executive committee of the Student Volunteer Movement of American, and board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an organization that he had first joined during his sophomore year at Morehouse.<sup>74</sup> Thurman was the first African American on the FOR board. He would, in the 1940s, become vice chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), by far the highest-ranking black in the organization.<sup>75</sup> In this capacity, he urged his former student, James Farmer, to establish the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and was a member of that organization's board.

In 1929, Thurman accepted a joint position as Director of Religious Life and Professor of Religion at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, Georgia. Thurman left Atlanta in 1932 when he was appointed the first black Dean of Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, and assistant professor in the School of Divinity, at Howard University in Washington, D.C. At Howard University, "Thurman extended his national reputation as a preacher and teacher of extraordinary talent and sensitivity"<sup>76</sup> with a "creative and pioneering sermonic style [that] attracted the attention of a broader religious and academic following, one larger than he had ever known before."<sup>77</sup> Historian Elizabeth Yates notes in her biography on Thurman that these years had

...distinct bearing upon the basic lines along which he was developing and growing. As dean of chapel, he began to develop a pattern for the worship service that became more and more inclusive in emphasis and contact. ... he experimented with working through Fine Arts, using poetry, verse-speaking choirs, the dance, as integral parts of the chapel service. ... [attendees] were given a broad deepening of their religious and cultural heritage.<sup>78</sup>

In the mid-1930s, Thurman was asked to lead a 'Negro delegation' to Ceylon, India, and Burma, sponsored by the Student Christian Movement. Thurman's wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, along with another African American couple, United Methodist pastor Edward Carroll and his wife, Phenola, made up the rest of the delegation. Taking a leave of absence from Howard University, Thurman and the delegation traveled to India in October 1935, where they covered some 15,000 miles, visited more than forty educational centers, and had numerous speaking engagements before university and community audiences, before returning to the United States in the spring of 1936.<sup>79</sup> During this tour, the Thurmans were the first African Americans to meet with Mohandas Gandhi. During a two-hour conversation, Gandhi questioned the Thurmans closely about the "...history and current situation of the racial discrimination dividing white and black Americans,"<sup>80</sup> before asking them to sing two spirituals/hymns. For their part, the Thurman's asked the leader about his precepts on nonviolence and what he believed were the

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<sup>73</sup> [About Howard Thurman » The Howard Thurman Papers Project | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Howard Thurman Chronology » The Howard Thurman Papers Project | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#)

<sup>75</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 152-3.

<sup>76</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 103.

<sup>77</sup> Zachary Williams, 30.

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer*, 110.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer*, 96.

<sup>80</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 105.

limitations of the Christian Church in India. Their conversation with Gandhi, and consideration of questions raised by attendees at various speaking engagements, led Thurman to examine more closely the nature of Christianity and of the Christian Church, noting how his beliefs “distinguished between Christianity, with its history of discrimination and prejudice, and the religion of Jesus, which supported the needs and demands of the disinherited.”<sup>81</sup> The trip also evolved his concepts of pacifism and nonviolence in Christianity, so that in the years following his return from India, Thurman “developed principles and a praxis about nonviolence”<sup>82</sup> and became a “prime shaper of a distinctive, radical African American interpretation of Gandhian nonviolence, placed into a broadly Christian framework, one that Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was old enough, and many others, would inherit.”<sup>83</sup>

With these unique experiences and observations, the Thurmans returned to their life in Washington, D.C. Thurman resumed his work at Howard University, delving further into patterns of worship, community fellowship, social justice, and African American Christianity. He also maintained a determined pace on the lecture circuit where he tirelessly made the rounds of preaching and lecturing, so that “[t]wo decades before [Dr. Martin Luther] King, Jr. burst into political prominence, Thurman was one of the prime deliverers of the message of African American nonviolence.”<sup>84</sup>

In an interview in the late 1970s, Thurman noted about the India trip that “above all the experience...pushed the couple toward a deeper and clearer perception of the interrelatedness of all people,” and that

[w]e saw clearly what we must do somehow when we returned to America. We knew that we must test whether a religious fellowship could be developed in American that was capable of cutting across all racial barriers, with a carry-over into the common life, a fellowship that would alter the behavior patterns of those involved. It became imperative now to find out if experiences of spiritual unity among people could be more compelling than the experiences which divide them.<sup>85</sup>

Such was the depth of the couple’s interest in this idea, that they “...talked about it together, wondered how it would come about, prayed for it, worked toward it,”<sup>86</sup> although for Thurman

[o]ne of the basic problems of the Christian church...was, as he would later write, that from its founding it had been committed to a revolutionary ethic but “deluded itself into thinking its revolutionary ethic can be implemented in less than revolutionary terms.” Thurman’s solution, his revolution, was simple. The church had to become fully interracial, and this process had to start somewhere. A segregated church could not be a force to integrate the society outside its doors. ... But there was no existing congregation in the United States that remotely met Thurman’s requirements... The closest was the Fellowship Church in Philadelphia, sponsored by the Committee on Race Relations of the Society of Friends. ... Thurman

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<sup>81</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 104-5.

<sup>82</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, “Gandhi’s India and Beyond: Black Women’s Religious and Secular Internationalism, 1935-1952,” *The Journal of African American History* (Winter 2019), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 159.

<sup>84</sup> Peter R. Eisenstadt, *Against the Hounds of Hell*, 158.

<sup>85</sup> Lerone Bennett Jr., “Howard Thurman: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Holy Man,” *Ebony* 33, no. 4 (February 1978): 76, 84). Quoted in Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 106.

<sup>86</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer*, 125-26.

would preach at the Fellowship Church frequently in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and he was clearly impressed by what it had achieved. He urged the church to become full-time, ever Sunday, and evidently pledged in that case to become its full-time minister.<sup>87</sup>

As the Thurmans were exploring ways to manifest their spiritual philosophy, Thurman received a letter from Dr. Alfred G. Fisk, inquiring whether he could recommend “a young Negro” – a student or recent graduate – “who would be interested in prospect [of serving as co-pastor to a “neighborhood church”] ... that would cut across racial and cultural lines”<sup>88</sup> in San Francisco. Although Thurman’s initial response to Fisk’s inquiry was to make such a recommendation, he also wrote, in passing, that this was an undertaking that he deeply wished he could undertake. Fisk, rather incredulously, replied that the fledgling church would be thrilled to have Thurman, if the vagaries of personal and professional logistics between Thurman, Howard University, and a revolutionary new church in San Francisco could be worked out.

In 1944, Thurman took a leave of absence from Howard University – this leave would extend over two years before becoming permanent – to move to San Francisco where he joined Dr. Alfred G. Fisk as co-pastor and co-founder of a foundling congregation, The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, the first avowedly, and the most sustained, interracial, interdenominational church in the United States. Through this undertaking, Thurman and his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman exercised their expanding vision for interracial and spiritual relationship-building, diverse faith traditions as integrated community, and the need to find common ground across cultural and international barriers. Thurman consistently preached the notion of unity of all life.<sup>89</sup> The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples is a congregation dedicated to breaking through the walls that separate mankind on any basis of race, color, creed, or national origin. It is interracial, interdenominational, interfaith, and international in its membership.<sup>90</sup> Shortly after his departure from Howard University was made permanent in 1946, Thurman became the primary minister and spiritual leader of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, following the quiet departure of Fisk.

Thurman served as minister with The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples until 1953 when he moved to Boston to become Dean of Marsh Chapel – the first black dean at a predominantly white university - and professor of Spiritual Resources at Boston University. Thurman retired from Boston University in 1965, returning to San Francisco where he founded and directed the Howard Thurman Educational Trust. The Trust, which Thurman directed until his death in 1981, provided scholarships for college students, supported intercultural community and school activities, and disseminated Thurman’s recorded and published works, which include more than 22 books. The Trust also maintained a collection of 800 tapes and cassettes of Thurman’s meditations, addresses and sermons.

Dr. Thurman, author of 22 books, received honorary degrees from more than a score of American colleges and universities, including Morehouse College where a dormitory was also named in his honor. Other memorials

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<sup>87</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 165.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer*, 125-26.

<sup>89</sup> Mark S. Giles, “Howard Thurman: The Making of a Morehouse Man,” *Educational Foundations* (Winter-Spring 2006), 119.

<sup>90</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Howard Thurman House, Dayton Beach, Florida, National Register #90000100, 1990, Section 8, Page 5

include the Howard Thurman Chapel at Howard University, and the Howard Thurman Center at Boston University. There are Howard Thurman Listening Rooms located throughout the United States and in 17 foreign countries.<sup>91</sup>

Dr. Thurman's funeral service was held on April 16, 1981

at the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco, where some thirty-seven years earlier, he had celebrated the founding of his proudest creation, Fellowship Church. . . . Frank Wilson presided at the service; the Rev. Marvin Chandler, executive director of the HTET, read the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm and delivered a eulogy. Two rabbis, Saul White and Alvin Fine, spoke, as did Jesse Jackson, William Jovanovich, Vernon Jordan, and Hugh Gloster, president of Morehouse College, and several others.<sup>92</sup>

### Sue Bailey Thurman (1903-1996)

Sue Elvie Bailey was born on August 26, 1903 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, the youngest child of Reverend Isaac Bailey and Susie Ford Bailey.<sup>93</sup> Her bi-racial – Black and Cherokee – father worked as Arkansas legislator and founded schools for black students, and her mother, after being emancipated from slavery, raised 10 children and was a teacher in southeast Arkansas schools.<sup>94</sup> The Baileys were committed to education, religious instruction, and missionary work, and helped found Dermott Baptist Industrial School (later became part of Morris Booker Memorial College), a private college funded by African American Baptists, in Dermott, Arkansas.<sup>95</sup>

Sue Bailey Thurman attended high school, also referred to as the college preparatory program, at Spelman Seminary, graduating in 1920. She then enrolled at Spelman College where she studied for two years before transferring to Oberlin College. She graduated from Oberlin College and Conservatory as the school's first Black recipient of a dual-degree in Liberal Arts and Music in 1926.<sup>96</sup> After graduating, Bailey Thurman taught music at Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), but left the institution after her endorsement of a student protest against a segregationist state law made her unpopular with the predominantly White administration.<sup>97</sup> Her commitment to the educational and spiritual needs of Black students lead to a position with the Young Women's

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<sup>91</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Howard Thurman House, Daytona Beach, Florida, National Register #90000100, 1990, Section 8, page 5-6.

<sup>92</sup> Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt. *Visions of a Better World*, 391.

<sup>93</sup> "Sue Bailey Thurman" biographical entry, Encyclopedia of Arkansas, at [Thurman, Sue Bailey - Encyclopedia of Arkansas](#); Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 85.

<sup>94</sup> Rachel Schlueter, "Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer," Black Women at BU and Boston, May 5, 2018: <https://blackwomenatbuandboston.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/sue-bailey-thurman-community-organizer-archivist-author/>.

<sup>95</sup> The original school was one of only a handful of high schools for Black students in Arkansas. It went through various evolutions: Dermott Baptist Industrial School, then Chicot County Training School (circa 1920-1975), then Morris Booker High School, then Morris Booker Memorial College (1975-present). No buildings associated with the original school, founded by the Baileys, are extant; a building constructed in 1929 for the Chicot County Training School with funding from the Rosenwald fund was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004. This building burned and collapsed after being abandoned and was de-listed from the National Register in 2022.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, "Gandhi's India and Beyond: Black Women's Religious and Secular Internationalism, 1935-1952," *The Journal of African American History* (Winter 2019), 69.

Christian Association (YWCA) National Board, where she served as traveling secretary of the organization's collegiate division from about 1928 to 1932.

With the YWCA, Bailey Thurman established the organization's first World Fellowship Committee and lectured throughout Europe as "...part of one of the first faculty-student Tours of Friendship to eight student centers in Europe under the auspices of the International Student Service."<sup>98</sup> As a national traveling secretary of the YWCA, she "worked with communities throughout the United States, with occasional staff visits to Canada,"<sup>99</sup> while organizing and attending YWCA-YMCA conferences, including one for the Georgia YMCA-YWCA at Atlanta University and annual YMCA-YWCA Colored Students Conferences at Kings Mountain, North Carolina. Following the closing ceremony of the latter conference in June, 1932, Sue Bailey married Dr. Howard Thurman. The couple had known each other previously, sharing a "...circle of friends during her final year in the college preparatory department at Spellman College while [Howard Thurman] was a student at Morehouse [College],"<sup>100</sup> and were reacquainted through attendance at YMCA-YWCA events as well as their shared network of friends, colleagues, and former classmates. After the wedding, Bailey Thurman, who had been living in New York, moved to Washington D.C., joining Dr. Thurman and his daughter from his first marriage, who had recently relocated from Atlanta. The Thurman's had a daughter the following year.

In addition to her travel within the United States and Canada for the YWCA, Bailey Thurman made her first of three trips to Cuba in 1930.

After leaving Cuba, Thurman headed to Mexico for her honeymoon in 1931 and later that year returned to take part in a seminar of the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America. In 1935, Thurman told *Crisis* readers that she again found herself on "a quiet street in Mexico City..." to conduct a general study of race relations.<sup>101</sup>

The 1935 trip to Mexico would be in support of and preparation for the Thurman's upcoming tour of India. She would return to Cuba in 1940 and XXXX through her affiliation with the National Council of Negro Women. Travel, always with an abiding interest in intercultural and interracial exchange and understanding, would be a lifelong activity, such that she would circle the globe twice.

In the mid-1930s, through their YWCA-YMCAs networks, the Thurman's "...embarked on a "pilgrimage of friendship" in 1935 with the World Student Christian Federation to share the life of racial minorities in America."<sup>102</sup> The delegation, which travelled through Ceylon, India, and Burma, was led by Dr. Howard Thurman, along with his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, and another African American couple, United Methodist pastor Edward Carroll and his wife, Phenola, made up the rest of the delegation. In his autobiography, *With Head and Heart*, Dr. Thurman notes that

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<sup>98</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 111.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 84.

<sup>101</sup> "Passport Held up a Month-She's in Mexico Now," *Afro American* (Baltimore, Maryland), March 9, 1935; and Hebert C. Herring to Sue Bailey Thurman, February 6, 1932," Box 2, Folder: H: 1932-1969, Sue Bailey Thurman Papers in the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University. Hereafter referred to as the Bailey Thurman Papers, HGARC. Quoted in Wells, 256.

<sup>102</sup> Rachel Schlueter, "Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer," *Black Women at BU and Boston*, May 5, 2018: [Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer – Black Women at BU and Boston \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.blackwomenatbuandboston.com/sue-bailey-thurman-archivist-author-community-organizer/)

[a]nticipating the India assignment, [Bailey Thurman] had spent several months in Mexico, studying the history and culture of the people. It was decided that, as a social historian in the field of Afro-American life and history, she would speak at college assemblies and meet with women's groups that at that time were spreading a vital influence in the three countries to be covered on the tour.<sup>103</sup>

Bailey Thurman's experiences during and following this tour are described in the following excerpt from Brandy Thomas Wells PhD. dissertation, "*She Pieced and Stitched and Quilted, Never Wavering nor Doubting*": *A Historical Tapestry of African American Women's Internationalism, 1890s-1960s*:<sup>104</sup>

From October 1935 to April 1936, Thurman served as an important part of the four-member delegation of African Americans on the Pilgrimage of Friendship to the East, ... whose purposes were to unite Christian students of different nationalities and races in a dialogue about conditions within their respective nations and their activism to change them.<sup>105</sup> After this trip, Howard Thurman would increasingly become known as an influential theologian and educator, but ... Sue Bailey Thurman would soon become important in her own right. In going abroad to India, she desired to be known not only as Howard's wife, but also as an individual with independent thinking.<sup>106</sup> Thus, when the two became the first African Americans to meet Mohandas Gandhi, Sue Bailey Thurman richly contributed to their three-hour conversation about African American affairs and the usefulness of nonviolent resistance to effect social change in the United States.

The Pilgrimage of Friendship venture was rounded out with Sue Bailey Thurman's meeting Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian writer who became internationally famous for not only for his literary productions, but also for his protest of British policies in India. [Bailey] Thurman happily enrolled in classes at Tagore's university as she continued her lectures before some 45 Indian audiences.<sup>107</sup> In these talks, Thurman provided the female perspective through discussions of the plight and progress of African Americans and women. She also sought to learn the same from Indian women, which led to rich exchanges, which as Gerald Horne suggested, far outlived this remarkable venture.<sup>108</sup> Three years after her return to the US,

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<sup>103</sup> Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 111.

<sup>104</sup> Brandy Thomas Wells, "*She Pieced and Stitched and Quilted, Never Wavering nor Doubting*": *A Historical Tapestry of African American Women's Internationalism, 1890s-1960s* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, Graduate Program in History, Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2015), 256-258.

<sup>105</sup> "Student Delegation to India Next October," *The Crisis* (July 1935): 219; and "The Student Christian Movement of India Burma & Ceylon: The Negro Mission of Friendship from America, Visit to Trivandrum, November 19-21, 1935," Box 136, Folder "Far East Delegation," the Howard Thurman Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

<sup>106</sup> Autobiographical S k e t c h , Box 1, Folder: Autobiographical Sketches of the Sue Bailey Thurman Collection, i n t h e Bailey Thurman Papers, HGARC; and Marion Cuthbert to Mrs. Edward Carroll, August 1, 1935, Box 2, Folder: C, 1930-1969, Bailey-Thurman Papers, Howard Thurman Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. Quoted in Wells, 256-258.

<sup>107</sup> Other sources indicate that Bailey Thurman received nearly 70 invitations to speak, primarily to female audiences, during this tour. See Dennis C. Dickerson, 70.

<sup>108</sup> Trudi Smith, *Sue Bailey Thurman: Building Bridges to Common Ground* (Boston: Trustees of Boston University, 1995), p. 10-11, Box 5, Folder 26, Bailey Thurman Families Papers, 1882-1995, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; and Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 99. Quoted in Wells, 256-258.



Thurman could still be found lecturing on her travels and on the need for relationships between African Americans and Indians. She was also busy organizing an education fellowship to India that memorialized the work of her colleague and fellow budding internationalist, Juliette Derricotte, who died tragically in November of 1931 after racist treatment prevented her from receiving proper medical attention after a car accident in Dalton, Georgia.<sup>109</sup>

Even as they returned to their roles in Washington D.C., the Thurmans both remained deeply introspective about their experiences in India, emerging with reconceptualized commitments to Christianity, pacificism, equality, and international understanding. Both would also become more widely known to the American public following this tour, although it was probably Bailey Thurman who most expanded her public persona, attracting the attention of the African American public after her travels to India, Burma and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and in her involvement with the National Council of Negro Women. Bailey Thurman “returned from India convinced that African American women, while historic heroines in the black freedom struggle, should now move with greater vigor in the international sphere” the these efforts being more “overtly political and targeted against racial and cultural hegemony.”<sup>110</sup> To this end, she said, “it is a sincere belief, held by many in India, that furthering the intercourse of the ancient racial culture of Negroes and Indians will yield increasing benefits through their mutual respect and esteem.”<sup>111</sup> Along with other black women internationalists in the 1930s and 1940s, Bailey Thurman sought to create a “discourse of solidarity with Indian women that expanded beyond their traditional activities of missionary activity”<sup>112</sup> to make way for “...initiatives to sustain cross-cultural and religious interactions and to spearhead cooperative projects to end the racism and colonialism that afflicted both African American and Indian women.”<sup>113</sup>

To support further exchange, as well as her belief that it was “crucial that black women establish ourselves in all parts of the world as people to be admired,”<sup>114</sup> Bailey Thurman spent several years “founding and fundraising for a scholarship fund to send Black female students to India...,”<sup>115</sup> giving over thirty lectures on Indian cultural to raise money for this effort. In 1938, the Julia Derricotte Memorial Foundation, founded by Bailey Thurman, sent its first Black female to India, on what was one of the first study abroad programs for African Americans.<sup>116</sup>

Around this same time, Bailey Thurman “became involved in Mrs. Bethune’s visionary crusade to uplift black women and young people,”<sup>117</sup> the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune, the NCNW – which is extant – is a charitable organization whose mission is to advance the opportunities

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<sup>109</sup> “Autobiographical S k e t c h ,” page 2, Box 1, Folder: Autobiographical Sketches of the Sue Bailey Thurman Collection, Bailey Thurman Papers, HGARC; and Winifred Wgal and W.E.B. Du Bois, “Juliette Derricotte, Her Character and Her Martyrdom,” *The Crisis* (March 1932): 85. Bailey Thurman’s lecture announcements include the following: “Dr. and Mrs. Thurman in Howard Concert,” *The Afro-American* (Baltimore, Maryland), April 10, 1937; “Zion Baptist Church Plans Charity Benefit,” *Reading Eagle*, (Reading, Pennsylvania) November 8, 1937; and “HU Stylus to Open Fall Competition,” *Afro-American* (Baltimore, Maryland), November 14, 1937; and “Lectures on India,” *Chicago Defender*, June 18, 1938. Quoted in Wells, 256-258.

<sup>110</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, 71.

<sup>111</sup> ???

<sup>112</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, 59.

<sup>113</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, 68.

<sup>114</sup> Dennis C. Dickerson, 71.

<sup>115</sup> Amanda Brown, *The Fellowship Church*, 100-101.

<sup>116</sup> Wells, 268.

<sup>117</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 23.

and the quality of life for African American women, their families, and communities. Established shortly after the National Association for Colored Women, the NCNW, which “sought to propel Black women into the political affairs of the nation and beyond as a means of ensuring systemic changes. . . .” “...became one of the most enduring and successful organizations created by African Americans” in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>118</sup>

Sharing reflections on her Indian experiences in a letter to NCNW founder, Mary McLeod Bethune, in 1940, Bailey Thurman wrote that she had become “particularly interested in the women’s freedom movements, and the movement to bring the races of the world together with some permanent degree and understanding.”<sup>119</sup> Bethune, who had known and worked with both Thurmans since the 1920s, surely heard in these reflections a shared interest and vision with the mission of NCNW. Doctoral candidate Brandi Taylor Wells notes in her dissertation that

[a]s an organizer and institution builder, Bethune recognized the importance of welcoming and attracting prestigious, hardworking, and like-minded activists into the Council. One group that reflected these characteristics...were the traveling secretaries of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). When taking leadership of the NCNW, Dorothy Height and Sue Bailey Thurman brought with them not only their organizing skills, but also an international perspective that they developed through conditions and populations they met during their YWCA travels.<sup>120</sup>

Upon joining the NCNW, Bailey Thurman founded the *AfraAmerican Women’s Journal*, the organization’s official publication, serving as its first editor from 1940 to 1944. As editor and contributor to the *AfraAmerican*, Bailey Thurman “...sought to connect African American women with the world’s women and People of Color”<sup>121</sup> with the journal frequently translated into French and Spanish to increase its reach.<sup>122</sup> These interests and goals for the journal are evidenced in several interactions Bailey Thurman initiated in the early 1940s.

In October 1940, the NCNW held a conference in Washington D.C. under the theme “Women are Facing New Frontiers,” where first lady Eleanor Roosevelt spoke on “Women in Club World and Organizations.” After Roosevelt’s talk, Sue Bailey Thurman ceremoniously presented to the First Lady the first two issues of the *AfraAmerican Journal*, the NCNW’s organ developed earlier that year. . . . The second of these issues concerned the Council’s first study abroad trip to Cuba completed just a few months earlier.

During the war, the NCNW utilized this [Cuba] venture to gain entry into predominately White national and international women’s organizations and governmental meetings alike. For instance, in March of 1941, Sue Bailey Thurman petitioned Mary N. Winslow, chairman of the Inter-American Commission of Women, for inclusion in an upcoming April program. She provided to Winslow copies of the *AfraAmerican*

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<sup>118</sup> Wells, 239.

<sup>119</sup> Rachel Schlueter, “Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer,” *Black Women at BU and Boston*, May 5, 2018: <https://blackwomenatbuandboston.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/sue-bailey-thurman-community-organizer-archivist-author/>.

<sup>120</sup> Wells, 256.

<sup>121</sup> Wells, 273.

<sup>122</sup> “From the Editor,” *The AfroAmerican Woman’s Journal* (Spring 1940): p. 16. Trudi Smith, *Sue Bailey Thurman: Building Bridges to Common Ground* (Boston: Trustees of Boston University, 1995), p. 12, Box 5, Folder 26, Bailey Thurman Families Papers, 1882-1995, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; and “Editors of the Afro American Woman’s Journal Names,” *The Chicago Defender*, May 29, 1943. Quoted in Wells, 273.



in order to show that as an organization, the NCNW had done “as much as most of theirs, for [it] [had taken] the time and money to make the visit Cuba for study.”<sup>123</sup>

In the mid- and late-1940s, even as Bailey Thurman moved her family across the country from Washington D.C. to San Francisco and was deeply involved, alongside her husband, with establishing The Church of the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, she continued to contribute to the *AfraAmerican*, penning articles containing her reflections on international conferences, including meetings of the fledgling United Nations. Bailey Thurman also founded and served as chair of a National Council of Negro Women chapter in San Francisco, which created new protest and civil rights organizations – like the National Urban League that established a San Francisco chapter at around the same time – on the West Coast.<sup>124</sup>

Bailey Thurman was elected chair of the NCNW’s Archives Committee in 1944 – the committee was originally established in 1941 – and oversaw a successful series of programs called “Negro Women in History” the following year.

In January 1946, Thurman’s mother, Susie Ford Bailey, donated \$1,000 to the NCNW for the purpose of establishing a “National Negro Women’s Museum.” Bailey’s donation enabled the NCNW to begin their National Archives Project, which aimed to establish the aforementioned museum, as well as to collect archival material and publish information related to those objects.<sup>125</sup>

Although the influence of this committee waned in the late 1940s, Thurman continued to consult with NCNW on how the organization should proceed with their archival work and remained as chairwomen of the newly named Historical Library and Museum department.<sup>126</sup> The early work of this committee laid the groundwork for the Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial Museum and the National Archives for Black Women’s History, established in 1979. Bailey Thurman also continued to assist with fundraising and archival efforts for the NCNW, compiling and editing a cookbook celebrating black heritage, *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*, that was published in 1958.

Although she retained an affiliation with the NCNW, Bailey Thurman’s role in the D.C.-based office of the organization lessened in the late 1940s as her focus shifted to San Francisco. This shift in focus is noted in Bailey Thurman being the only former member of the NCNW’s 1945 delegation to the United Nations not considered as a successor to Mary McLead Bethune in 1947 due to Bailey Thurman being too “busy in her husband’s racially-integrated, intercultural church in San Francisco.”<sup>127</sup>

Simultaneous with her involvement in the NCNW, Bailey Thurman was also, along with her husband, still processing and contemplating their earlier trip to India. Dr. Howard Thurman noted that the trip had “...pushed the couple toward a deeper and clearer perception of the interrelatedness of all people,”<sup>128</sup> and that they were

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<sup>123</sup> Wells, 273-4.

<sup>124</sup> Amanda Brown, *The Fellowship Church: Howard Thurman and the Twentieth Century Religious Left* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 128.

<sup>125</sup> Sydney Coleman, “Early Preservation Efforts of the NCNW,” prepared for National Park Service pamphlet for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House Historic Site, accessed at: [Early Preservation Efforts of the NCNW - Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Wells, 317-8.

<sup>128</sup> Lerone Bennett Jr., “Howard Thurman: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Holy Man,” *Ebony* 33, no. 4 (February 1978): 76, 84). Quoted in Albert J.

motivated to test whether an interracial religious fellowship could be developed in the United States. Dr. Thurman noted further that such was the depth of the couple's interest in this idea, that they "...talked about it together, wondered how it would come about, prayed for it, worked toward it..."<sup>129</sup> As in their joint decision to undertake the India tour, the couple was unified in their decision to move to San Francisco in 1944 to "put African American religion into discourse with interfaith principles that affirmed black freedom objectives."<sup>130</sup> Bailey Thurman was committed to work with her husband and Dr. Alfred G. Fisk to establish The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. In the letters exchanged between Drs. Fisk and Thurman in 1943-1944, discussing this possibility and the logistics of such an undertaking, Dr. Thurman writes several times about Bailey Thurman's thoughts on the religious and social meanings of the undertaking as well as her practical considerations regarding the Thurman family's move across the country. Through their efforts to establish and develop The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, both Bailey Thurman, and her husband, were seeking to expand their visions for interracial and spiritual relationship-building, for creating diverse faith traditions as integrated community, and exploring their beliefs of the need to find common ground across cultural and international barriers.

At The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, Bailey Thurman chaired the Intercultural Committee, which oversaw the Intercultural Workshop. This committee was responsible for intercultural workshops and exchanges and children's programs and summer camps. Initially the committee hosted a series of periodic international public dinners with each dinner being intergroup or intercultural in character.<sup>131</sup> The committee also conducted a series of forum discussions, lectures, recitals, and art exhibits designed to educate and expose congregation members (and the public) to the racial and cultural groups represented in the church and the within the community.<sup>132</sup> It was also through the Intercultural Workshop (as well as her archival and editorial experience with NCNW) that Bailey Thurman began compiling "factual history concerning black people"<sup>133</sup> that coalesced into a series of articles on "Pioneers of Negro Origin in California" published weekly in a San Francisco paper prior to publication in book form as *Pioneers of Negro Origin in California* (1949).

One of the most public and dramatic activities of the Intercultural Committee was the delegation from The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples sent to participate (unofficially) in the annual plenary session of UNESCO in Paris.<sup>134</sup> On September 14, 1949, Bailey Thurman, who was chair of the church's Intercultural Committee, set sail from New York along with twelve church representatives, for the Fourth General Conference of UNESCO.<sup>135</sup> The group financed the trip themselves and also included the Fellowship Church Quintet, which represented the church in a series of concerts in Europe. Upon her return to the United States, Bailey Thurman reported her findings to the National Council of Negro Women through the *AfraAmerican*, partly attributing her involvement in the trip to that organization.<sup>136</sup>

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Raboteau, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals & Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 106.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer*, 125-26.

<sup>130</sup> Dickerson, 68.

<sup>131</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 64.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>133</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 158.

<sup>134</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 66.

<sup>135</sup> Wells, 319.

<sup>136</sup> Wells, 319.

When the couple left San Francisco and settled into academia at Boston University, where they lived from 1953 to 1965, Bailey Thurman "...established herself as an organizer, historian, and archivist of Black history" as well as continuing to support international solidarity by "forming the "Faculty Wives Hostess Committee for Service to International Students."<sup>137</sup> In Boston, Bailey Thurman was a member of several organizations, including Boston YWCA Board, Harriet Tubman Community House, Boston University Women's Council, South End Music Center in Boston, International Student Center in Cambridge, and established the World Refugee Arts and Crafts Program of the Women's Committee of Marsh Chapel.<sup>138</sup> She also expanded her interest and commitment to Black history, establishing the Museum of Afro-American History in 1964.

Following her husband's retirement from Boston University in 1965, the couple returned to San Francisco, where they founded the Howard Thurman Educational Trust, which Bailey Thurman co-directed with Dr. Thurman until his death in 1981. The Trust provided scholarships for college students, supported intercultural community and school activities, and maintained and disseminated a collection of 800 tapes and cassettes of Dr. Thurman's meditations, addresses and sermons. Following Dr. Thurman's death, Bailey Thurman oversaw the establishment of the Howard Thurman Center at Boston University and situating both Dr. Thurman's and her own personal papers at the university's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center.<sup>139</sup> In 1984, Bailey Thurman sent most of the couple's papers to Boston University, which have become known as The Howard Thurman & Sue Bailey Thurman collections.<sup>140</sup> Bailey Thurman also worked closely with Dr. Walter Earl Fluker, who founded The Howard Thurman Papers Project at Boston University School of Theology in 1992 to preserve and promote Thurman's vast documentary record, spanning 63 years and consisting of approximately 58,000 items of correspondence, sermons, and unpublished writings, and speeches.<sup>141</sup>

Sue Bailey Thurman's work was celebrated with many awards, including honorary doctorates of letters from Boston University and from Livingstone College in North Carolina.<sup>142</sup> Bailey Thurman, a "well-known speaker and ecumenical activist"<sup>143</sup> and staunch supporter and associate in the founding and operation of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, passed away in San Francisco in 1996.

## Property Description and History

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (2041 Larkin Street) (also known as Fellowship Church) is located on the west side of Larkin Street between Vallejo Street and Broadway (Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0572; Lot 003), in the Russian Hill neighborhood. The surrounding block is characterized by two- to three-story, multi-family

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<sup>137</sup> Rachel Schlueter, "Sue Bailey Thurman: archivist, author, community organizer," Black Women at BU and Boston, May 5, 2018: <https://blackwomenatbuandboston.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/sue-bailey-thurman-community-organizer-archivist-author/>

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Silvia P. Glick, "The Long and Winding Road: An Interview with Walter Earl Fluker," *Scholarly Editing*, Volume 39. Accessed at: [The Long and Winding Road | Volume 39 | Scholarly Editing](#)

<sup>141</sup> The Howard Thurman Papers Project website, accessed at: [The Howard Thurman Papers Project | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#). The Project has published multi-volume documentary record of Thurman's career in *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman*.

<sup>142</sup> [Thurman, Sue Bailey - Encyclopedia of Arkansas](#)

<sup>143</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets*, 102-3.

residential buildings constructed in the early 1900s, following the neighborhood's devastation in the 1906 Earthquake and Fires.

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples building at 2041 Larkin Street, which occupies most of the underlying 50-foot by 80-foot parcel, is a monumental two-stories and rectangular in plan with a bell tower at southeast corner. The side elevations are pulled away from the property lines to create narrow lightwells to expose tall arched window openings that extend along the first and second levels on the side elevations. It is a wood-frame building clad in smooth stucco (front façade) and horizontal wood drop-lap siding (side elevations) with a hipped roof behind a parapet.

The imposing façade is mostly unadorned except for several bas relief panels, an arched multi-lite bow window centered in the upper level, and three recessed entrance openings. A tall, stepped, stucco-clad, bell tower rises from the south end of the façade.

Each ground floor opening features a pair of recessed wood doors under a pointed arched wood transom with translucent glazing. The entrance openings are flanked by stucco pilasters. On the side elevations, the upper floor, where sanctuary is located, is fenestrated by arched, double-hung, wood sash windows with leaded opalescent/stained-glass glazing. Other windows on side elevations are arched, single-lite over single-lite, double-hung, wood sash.

The entry vestibule is a tall room with walls of textured stucco that mimics travertine. At the west wall of the vestibule are pair of swinging doors that open into a large room, known as Thurman Hall (formerly Fellowship Hall), which occupies much of the ground floor of the building. At side walls of vestibule are stairs that rise to a shared intermediate landing before turning to extend up to the second floor. Stairs have wood treads and risers covered in carpet with wood handrails and turned newels. The intermediate and second floor landings are one double-height space with textured stucco walls capped by a picture rail of molded plaster; above this point the smooth plaster walls curve and arch over the space. Above the plaster molding, at east and west walls, are window openings. At east wall – the building's front façade – is a multi-light, fixed, bowed window; at opposite (west) wall, is a three-part window of stained-glass panels, which are visible from interior of the sanctuary. Below this section of wall, is the second-floor landing, separated from the sanctuary by angled walls clad with wood and stained-glass panels. A pair of stained-glass and wood paneled, swinging doors, aligned with head of stairs, open into the center aisle of the sanctuary while similar individual swinging doors open into the side aisles.

Primary access to sanctuary is via stairs at the front of the building from the arched opening at east entrance on façade. The sanctuary is a long open room with carpeted and painted wood floor, wood pews, and a flat ceiling highlighted with painted wood beams with decorative brackets at juncture of walls and ceiling. Walls are plaster above wood wainscot with wood framed window openings. Walls are plaster above wood wainscot with chair rail. The large, symmetrically arranged window openings are wood-framed. At north end of sanctuary (opposite the stair landing) is a raised and recessed platform bounded by a tall solid railing clad in wood panels. Wood posts delineate each section of the railing and highlight the central section. Extending eastward into the sanctuary, in front of the central section of this solid railing, is a raised, carpeted platform. Behind this, the large organ with wood pipes is centered along the west (rear) wall of the sanctuary. On either side of the organ are risers with simple wood benches, typically seating for a choir. Emergency exits with metal doors, opening into the passages along north and south sides of building, are located at either end of this raised, platform.

The church sanctuary occupies most of upper level. A small office is located at the northeast corner of the upper level. Access to the bell tower is located within a small office at the southeast corner of the upper level. A rope pull to activate bell(s) in the bell tower is also located within this utilitarian room.

The lower level of the building is primarily a large assembly space broken up with two, widely spaced rows of painted columns. The space has plaster ceilings and walls above painted wood wainscot. Large, arched, wood sash, wood-framed windows with wood shutters. A small stage projects into the space from west end of the room. Small restrooms are located at either corner of the west end of the building. At northeast and southeast corners of the lower level are an industrial-style kitchen and several small offices, respectively. The main building entrance vestibule, which contains the stairs to the upper level and access points to the ground floor assembly space as well as to the offices, occupies the central portion of the east end of the building's ground floor.

The rear elevation, which is visible in a narrow space that abuts the neighboring property, is utilitarian with unpainted wood sheathing and several double-hung, wood sash windows. The roof overhang extends into the narrow space between the buildings.

### Building History

The building at 2041 Larkin Street, which has been owned and occupied by The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples since 1949, was previously the home of St. John's German Evangelical Church (also known as St. Johannes German Evangelical Church). St. John's occupied the building from 1907 to 1949.

St. John's German Evangelical Church twice dedicated buildings at 2041 Larkin Street. The first dedication occurred in March 1906, when the congregation celebrated the rehabilitation of a circa 1860s building that St. John's had purchased and moved to Larkin Street about a year earlier. According to a newspaper article outlining the first dedication, the rehabilitated building had been moved by St. John's from Franklin and Vallejo streets, where it was known for sixteen years as the Franklin-Street Presbyterian Church, after originally being constructed on Larkin Street, between Broadway and Pacific streets, where it was known as the Larkin-Street Presbyterian Church.<sup>144</sup> Less than a month after this celebration, St. John's newly refurbished building, along with thousands of buildings across large swathes of the city, was destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fires, which struck on the morning of April 18. To replace their building, St. John's contracted with builder/contractor Hugh E. Pynn in early October 1906 for construction of a two-story, wood-frame, building at cost of \$9850.<sup>145</sup> Consecration of the site occurred with laying of the cornerstone for the new church in November 1906.<sup>146</sup> The second dedication ceremony took place in May 1907 when St. John's held its first service in their newly constructed building - the existing building at 2041 Larkin Street.

Prior to 1906, when St. John's moved a building onto the site, it seems likely that the subject property at 2041 Larkin Street was undeveloped. The first published Sanborn Fire Insurance map (Sanborn map) for the surrounding blocks is from 1899, and at that time, the west side of Larkin Street, between Broadway and Vallejo

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<sup>144</sup> "Evangelists Now in Historic Building," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 19, 1906).

<sup>145</sup> Real Estate Notices, *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 10, 1906 and October 13, 1906).

<sup>146</sup> "St. John's Church is Consecrated," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 12, 1906). The cornerstone that is held within the Fellowship Church archive, which reads "St. John's German Church 1906," may be from either the pre- or post-1906 dedications of the building.

Street, was undeveloped and had not been subdivided into multiple building lots. Although the block containing the subject property was undeveloped in 1899, the Sanborn map from that year does show development on surrounding blocks, so some of the subject block may have been developed in the years between 1899, when this map was published, and 1906 when any buildings in this part of the city were destroyed.

The 1909 Block Book, which lists St. John's German Evangelical Church as owner of 2041 Larkin Street, shows the block subdivided with various owners of the multiple lots. The 1913 Sanborn map shows the footprint of the relatively new church building, listing the building's use as "St. John's German Evang'l Church." This same map also shows all the surrounding parcels developed with two- or three-story buildings used as residential flats. The same building footprints and uses are outlined in the 1950 Sanborn map of the block with the only change at 2041 Larkin Street that of its occupant, which is identified as "Fellowship Church."

A photograph of the building, published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1949, at the time that The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples purchased the property, depicts the façade and its surroundings much as it appears today. Fellowship Church records and the city's Building Permit archive document few alterations to the building since 1949. Documented work to the building includes underpinning building foundation (1982), dry-rot repair, partial seismic retrofit to south wall of existing bell tower, and new ramp and exit door at front of building (2003-4; final inspection and approval of this work issued in 2012), and re-roofing (2013). In 1953 and 1957, Carl Huneke, owner and operator of San Francisco's Century Stained Glass Studio, rebuilt one of the leaded opalescent glass or stained glass windows on south elevation of sanctuary.<sup>147</sup> Other work, largely cosmetic in nature, such as repainting, replacing carpets, and remodeling kitchen, has also been undertaken at unknown dates.

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<sup>147</sup> Huneke Stained Glass website, at: <https://www.hunekestainedglass.com/fellowship-of-all-peoples>

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*San Francisco Chronicle*

San Francisco City Directories

San Francisco Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder

U. S. Federal Census.

**Photos**



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, front (east) façade, view west, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, front (east) façade, view north, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department





The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department

Top left: Upper portion of front façade and bell tower.

Bottom right: Detail of entrance at front façade.





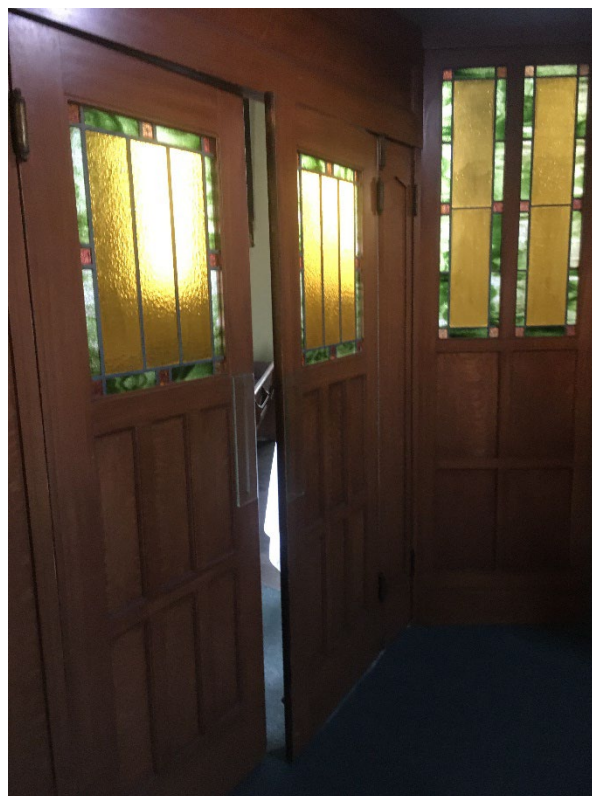
The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, sanctuary, view west, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department







The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, sanctuary, view east, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, doors and wall at 2<sup>nd</sup> floor landing/narthex, view north, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department





The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, ground floor, Thurman Hall, view east, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, ground floor, Thurman Hall, view west, 2022  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department

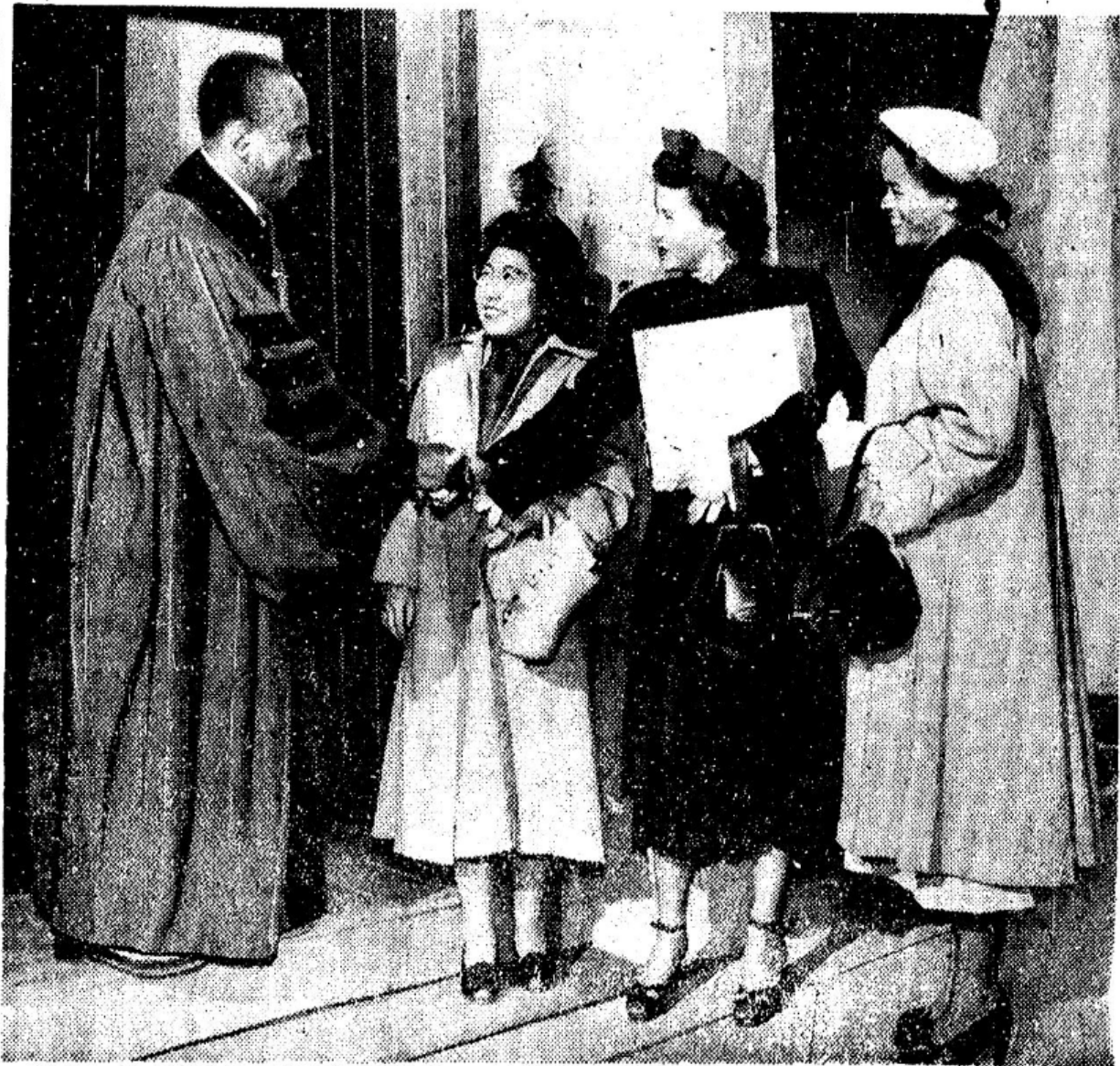


The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, 1949  
Source: San Francisco Public Library, Historical Photograph Collection



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 2041 Larkin Street, 1953  
Source: San Francisco Public Library, Historical Photograph Collection





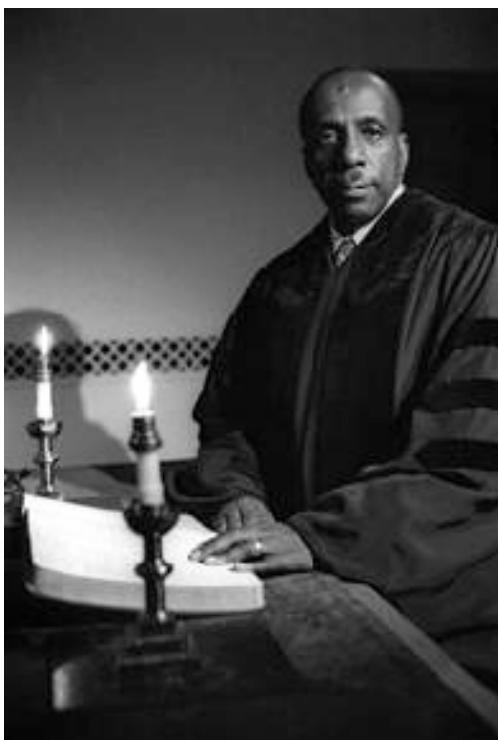
**"THE GROWING EDGE"** — Fellowship Church yesterday dedicated its new quarters at 2041 Larkin street. Dr. Howard Thurman (left), copastor, welcomed members to the morning services. Being

greeted (above) are Eiko Yoshihashi, Lavetta P. Sutphin and Ruth Acty. The church is described as "a creative venture in interracial, intercultural and interdenominational communion."

The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, 1949  
Source: *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 31, 1949)



Dr. Howard Thurman, 1953  
Source: *Life Magazine* (April 6, 1953)



Dr. Howard Thurman, no date.  
Source: Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University





Ministers officiating at “inaugural” ceremony of Fellowship Church, October 8, 1944. Standing, left to right: Dr. Buell G. Gallagher, Co-pastor South Berkeley Community Church; Rabbi Elliot M. Burstein, Chair, Northern California Board of Rabbis and Cantors; R. John C. Leffler, President, San Francisco Council of Churches. Seated: Co-pastors Dr. Howard Thurman and Dr. Alfred G. Fisk.

Source: The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples



The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, Board of Trustees meeting, 1949

Source: The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples



Dr. Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman flanked by Dr. Harold Case, president of Boston University, and Mrs. Case, circa 1953

Source: Boston University





Sue Bailey Thurman, 1927  
Source: Oberlin College Yearbook,  
[U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-2016 - AncestryLibrary.com](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com)



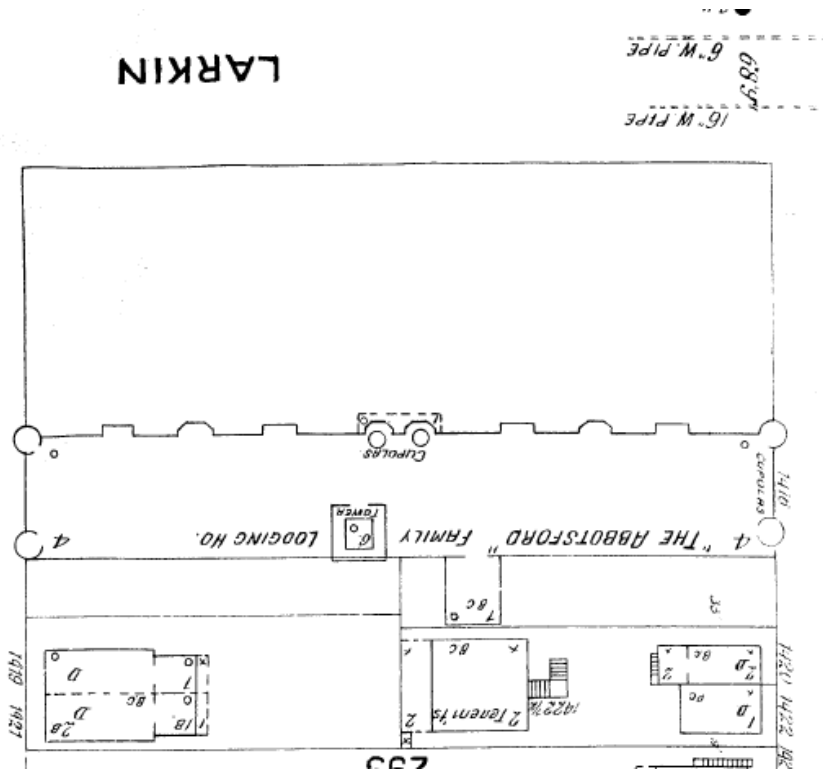
Sue Bailey Thurman, no date.  
Source: Sue Bailey Thurman Papers, Howard Gotlieb Archival  
Research Center, Boston University



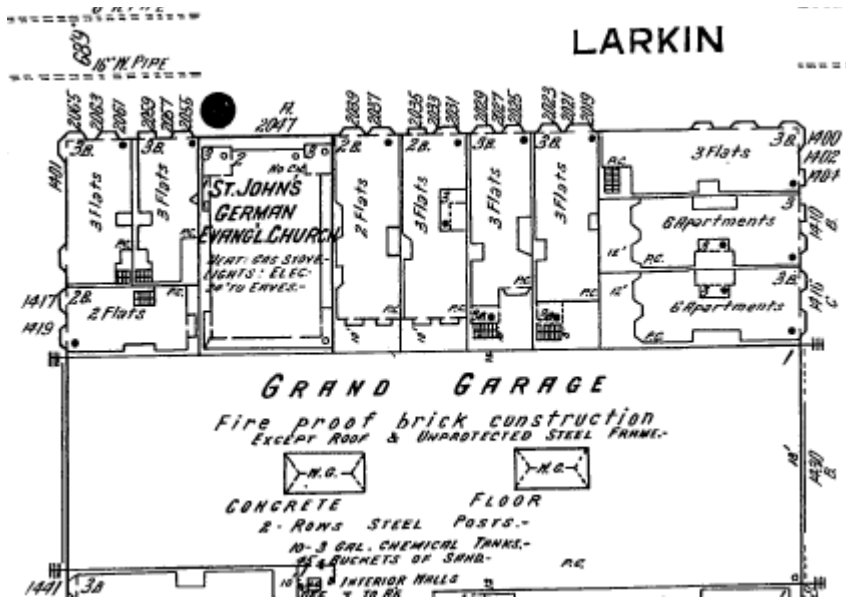
(From left) Howard Thurman, Sue Bailey Thurman, Phenola Carroll and Edward Carroll on India tour, circa 1937  
Source: Sue Bailey Thurman Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University



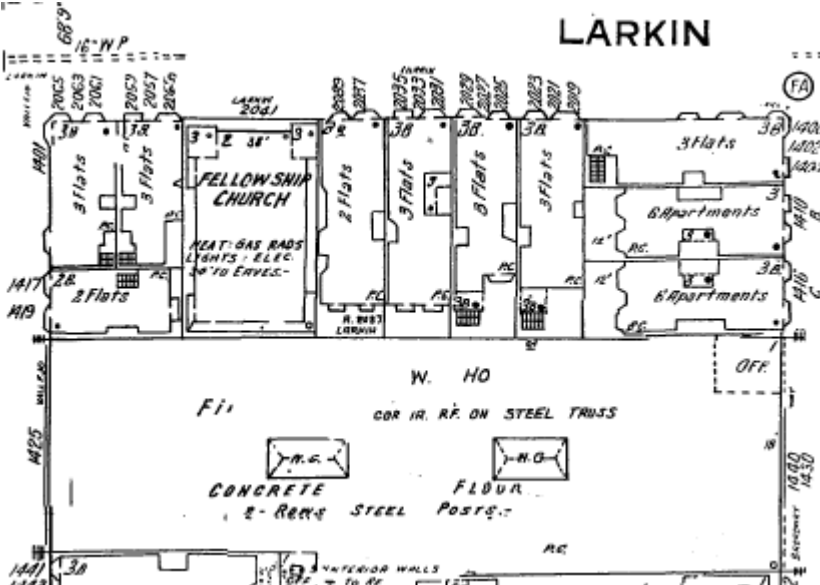
The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, representatives of its Intercultural Workshop and Quintette attending the UNESCO Plenary Session, Paris, 1949. Sue Bailey Thurman, middle, seated row.  
Source: *Footprints of a Dream*



Detail from 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Detail from 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Detail from 1950 Sanborn Map  
Source: San Francisco Planning Department