

At 105, Mildred Hutchinson is l

By Michael Cicchese
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Enthusiastic, idealistic theology students embarking on a life of Christian ministry in hopes of changing the world should know they're not going to get it all done in their lifetime.

That was the advice Mildred Hutchinson offered during a special service at Kresge Chapel on the Claremont School of Theology campus Wednesday.

It was a celebration of a life devoted to championing children's rights, furthering the role of women in the Methodist church and advocating the church do more outreach ministry in urban settings.

It was also a celebration of a life nearing its 105th anniversary.

"Don't think you're going to get it all done in one lifetime. You have to build and build ... so the next generation has something to build on," Hutchinson said. "The church has a role to play in building community."

The Los Angeles native still serves as chairwoman of the Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation. The foundation funds the Mildred Hutchinson Urban Ministry Chair at the Claremont School of Theology, a post now held by the Rev. Michael Mata.

"When I applied for the position I didn't know I would have to do a separate interview with her," Mata said. "I think our passion was in synch when it comes to the church being involved in the health of the community and especially its youth ... She embodies what she believes."

Born on Oct. 17, 1894 in East Los Angeles, Hutchinson is set to witness her second turn of a century. During the chapel service she was asked by longtime friend Don Locher about New Year's Eve 1899.

"I don't remember anything about that at all," she said, later adding that she was 6-years-old then and probably in bed when the 20th century arrived.

When Locher asked Hutchinson what the most significant event of the 20th century was, she recalled the celebrations when World War I ended. The belief then was that they had survived the war to end all wars.

Another reason that time stands out in her mind can be found in her book "In Gratitude For The Doors Others Have Opened: The Mildred Hutchinson Story." She wrote how she and her husband John Edgar Hutchinson were engaged before the war started. When he went into the army, they agreed to wait until he returned before getting married.

He was home a month after the fighting in Europe stopped.

"These have been exciting years because of all the changes I've witnessed," Hutchinson wrote



Mildred Moore Hutchinson is excited about her 105th birthday.

in 1993. "We've gone from wood stoves to microwave ovens. From kerosene lamps to electric light by a touch. From horse-drawn carriages to the Blue-line, from corrugated scrub boards to push-button washing machines, and from five cents for a loaf of bread to \$2.50."

And she has seen Los Angeles develop, decay and now try and redevelop. Despite the setbacks, she has carried endless hope for the future of her hometown.

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Terry Pierson/Staff Photographer

day as friends at Claremont School of Theology sing happy birthday to her, in the Haddon Conference Center in Claremont.

"The church as a whole should be helping to build this community. We need to get everyone involved. I don't care what color or faith you are," she said, showing no sign that time has eroded her passion. "Los Angeles can be such a beautiful place."

On the altar at Kresge Chapel sat a wooden candelabra that three years ago was outfitted with 102 candles. This year 105 Crayola crayons were attached to it instead, representing her

longevity and belief in racial unity.

"Aging will take a heavy toll unless you maintain outside interests and keep busy with those activities," Hutchinson wrote in her biography.

Bob Edgar, president of the Claremont School of Theology, said Hutchinson often calls him, letting him know what the school should be doing in grooming future church leaders.

"She's one of the most aggressive women I've ...met," Edgar said. "And one of the most inspiring."