A Message from our President: Ivan Corbin

I have a confession to make. Most of the history of the United Methodist Church I know and have studied is from the predominantly “Methodist” line. While I learned much more about our “United” of the United Brethren side when we met in Dayton in 2018, my knowledge of the “Evangelical” line was still very limited when I arrived in Williamsport, Pennsylvania on May 15 for the 2023 Annual Meeting. Thanks to the wonderful program of speakers and sites that we visited I now know and appreciate much more about the rich heritage that is ours that began with Jacob Albright and “The Evangelical Association.” Our hosts, the Northeast Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and Historical Society, gave us a rich exposure to places and stories that helped us all know more of our German roots.

Our time together began at Pine Street UMC where many of our meetings happened, and meals were provided. We also had the opportunity to visit the Susquehanna Conference (SUSUMC) Archives at Lycoming College prior to our Monday night meetings. We began with worship led by Sarah Mount Elewononi that helped center us and prepare us for the week ahead. The HSUMC primary speaker this year was PhD student, Wren Hillis, who gave a very impassioned presentation about our Methodist involvement and/or complicity with the Native American boarding school movement. Following the Monday evening sessions, the Executive Committee of the HSUMC met to plan for our general meeting via a hybrid of Zoom and in-person.

See Doug Tzan’s summary on pg. 7 about Wren Hillis’ presentation.

Continued on page 3
Welcome to our midsummer issue of Historian’s Digest. With the best of intentions, I was hoping that this first issue of 2024 might have shown up in the late spring. But due to some unforeseen circumstances (such as my taking some extra weeks to write this column) this issue will be reaching most of you in early August. But the stories inside will hopefully make any waiting on your part worthwhile. We have a detailed breakdown of our Historical Society meeting in Pennsylvania back in May, as well as a nice article from the South Carolina Advocate profiling Rev. Roger Gramling, this year’s winner of the Ministry of Memory award. (Roger also serves as the president of the SEJ Historical Society, which just met in July in Greensboro, North Carolina. We hope to have a report of that meeting in our next issue of Historian’s Digest.)

It’s important to note that Methodism continues to mark significant historical milestones. My own home conference of Holston will be celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2024 and we are planning some great events to commemorate that occasion. Granted, it may not be quite as big a celebration as the 1924 centennial, when both of the Holston conferences (M.E.C. and M.E.C.S.) had celebrations and the city of Knoxville hosted a large parade, where crowds cheered the Methodist-themed floats as they streamed down the main street through downtown. We may not necessarily have a parade this time, but we are excited about lifting up Methodist history in all parts of the conference.

Another interesting bicentennial that will also be taking place in 2024 involves Methodist women. According to historian Noreen Dunn Tatum in her wonderful book A Crown of Service: A Story of Woman’s Work in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, From 1878-1940 (published in 1960), the first recorded mention of Methodist women’s mission work in the southern United States was in 1824, “…when a home missionary society in Jonesboro, Tennessee organized to raise funds to support the gospel in the Holston Conference. As a result of activities the first year, $40.25
Message from our President: continued from page 1

**Tuesday** included a mixture of devotions, business meetings and presentations by General Secretary Dr. Ashley Boggan on behalf of the GCAH, as well as Bob Baker and Milton Loyer of the SUSUMC on topics of our Indigenous Journey and Evangelical history. Our Tuesday night included the HSUMC’s **Ministry of Memory award** to Roger Gramling of South Carolina and the **first ever Local Church History award** to Kent H. Roberts for *Oaklawn United Methodist Church: Love, Struggle and Renewal as a Sheltering Church 1981-2022*. There was no Saddlebag award for 2023. Tuesday evening concluded with interesting presentations about the Strawbridge Shrine and the contribution of Williamsport hymn writer J.M. Black by Brand Eaton.

**Wednesday** was a full day with visits to numerous historic sites tied to the Evangelical Association. We began at Central Oak Heights (camp meeting location) with a devotion by Gary Weaver and a very enlightening presentation by Brand Eaton about the contribution of Evangelical Association pastors and laypeople to our greater hymnody. We spent several hours touring New Berlin that included the New Berlin Heritage Museum, cemetery, and the site of Jacob Albright’s first meeting house and print shop. Lunch was provided by the laypeople of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church in New Berlin. Wednesday afternoon included tours of Mifflinburg’s Buggy Museum (the last of over 80 buggy factories in Mifflinburg at one time), the home owned by the enterprising buggy factory owner and his family and ended with a tour of Elias Church, considered to be Pennsylvania’s oldest existing wooden frame church building. Jacob Albright preached here in 1805. On the way to several of these sites that we toured we were also shown a variety of towns and locations with significance to the history of the Evangelical Association.
Field Trip Day

Dr. Ashley Boggan of the GCAH makes a presentation.
An opportunity to attend a special session of the Susquehanna Annual Conference was offered Wednesday evening to anyone who wanted to witness history in the making. About 141 United Methodist Churches voted to disaffiliate at this called session of the Conference including the church where we had lunch that day and First UMC of Williamsport where the reunification of the Evangelical Association took place in the 1920’s. Our host church, Pine Street UMC, remains United Methodist.

Our time together concluded on Thursday with very interesting presentations by Milton Loyer, Jack Eidam and John Piper about “Three Seminaries” (not to be confused with our current definition of “seminary”). Milton Loyer gave the final presentation centered on a Civil Rights Journey. Worship and a memorial service led by the NEJCAH wrapped up our time together.

It was an interesting time to be gathered together to learn more of our shared history as United Methodists knowing that votes on disaffiliations were literally happening during the time of our gathering, had already been taking place across United Methodism, and would continue at least through the end of 2023. Even so, our programs reminded us that we have gone through separations and reunifications, engaged in not so Christian activities involving Indigenous people, enslaved persons and their descendants and have hopefully learned from each chapter of our collective histories. Again, I want to thank our hosts. I feel much more informed about the Evangelical Association line of my Methodist heritage, and I was challenged and enlightened in ways I did not expect coming into Williamsport on May 15th. We look forward to next year when we gather in Bozeman, Montana in September where we will continue to learn from and wrestle with our history as people called Methodist.

In Christ’s service,

Ivan
Ivan G. Corbin, President
HSUMC

Save the Date

HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2024 ANNUAL MEETING

September 9-13, 2024

In Bozeman, Montana
Hosted by the Western Jurisdiction and GCAH

More details to follow. Check the HSUMC website for details: TBA
https://www.umchistory.org
Gramling receives Ministry of Memory Award from UMC Historical Society

Reprinted with permission of Jessica Brodie, editor, South Carolina United Methodist Advocate newspaper

Pictured, Gramling, the 2023 recipient of the “Ministry of Memory” Award, proposes a motion from the floor at the recent South Carolina Annual Conference. Photo by Matt Brodie.

June 13, 2023

Dr. Roger M. Gramling, a retired elder of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, has been named the 2023 recipient of the “Ministry of Memory” Award.

The award, which recognizes and encourages excellence in archival and historical work, is presented by the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church with the support of the General Commission on Archives and History.

The announcement was made during the annual meeting of the UMC Historical Society, May 15-18, in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

Gramling’s nomination was based on his more than 50 years involvement in historical research and preservation at the local church, conference and jurisdictional level. His involvement in historical research began with the preservation and promotion of the history of his home church while he was a teenager.

He was nominated for the Ministry of Memory award by Joyce E. Plyler, a former president of the Conference Historical Society.

Gramling is the author of five books related to Methodist history and was the general editor of the 2001 edition of United Methodist Ministers in South Carolina. He currently serves as president of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society, secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society and a member of the SEJ Commission on Archives and History.

In her nomination, Plyler lifted up Gramling’s work to preserve the Burdine Lodge. Gramling spearheaded a project to raise funds for the restoration of this 1790s-era log cabin, which was a lodging place for Francis Asbury (as documented in his Journal) and in which an early Methodist society was formed. Under Dr. Gramling’s leadership, more than $30,000 was raised on behalf of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society of the UMC. In coordination with county and local leaders, the lodge was restored and located at the Hagood Mill Historic Site in Pickens County, where it will serve to educate current and future generations about the influence of Methodism in early America.

Plyler also noted that Gramling has played critical roles in the South Carolina Conference Historical Society for many years.

“In this capacity, he is without peer, doing the work of yeoman, wise counselor and conscientious leader,” she wrote in her nomination.

Much of his work of historical preservation has been behind the scenes, she noted. For example, he created and maintained a database of the founding dates of all United Methodist Churches in the South Carolina Conference. Over the years, he diligently worked with churches to help determine their founding date and to keep the database current. This was no easy task because the South Carolina Conference is one of the six original Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America and has many churches dating to the late 1700s and early 1800s, for which records are scant. Though now maintained by others, this database remains the “go to”
document for this important information. In addition, Dr. Gramling’s extensive personal files and memory have provided assistance countless times for individuals seeking more information about their Methodist ancestors or their church.

Along with Dr. A.V. Huff and others, Gramling was responsible for reviving the society and ensuring that it would be a vibrant participant in keeping Methodist history alive within the South Carolina Conference.

Plyler also noted how, at the close of 2018, Gramling retired as president of the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, for which he had been the chief executive since 1985. Through this foundation, he and his wife, Marilyn, created a restricted endowment fund for the benefit of the historic White House UMC, Orangeburg. Gramling filed the documentation leading to placement of this c. 1850 primitive structure on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and wrote a history of the church in 1981. It is the oldest congregation in Orangeburg County, dating to 1788, and one of the oldest in the state.

His counsel has helped many others to establish funds that keep alive the memory of ministers, lay leaders and churches that have made significant contributions to Methodism in South Carolina.

“Perhaps what is most remarkable is that Dr. Gramling’s work has been conducted almost exclusively as a volunteer and in addition to his full-time work as an ordained minister and foundation executive, not to mention his various assignments with the South Carolina Conference, including conference secretary, parliamentarian, counsel for the church, secretary and registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry and secretary of the trial court,” Plyler wrote. “Throughout his long and illustrious career, history has remained his passion. For this, and for his God-given skills as a meticulous and detailed record-keeper, we and future generations can be truly thankful.”

Doug Tzan’s Summary

Lawrence (Wren) Hillis, a Ph.D. candidate at Drew University and an independent research consultant contracted by the Council of Bishops and General Agencies of the United Methodist Church, presented a paper entitled “White Harvest: Methodist Unity as Missional Assimilation.” Hillis offered historical vignettes of Methodist involvement with native peoples, beginning with the Methodist Mission to the Wyandotte in Upper Sandusky, initiated by John Stewart, and concluding with the Shawnee Manual Labor School in Kansas. He argued these examples demonstrated an “increasingly racialized trajectory, featuring growing violence and reduced intercultural partnership as the various indigenous nations were repeatedly relocated further and further west.”

Mike Feely article: Continued from page 2

was raised ‘to assist in supplying the salaries of preachers.’” (p. 15).

There is a lot to celebrate in Holston Methodism, and a lot to celebrate in your conference, and all our conferences around the world. What other milestones are coming up in these next few years? We need your help to share those stories. They are more important than ever. So write them down and send them in! We have another issue coming up soon! And we want to share your stories.

We are grateful for you,

Mike Feely
Dr. Richard Stowe passed away on July 9, 2023.

“We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Richard Stowe and we give thanks for the major contributions he made to the Ministry of Memory of the United Methodist Church and beyond.”

- Rev. Ivan Corbin

“I'm really grateful that Richard generously opened his Local Church Historians School to those outside of his conference. I took the course & refer often to my binder of info. Also, his humorous approach to the topics he presented was refreshing and diminished my anxieties about the work and care needed to keep history alive for the future.”

- Judy Vasby- Wisconsin

“I am so grateful for the opportunity to work and learn from Richard. I am sorry about his passing, and I will miss our ongoing communications. He was a visionary who shared much with the field of Methodist history. He was one of my heroes, leaving his footprints on my heart forever.”

Margaret Cline Harmon
Church Historian & Archivist
Zachary United Methodist Church
Zachary, Louisiana

His obituary is reprinted here with permission. It highlights his Ministry of Memory contributions and involvement in the life of the United Methodist Church.

Obituary

Richard Alan Stowe was born December 5, 1932, in Petersburg, VA, to Vernon M. and Marian H. Stowe. He grew up in Collinsville, IL, developing life-long interest in camping, photography, and astronomy. He graduated from Collinsville High School in 1950, then earned two degrees at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. In 1954, he married Eleanor Jean Prather of Carrier Mills, IL. They were blessed with four daughters, Linda Jean, Cheryl Ann, Rebecca Lynn, and Marcia Lee.

After teaching in the the public schools of Alton and Skokie, IL, he took a doctorate in instructional systems technology at Indiana University in 1969. He served on the I.U. faculty for a total of six years and formulated one of the pioneering models of instructional systems development. He founded the Division for Instructional Development of the Association of Educational Communications and Technology.

He was director of instructional resources at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh from 1973 to 1981. He then worked for the Association for Higher Education in North Texas which delivered college instruction to industries throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth area via its TAGER (closed-circuit) microwave network.

In 1986, he joined the newly created Center for Information and Communication Sciences at Ball State University, Muncie, IN., as its assistant director. This innovative center offered information-age graduate-level education for professionals entering business, education, the military, and other types of organizations.
Richard specialized in directing student-led teams in the delivery of video teleconferences.

Richard retired in 1996, and intensified his efforts to trace his and his wife’s genealogies. He had begun computerizing the family records in 1983, and later applied computer mapping techniques, imaging technologies, and digital video production to his genealogical findings. He produced several video documentaries on family subjects. He also wrote short accounts of the lives of various ancestors and circulated copies to family members.

In 2005, Richard researched the history of the High Street United Methodist Church of Muncie, IN., and produced a documentary DVD, the first of many videos about the church. He served as chair of the church’s archives committee and as its archivist and historian, helping to design and furnish new quarters for the church’s collection.

Developing an interest in the broader history of Methodism, he joined the Indiana United Methodist Historical Society and served as its treasurer and on its executive committee for eight years. He was a member of the Commission on Archives and History of the Indiana Conference and the Joint Archives Committee which oversees the Methodist Archives at DePauw University.

During these years, Richard also researched the life and ministry of Edward R. Ames, a fascinating Civil War-era bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

From 2013 to 2015, Richard was the Conference Historian of the Indiana United Methodist Church, visiting over 100 shrines of the Church in Indiana, photographing them, and contributing to an interactive online map of the state. He secured national recognition for five sites in Jasper County, IN., sacred to the legacy of, Helenor Davidson, the first woman ordained in the United Methodist tradition. He served as the founder and director of a Local Church Historian’s School, an online course for Indiana Methodist Historians, which enrolled over 190 participants.

In 2016, at the age of 83, he became the membership secretary of the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church.

He passed away on July 9, 2023. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Eleanor; his three daughters, Linda (Hank Ingles) Danzell, Cheryl (Jim) Yoars, and Marcia (Tim) Jacobi; he is also survived by ten grandchildren, fifteen great-grandchildren, two nephews, and a niece.

He was preceded in death by his parents, daughter, Rebecca Bosley; and sister, Margaret “Peggy” Brockmeyer.

Richard was active in the Methodist Church all of his life and occasionally served as a local pastor. If desired, donations may be made to the Archives Fund, High Street United Methodist Church, 219 S. High Street, Muncie, IN 47305.

Memorial Services were held on Thursday, July 13, 2023 at The Meeks Mortuary and Crematory, Mt. Pleasant Chapel, 7901 W. Isanogel Rd., Muncie. Burial of cremated remains will be held in Belleville, IL at a later date.

Source:
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Bob Baker, Susquehanna; Earle Baker, Susquehanna; Tara Barnes, Upper New York; Ashley Boggan, GCAH; Jonathan Brown, a visitor from the Evangelical Congregational Church; Mary Buzby, Baltimore-Washington; John Callanan, Greater New Jersey; Ivan Corbin, President, Florida; Donald DeGroat, Greater New Jersey; Brand Eaton, Susquehanna; Jennifer Eaton, Susquehanna; Rebecca Holland, visitor, Susquehanna; Ken Jones, Upper New York; Joyce Kells, Baltimore-Washington; Robert Kells, Baltimore-Washington; Meekyung Kim, Greater New Jersey; Warren Kinneer, Western Pennsylvania; Phil Lawton, Peninsula-Delaware; Robert Kells, Baltimore-Washington; Matthew Loyer, Susquehanna; Milton Loyer, Susquehanna; Bonnie McCubbin, Baltimore-Washington; Rod Miller, Susquehanna; Sarah Mount Elewononi, Secretary, New England; Becky Patterson, Western Pennsylvania; Catherine Parsons, Susquehanna; John Parsons, Susquehanna; Nancy Pullen, Upper New York; John Piper, Susquehanna; Rayman Richardson, West Virginia; Nancy Rutenber, Upper New York; Dan Swinson, North Illinois; June Swinson, North Illinois; Mark Shenise, GCAH and Greater New Jersey; Pat Thompson, New England; Vernon Thompson, New England; Dough Tzan, Baltimore-Washington; Janice Ulmer, Eastern Pennsylvania; William Wilson, Greater New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania

DEVOTIONS

The meeting began with devotions offered by Jennifer Eaton of the Susquehanna Conference, who works for PA historical commission. She had us reflect on 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5.

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy during the second time he was imprisoned in Rome – this time the conditions were harsher. Timothy had traveled with Paul – who sent him to Ephesus. Paul recognized that Timothy had grown in his faith and encourages Timothy to spread gospel in the face of hardship and false teachers – to continue in what he has learned and believed.

Jennifer said we can draw on the lessons, wisdom, and knowledge of those who came before us, and pray, bless, learn from history, celebrate the work of God among us and move forward with strength.

HSUMC BUSINESS

Ivan called the meeting to order by noting that at its founding HSUMC had almost 1000 members. We have dwindled as interest in history seems to have declined. It seems people want something sensational. Our job is to continue a ministry of memory.
Board Members Present

Ivan Corbin introduced the board noting that we were supposed to have election in 2020 tied to GC. And so we’ve been serving longer than expected.

Ivan, is the president of the Historical Society.

Doug Tzan, is Vice President.

Sarah Mount Elewononi, is the secretary.

Duane Coates and John Finley are members at large.

Ashley Boggan is ex officio of the Historical Society as the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History.

Other Board Members

Debbie Corbin, Ivan’s spouse, is the Website Editor and co-editor of the Historian’s Digest. Mike Feely is the Editor of the Historian’s Digest. Janet Mills is a member at large from Philadelphia. Kerri Shoemaker, our Treasurer and her spouse, Chris Shoemaker, membership secretary. Linda Schramm is the representative from the General Commission on Archives and History.

Ivan has looked at the possibility to change our name to be more generic and learned that we are mandated by Book of Discipline. So, while we welcome those who are not staying in the UMC, only United Methodists can be on the executive committee. HSUMC belongs to the entire United Methodist Church, an international denomination. We were invited to hold a meeting at African University but due to the costs we have declined.

Ivan gave a recap of the last few meetings. The HSUMC meets with a different jurisdiction each year. In 2019 we met in St. Louis, Missouri with the South Central Jurisdiction. In 2020 our plans to meet with the South Eastern Jurisdiction were delayed due to COVID. Instead, we met on line with 100+ in attendance, the biggest in some time. We met on line again in 2021 with between 50-60 participating, and resumed in person meetings in 2022 on St. Simon’s Island in Georgia.

HSUMC Meeting Plans for 2024

Next year’s meeting September 9-13, at Bozeman, Montana. This will be a Convocation with the General Commission and other Methodist historians, like the one we had in 2018 in Dayton, Ohio. The Western Jurisdiction is hosting and the themes will be indigenous schools and Methodists of color in the jurisdiction.

The General Commission on Archives and History usually meets in the fall.

In 2025 HSUMC will rotate to meet with the North Central Jurisdiction.

Budget

Ivan gave a verbal presentation of the budget provided by Kerri Shoemaker. The last “year” represents just nine months because of the dates of our HSUMC meetings.

### Treasurer’s Report as of April 30, 2023

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Ending Balance: April 30, 2023  
11,114.74

Difference Between Income and Expenses:  
2,063.71

Kerri Shoemaker  
Treasurer

1 Includes costs for December 2022 edition
2 Includes costs for October 2022 edition (most copies were emailed)

**Proposed Budget for 2023-2024**

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**Discussion**

We came in under budget for *Methodist History* which is now being published with 2 issues per year. Sending most of them out by email cut expenses. We have also decreased expenses by sending the Historian’s Digest primarily by email.

The Awards line of our budget now has three categories:

*The Ministry of Memory* is for people who have spent considerable time and talents working with church history/archives.

*The Saddlebag* award is for books on Methodist church history that were published in the year prior to the award. There was only one entry for Saddlebag award this year. It is a substantial local church history published in book form covering a 40-year period. While it does not meet the criteria for the Saddlebag, it is an excellent local church history.

*New Local Church History Award* This has prompted to Board to create a third award. We have not yet given it a name, nor set up the criteria. We hope it will encourage follow through from those who have been taking the course that GCAH has been running. *Oak Lawn United Methodist Church: Love, Struggle and*
Renewal as a Sheltering Church 1981-2022 by Kent H. Roberts will be the first recipient. We will present this award in a Zoom meeting that we record.

The budget also includes Honorarium for a scholar to speak on their research. And travel expenses for Executive committee.

Last year more money went in than out leaving us with a net gain of $2,063. We are presenting a slightly lower budget and have shifted some items according to last year’s financial report.

**VOTE** The HSUMC unanimously voted to accept the Treasurer’s report and proposed budget.

**Membership**

The membership secretary has reported a net gain just over 200 – including some local church historians who have completed the course offered by GCAH.

After inviting everyone to introduce themselves Ivan ended this portion of our meeting by noting our average age. How can we bring younger people to work beside us?

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Mount Elewononi

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**HSUMC Membership Information**

*(See form on back page)*

For address changes, questions concerning membership, requesting membership forms, contact:

HSUMC Membership Secretary
Rev. Chris Shoemaker
Tel. (229) 848-3264
brothershoe@zebra.net

Some United Methodist conference historical societies offer reduced joint memberships. Contact your conference society for more information.

Membership information and form are also available at https://www.umchistory.org/join
Historical Society of the United Methodist Church
Membership Form

As of January 1, 2019, our membership dues have increased to cover the cost of the Society’s publications.

☐ Annual Membership including print subscription to Methodist History: $50
   (Joint membership submitted through a conference historical society: $45)

☐ Annual Membership including email (PDF) subscription to Methodist History: $25
   (Joint membership submitted through a conference historical society: $20)

☐ Student Membership including email (PDF) subscription to Methodist History: $10

☐ Sustaining Membership (of which $50 is a tax-deductible contribution): $100
   (Please choose subscription: print ____, or email (PDF)____).

☐ Life Membership: $800
   (Please choose subscription: print ____, or email (PDF)____).

All subscriptions include our Society’s newsletter: Historian’s Digest

I’d like to include an additional, tax-deductible gift for the work of the HSUMC! Amount: $_______

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $_______

Please make your check payable to “HSUMC” and mail to:

HSUMC

C/o General Commission on Archives and History
PO Box 127
Madison, NJ 07940

NAME: ________________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS: ______________________________________

CITY: ________ STATE: _____ ZIP: ______

EMAIL: ________________________________________________

PHONE: ______________________________________________

Questions? Contact Rev. Chris Shoemaker, Membership Secretary:
229.848.3264 or chris@brothershoe.com