

HISTORIAN'S DIGEST

Volume 47, Number 4

November 2007

Celebrating Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley, Charles Wesley and more Charles Wesley – the participants of the Sixth Annual Historical Convocation of the UMC were immersed in the life, theology, ministry and most importantly, the poetry and hymns of United Methodism's co-founder, the Rev. Charles Wesley. All who attended were able to sing or hear sung their favorite Wesley hymn at least once during the Convocation. Participants gathered at the 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, MD for daytime meetings and workshops, walking or riding across the street to Chevy Chase UMC for evening presentations and Sunday morning worship.

Those who arrived on Thursday, along with the members of the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) had the privilege attending a presentation by Karl Heinz Voigt, the first of two 2007 Distinguished Service Award recipients. Dr. Voigt is a United Methodist pastor from Germany and has written extensively on German Methodism. He presented a paper entitled, "John Heyl Vincent: A Bridge Builder Between Denominations, Confessions, Continents and Cultures." This was Dr. Voigt's first lecture in English to an English speaking audience and was very well done.

The Convocation opened officially on Friday afternoon with two excellent presentations on Charles Wesley by Dr. Timothy McQuiban, and Dr. Karen Westerfield-Tucker. After dinner we boarded buses for Asbury UMC in downtown Washington, D.C. where HSUMC President Pat Thompson presented two awards. The first is a new award, established this year, the Ministry of Memory Award, to be given to an individual who has done outstanding work in some aspect of UM history at the local church, conference or jurisdictional level. The 2007 award was presented to Lonise Robinson, a member of Asbury UMC, for her excellent service at all three levels of the church. The second annual Saddlebag Selection Award, given for an outstanding publication related to United Methodist history, was presented to the Rev. John Tyson, for his book, *In the Midst of Early Methodism: Lady Huntingdon and Her Correspondence*. Following the awards the "Friends of Charles Wesley Choir" gathered by Dr. Eileen Guenther,

associate professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, presented "A Festival of Music: Charles Wesley at 300 – Texts of Charles Wesley Set by Composers of our Time." This was an excellent and inspiring concert to end the first day of the Convocation.

On Saturday morning participants had the opportunity to chose from two additional workshops related to Wesley, two workshops on aspects of African American history or a most interesting tour of Washington, D.C. United Methodist (or former Methodist) churches and United Methodist historic sites led by Jane Donovan. During the afternoon two more excellent presentations by Dr. Dennis Dickerson and Dr. Thomas R. Albin completed the plenary sessions. In the evening the second 2007 Distinguished Service Award was presented to Dr. S.T. Kimborough, Jr, who gave a wonderful solo concert of renditions of Charles Wesley poems and hymns set to music by either himself or his sister, who accompanied him throughout the evening.

On Sunday morning the HSUMC (along with other groups in attendance) held their annual meetings, followed by two presentations. The first was by Mary Kay Ricks, whose new book, *Escape on the Pearl* addresses the most ambitious and dramatic escape attempt of the Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C. Most, if not all, of the enslaved persons who tried to escape on The Pearl (a sailing ship) were Methodists. The second was from John Tyson, who spoke about his book, *In the Midst of Early Methodism: Lady Huntingdon and Her Correspondence*, the winner of the 2007 Saddlebag Selection Award. We ended with worship at Chevy Chase UMC with the Rev. Dr. Paul Chilcote preaching. Minutes of the HSUMC Meeting were printed in the October issue of *Methodist History*.

Go west, young Methodist, go west!

See page 4 for information on the 2008 annual meeting of the United Methodist Historical Society, to be held in Mitchell, South Dakota.

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The Historian's Digest is published quarterly by the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church. Please send address changes to Phil Lawton at Philip.Lawton@dol.net. Editorial correspondence should be directed to Jane Donovan. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is January 1, 2008.

Letter from the President

Fall greetings from the beautiful colored mountains of Vermont. I hope that you all have the opportunity to travel to New England during the foliage season at least once in your lifetimes.

This will be the first letter I've written since we gathered in Chevy Chase, Md., in July for the 2007 annual meeting of our Society and the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley. As you'll read elsewhere in the newsletter, the Convocation was a huge success and everyone who attended was richly blessed by the continuing legacy left to us by Charles Wesley. I hope that you have also had the opportunity to celebrate this special anniversary in your local churches and in your conferences.

The minutes of the annual meeting appeared in the October issue of *Methodist History*, so you may already be aware of the actions that we have taken. Two, in particular, I would like to point out. We voted to relieve Michael Peterlin of his duties as the Treasurer of the Society due to his extended poor health which has made it impossible for him to attend our annual meetings. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Michael for his faithful service over the past two years as we made the transition to a new treasurer. The membership elected Charles Yrigoyen to complete Michael's term.

Bill Bakeman, our first membership secretary, who keeps our membership list current and mails renewals, asked to be relieved of his duties after serving for more than five years in this position. We also thank Bill for his faithful service. Phil Lawton will be the new membership secretary.

With Phil's move to the position of membership secretary, we are now looking for someone with good computer skills to manage the HSUMC web site. We are very appreciative of Katherine Kline, a student at West Virginia University, who worked with Dale Patterson at GCAH to redesign the site. We now need someone who will continue to work with Dale to manage the site on an on-going basis. This individual does not need to be responsible for content for the site, which will be provided. This is a volunteer position and the individual who becomes the web master will be an ex-officio member of the Board. This means that there is no requirement to attend Board meetings but the webmaster will always be welcome at the meetings. If this is of interest to anyone who is reading this or you could recommend someone who might do a good job, please contact me at pajt8817@aol.com, or 802-888-2185. As we do more and more business via electronic communication, this position will become increasingly important for the growth of our Society. I invite you to pray about this to see if God might be calling you to this important ministry.

By the time that you receive this letter we will be approaching the season of Advent and a new Christian year. I pray for each of you that you might have a meaningful and blessed Advent and Christmas season.

Grace and peace,
Pat Thompson

**Scenes from
the Sixth
Historical
Convocation,
July 2007,
Chevy Chase,
Maryland**

*Chevy Chase United
Methodist Church*



General Secretary Robert Williams and Bishop Solero Toquero present Karl Heinz Voigt with his award.



Professor Ulrike Schuler of Tübingen University in Germany represents the European conferences at GCAH.



Eileen Guenther, associate professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, conducts the Charles Wesley concert on Friday night.

Tour of “Methodist Firsts” in Washington, D.C.

Fifth Church of Christ Scientist, which worships in the 1829 building constructed by the Congress Street Methodist Protestant congregation, the earliest MPC in the DC area.



Jane Donovan spoke on the history of Dumbarton UMC, the oldest Methodist congregation in the DC area, which dates to October 1772. The rug was designed by a local artist and painted by Dumbarton members. It represents a scene from the Book of Revelation.



Grave of William Watters, the first American-born Methodist itinerant, McLean, Va.



Vault in the Old Methodist Burying Ground, aka Mount Zion Cemetery, is thought to have been a hiding place for escapees on the Underground Railroad.



Mount Zion UMC is the oldest African-American congregation of any denomination in DC, dating to 1816.

A word from the General Secretary:

As I near the end of my second year in this position, I have so enjoyed traveling around the church seeing long time friends and making new friends. The travel schedule will slow some now but since the spring I have helped lead a Wesley Heritage Tour, attended the annual meeting of the Commission and participated in the Sixth Historical Convocation, attended the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, a conference on Methodist Identities at Wesley House in Cambridge, the Connectional Table and General Council on Finance and Administration, and the Executive Committee of the World Methodist

Moments from our Past

by Lyle Johnston

Interesting Legislation from ME General Conferences

(continued from the July 2007 issue)

1888: Ministers were allowed to remain five years in a charge.

1900: GC refused to approved Ladies' Aid presidents and similar societies membership in the quarterly conference.

1908: GC "challenged" every Methodist voter to cast his ballot for the suppression of the saloon. (Editor's note: some Methodists back then in two of my churches left the Methodist church to start Presbyterian churches across town so they could drink without feeling guilty.)

1924: Laymen were approved as delegates to their annual conference. The constitutional amendment was rejected by annual conferences vote.

(Source: Encyclopedia of World Methodism, 1974)

Council in Australia. I delivered addresses to the Southeastern Jurisdiction Preservation Workshop and the Historical Society of the Greater New Jersey Conference.

I have begun, with Dale Patterson, to consider advertising for a part time reference archivist to begin in mid-winter. We have faced significant staff reductions when funding looked very uncertain. We believe that we can restore a part time position of about 21 hours per week. The primary duty will be to respond to research requests and assisting research patrons at the Archives Center. Qualifications should include Archival Certification or an MLS/MA in History degree or 3 years of full-time archival experience or equivalent. Contact me for further information at rwilliams@gcah.org.

The web site upgrade is still in progress and should be up and running by mid winter. Be watching for an announcement about the Historical Society and the Conference archivists' list serve. Once the new site is

functioning I am hoping to create distribution lists including all those interested in this work for more timely communication. If you want to get on the current list serve for the Historical Society you can go to www.gcah.org/discussionlist.htm.

The legislation that the General Commission sent on to General Conference is very modest this time. We are suggesting adding language to remind the Conference secretaries that two paper copies of conference journals are to be sent to appropriate depositories. Also, the Commission approved Long's Barn in Pennsylvania as a Heritage Landmark, calling to mind the famous meeting of Phillip Otterbein and Martin Boehm.

You may have heard me share the words of Isaiah 30:8, "Go now, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, so that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever." We work so we do not forget the witness of those who have gone before us.

– Robert J. Williams

Reference Archivist position available at GCAH

This is a permanent part-time position at 21 hours per week. The person reports to the Archivist-Records Administrator. The primary duty is responding to research requests that come into the Archives; as well as assisting research patrons at the Archives. The Reference Archivist will participate in the creation of the Archives' finding aids, and other catalogs, by editing them for readability and for appropriate subject classification. The Reference Archivist will also direct any student research assistants.

The Reference Archivist must have excellent writing and communication skills. She or he must be able to work in a small office environment that requires multi-tasking and rapid response. The person will be expected to become competent in United Methodist history in particular and American religious history in general. The Reference Archivist responds concisely to research requests and guides the patrons to appropriate resources. The person should have or develop awareness of appropriate cataloging techniques and be able to use EAD and DACS in creating finding aids.

Requirements: Archival Certification, or an MLS/MA in History degree, or 3 years of full-time archival experience. Must be comfortable with computer technology, including the use of databases, word processing, image scanning and the creation of web pages and xml documents.

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Reference Archivist position available at GCAH

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The General Commission on Archives and History [www.gcah.org] is the official archival agency of The United Methodist Church. It houses approximately 9,000 cubic feet of records covering the 200+ year history of United Methodism. It is located on the campus of Drew University, an historic United Methodist school, in Madison, New Jersey, and shares its space with Drew University's renowned Methodist library and rare book collection. GCAH is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. Salary begins at \$25,000 per year. Send resume along with 3 names of reference to: Dr. Robert Williams, GCAH, PO Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940 or by email to rwilliams@gcah.org. Deadline for application: December 15, 2007.

HSUMC to meet in South Dakota in 2008

A joint convocation of the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church and the North Central Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History will be held July 7-10, 2008 on the campus of Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, SD.

Convocation attendees will tour the George and Eleanor McGovern Library and Center for Leadership and Public Service and Senator McGovern, a life-long United Methodist, will speak at the convocation. We will also see the University's new library, which houses the archives for the Dakotas Conference.

Deborah Kiesey, Bishop of the Dakotas, will preach at the opening worship service. Other presenters will include Dr. Stephen Perry (to speak on "Writing the History of the Dakotas Annual Conference: Who should be included?"); Dr. Bruce Forbes ("A History of Christmas Traditions"); Lori Holmberg ("Dakota Discovery Museum and its Methodist Connection"); James McLaird ("Calamity Jane and the Methodists"); and the Rev. Scott McKirdy ("A. B. Smart, Pioneer Preacher"). Also scheduled are business sessions, tours, a buffalo barbecue, and musical entertainment.

Registration materials will be provided in the January 2008 issue of *Historian's Digest*.

See you in South Dakota!!!

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