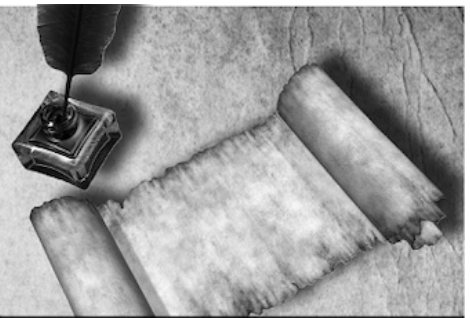


HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



Volume 62, Number 3

December 2022

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A Message from our President: Ivan Corbin

Advent greetings to all of you!

As I write this, it is December 8, 2022. I am sitting in a partially decorated house because we have fostered a one-year-old dog named Kromej for the past few months. He has made it abundantly clear that if we set up a Christmas tree with ornaments within his reach that they will be his, so we opted to alternative decorating strategies. Kromej was dropped off at First UMC of Homestead (which is on Krome Avenue) where I am pastor. The street is named for the primary overseer of the construction of Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad that found its way to Key West. After three weeks of coaxing and offering bribes, Kromej finally trusted me enough to get him to come to me. In retrospect, I believe he had been grooming me out of all the people who had tried to catch him and recognized a soft touch. His arrival in our home has certainly changed the equilibrium of our household, mostly for the good. Debbie and I both still claim we are only his foster parents but the longer this goes on I suspect we are simply living in denial.



This past year has been for many of us like the arrival of Kromej: disruptive with times of joy, frustration, anger and even entertainment. Our world is witnessing yet another unjustified and horrifying war with Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. We have United Methodist brothers and sisters in both countries and pray that this and all other wars will come to an end as soon as possible and that Isaiah's prophesy that weapons of war will be turned into tools of agriculture providing for the needs of all people will become reality. Natural and human made disasters have devastated parts of our planet. Political turmoil at home and abroad has made daily headlines. With all that is going on in our world, our denomination, and the lives of those around us it is still our privilege and responsibility to help interpret what is happening in light of history in order to offer hope in what seems for many like a dark world.

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One bright spot for us UMC History types is that we had the opportunity to enjoy an in-person gathering at Epworth by the Sea on Saint Simons Island this summer even as it feels like our denomination is becoming the un-tied Methodist Church instead of the United Methodist Church we have known, loved and whose history we celebrate and continue to learn from. Even now we see the waves of disaffiliations happening across the denomination and we pray that we can somehow stay in fellowship and continue to celebrate what we have in common even as congregations and colleagues feel led to go different ways. May the Ministry of Memory of our Wesleyan Heritage provide a foundation for maintaining some form of connection when the dust settles.

As the year 2022 draws to a close and the uncertainty of 2023 is just around the corner, I'd like to close my rambling reflections with the words to Charles Wesley's Hymn "Come, thou long-expected Jesus":

Come, thou long-expected Jesus
Born to set Thy People free,
From our Fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou Art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious Kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

May you all have a blessed rest of this Advent, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Hope-filled New Year.



In Christ's service,

Ivan

Ivan G. Corbin, President
HSUMC

Editor's Column: Mike Feely

Signs of Hope

Advent greetings to each of you! We are honored to have you on this historical journey with us and appreciate your support of the work of the *Historian's Digest*. Thank you for reading this issue!



This issue is a little smaller, but like an old circuit rider, covers a lot of territory. We have a wonderful article from Heather Hammer about Methodist history in the Shetland Islands (make sure that you check out Heather's book as well). We have some great book reviews by Pat Thompson and Heather Moore, and an update on some of the historical happenings in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. We also have a reminder about the 2023 annual meeting of the HSUMC. And we also have a wonderful profile reprinted from the *The Call* (Holston Conference) of Daniel Ferkin, the archivist for the Holston Conference. Daniel is a great guy, who quietly, and with great skill and dedication, keeps the history of Holston organized and accessible. He has made a real difference in the Holston archives. All of us know other archivists and historians throughout Methodism who each day make a difference in our shared "ministry of memory." They are a sign of hope in this Advent season. To each of them, and the work they do so faithfully, we dedicate this issue of *Historian's Digest*.

May all of you have a Merry Christmas.

Mike Feely, Co-editor



SEJ Archives and History Update

Besides being the co-editor of the *Historian's Digest*, I also have the privilege to serve on the Southeastern Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History. I wanted to update you on

some of our recent activities and news. Here is an excerpt from the report we gave at the recent November meeting of the SEJ at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. The report focused on the upcoming retirement of Nancy Watkins and the closing of the Heritage Center at Lake Junaluska.

I want to briefly update you on some of the upcoming activities and changes relative to our commission and of the SEJ Heritage Center here at Lake Junaluska. Since 1996, the SEJ Heritage Center has served as the official repository for the records of the SEJ and its agencies.

First, we want to take a moment to thank the SEJ and the United Methodists in the southeast for your ongoing financial support of our work in stewarding and preserving the history of Methodism in the SEJ and its member conferences. One of the key persons in helping to collect and preserve that history has been our archivist, Nancy Watkins. Nancy has been a wonderful archivist and has faithfully served in that position since May 2010. She has announced her retirement and will be retiring as of May 2023.

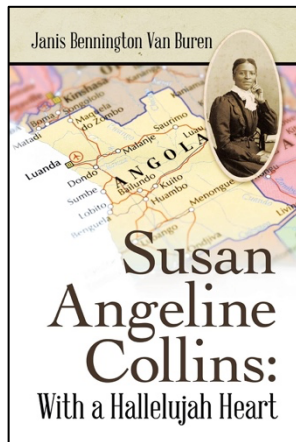
In light of her retirement, as well as some expected changes in our jurisdictional funding, our commission has made some decisions to help preserve our historical records and provide them with some long-term sustainability. We have made the decision to move the records and archives of the SEJ to Emory University's Pitts Theology Library in Atlanta (in summer 2023).

....It is important to note that as part of our formal agreement with Emory, Pitts Library will continue to include open access for researchers and scholars to view and use the records of the SEJ, and that Pitts will receive future SEJ records (including the records and journal of this conference).

.....The SEJ will continue to have an active Commission on Archives and History, and we will continue to lift up the ever changing Methodist history that we are all part of.

Michael Feely, SEJAH

BOOK REVIEWS



Susan Angeline Collins With a Hallelujah Heart.
By Janis Bennington Van Buren (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2021) Pp. 382.

In *Susan Angeline Collins With a Hallelujah Heart*, Janis Van Buren traces the life story of one of the few African American women who served as a missionary in Africa in the Methodist Episcopal Church. With only a minimum of primary sources, Van Buren has developed an amazingly complete picture of Collins' life from her birth in Illinois in 1851, to her more than 30 years of missionary service in Africa, and finally to her retirement in Iowa and her death at age 89. Through in-depth research Van Buren creates in great detail the context in which Susan lived her life: her travels while growing up first to Wisconsin and then to Fayette, Iowa, which she eventually called home, her attendance at Iowa University from 1876-1879 and her subsequent move to the Dakotas Territory from 1882-1885. Eventually, Collins moved to Chicago where she pursued her dreams of becoming a missionary when she enrolled in the newly opened Chicago Training School (CTS) for City, Home, and Foreign Missionaries, becoming the first African American graduate of the school. She was subsequently accepted by Bishop William Taylor as a missionary to Africa, where she served two years in the Belgian Congo before becoming the first African American female Methodist Episcopal missionary in Angola, serving there for 31 years.

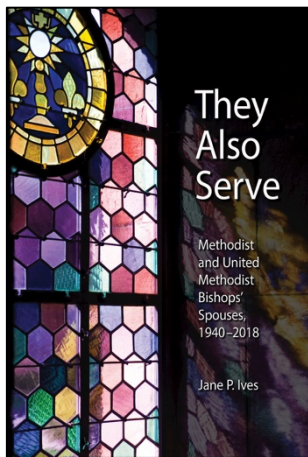
Van Buren describes in great depth the context in which Collins lived, including descriptions of social, economic, and political life as it would have been when Collins was living, as well as addressing issues of gender, race, and religion, focusing especially as they related to African Americans.

The primary focus of the book, however, is on Susan's life in Africa, where she spent 33 years as a "stalwart missionary leader, teacher, nurse construction manager and surrogate mother" (back cover) to hundreds of young native African women. Collins served far longer than many missionaries at the time. When she took her first furlough in 1900, she was nearing the age of 50 which the Missionary Society considered retirement age for missionaries, concerned that lack of stamina might led to their death overseas. Susan, however, met with the Pacific Branch of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, which agreed to continue her support and she served until age 67. As noted, not only did she continue as a teacher, she also oversaw the construction of a number of buildings which served as classrooms and living quarters for the young women who boarded at the school in Quessua.

Collins' story is one of faith and strength amidst circumstances where few African Americans had previously walked and that are hard to imagine in Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is also the story of the amazing difference that one individual who came from an unlikely background can make in the lives of untold numbers of individuals.

A must read for anyone who is interested in missionary life and service in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Africa and would make a great addition to the United Women in Faith (formerly the UMW) Reading List.

Rev. Patricia J. Thompson



***They Also Serve: Methodist and United Methodist Bishops' Spouses, 1940-2018*, by Jane P. Ives. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020. Pp. 459. \$29.99.**

In the *Introduction*, Jane P. Ives, herself a bishop's wife, states her goal of providing personal experiences and stories to counter the pedestal upon which those in the episcopacy find themselves (p. 7). This book chronicles the life experiences and witness of spouses of United Methodist bishops. Ives provides a thorough, well-researched, and authentic expression of Methodism from behind-the-scenes. She focuses on the experiences of those who historically have been in the public eye, but not often given voice.

The chronicle is broken into five major parts. Part One expresses the stories of episcopal elections from those whose lives are altered and disrupted by that event. It moves from the shock of election to the uprooting of lives, careers, and family units. Through the stories, the reader may discern a fraction of the challenges that these families face – racial discrimination, gender discrimination, chronic illness, social obligations, mental health, national crises, end-of-life care, newfound ministries, and social roles for fellow clergy. Additionally, it details the history of the spouses' fellowship and its ongoing evolution, including shifts in culture, denominations, norms, focus, and purpose.

Parts Two, Three, and Four offer stories from the differing ages of Methodism. Through charts of historical information, the reader may identify the episcopal couples, years elected, Methodist denomination affiliation, location of election, and episcopal assignments. These charts provide a digestible means for obtaining necessary details. More information, personal stories, and council meeting information are included as well. These sections focus on the historical details surrounding tenure, spousal events, and conversations.

Part Five provides an alphabetical roster and profile for each episcopal spouse from 1940 to 2018. Ives provides a snapshot of the spouses' lives and the "uniqueness she or he brought or brings to the role of Bishop's Spouse" (p. 8). These profiles include profession, ministry focuses, gifts and graces.

Due to the complexity of serving as historian for seventy-eight years of Methodist episcopal history, certain details have fallen through the cracks of reported history. Despite the difficulties of coordinating communications, sources, documents, and reporting, Ives reports what is available in a succinct fashion. The task of writing, securing, and reporting personal stories that are honest yet illumine the full breadth of experiences is no small feat. Ives successfully organizes the information in such a way that the reader follows the organization as it evolves from an organization focused on comradery, known as the Bishops' Wives Fellowship (p. 48), to a more inclusive Bishops' Spouses' Fellowship (p. 62).

This is an important work for Methodist history in that it shares the challenges of the eras without glossing over racism, sexism, discrimination, or problematic practices that have plagued Methodism.

Heather Moore
Religious Studies Program
West Virginia University

Holston archives revived, ready to help Methodists tell their stories

By Annette Spence

ATHENS, Tenn. -- When Daniel Ferkin walked in to his first day on the job as Holston Conference archivist, he encountered a jumbled room full of piled-up boxes.

It looked more like a college student's move-in day than a venerable collection of Methodist books and artifacts from as far back as the 1700s.

"It was chaos," recalls the Rev. Brad Scott, then president of the Holston Conference Historical Society.

Instead of turning away, Ferkin says he had a sense of, "I can do this." Fresh out of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a master's degree in library and information science, Ferkin had been warned about the archives' unorganized state by the search team that hired him.

"My first reaction was like, 'Oh, wow,'" Ferkin remembers. "It was overwhelming to be asked to do this but I also thought, 'Hey, they actually trust me to do this.'"

Since then, the archivist has worked diligently for three years in a basement at Tennessee Wesleyan University. Even through the challenges of a pandemic, he chipped away at organizing and shelving 480 cubic feet of records that not only include books and church histories, but also a circuit rider's saddle and hewn logs from a house where Francis Asbury preached.



Along the way, the Memphis native who was raised Jewish ("specifically reformed Judaism," he says) has looked through many windows into the United Methodist history of Holston Conference.

"Going through the collection, I have seen quite the diversity of thought and perspectives from Methodists going back to the late 1700s to the present," he says. "I am especially impressed by their dedication to education and literacy at a time long before public education was the norm."

Formally established in the 1940s, Holston Conference's archive collection was housed for decades at Emory & Henry College in Emory, Virginia. The archives were relocated in 2016 when the college experienced budget cuts and needed the space, according to the Rev. Charles Maynard, a Holston historian.

The collection was moved to Sevierville, Tennessee -- to a large church building then known as the "Connexion" -- leased by Holston's congregational development office. When the lease was up in 2018, Holston staff moved the archives again to rented storage in Knoxville, Tennessee, until a partnership and space could be arranged with Tennessee Wesleyan University.

"I give thanks to God for the good stewardship of President [Harley] Knowles and the administration and trustees of Tennessee Wesleyan for giving us a home," the Rev. David St. Clair said in July 2018. "I think Tennessee Wesleyan and Athens are a very fitting location for these vital assets." St. Clair was then chair of the Holston Commission on Archives and History.

The relocations destroyed most of the cataloging, which is where Ferkin comes in, Scott said. "I saw the

archives after he started working on them. He had to reinvent all that.”

Ferkin’s first day was June 10, 2019. While the Holston Annual Conference was in session in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, Ferkin began unpacking the boxes 150 miles away in Tennessee Wesleyan’s Sherman Hall.

A month later, he took his first “reference request,” an inquiry from someone looking for assistance with a research question. By October 2019, all the books were unpacked and placed on shelves. By July 2020, all the boxes were organized, placed on shelves, and initial processing was completed.

To date, Ferkin has answered 169 reference requests. He has taught classes, worked with interns and hosted visitors, including a group of Baptist preachers who wanted to see the Bible that belonged to 19th century evangelist and circuit rider Robert Sheffey.

This summer, the entirety of the collection was reprocessed and cataloged.

“The majority of the collection, give or take 70%, is materials from Holston Conference churches, institutions, universities, clergy, and lay people,” Ferkin says.

About 20% is related to the general United Methodist Church institutions, including General Conference minutes, various periodicals, and materials from neighboring districts formerly part of Holston Conference.

“The remaining part of the collection, or about 10%, deals with general historical materials dealing with East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, and a variety of unique documents and artifacts held by Holston clergy but not specifically related to Methodism,” he added.

The collection houses more than 1,100 biographical files on individual Holston ministers and notables, 600 to 700 church histories, over 1,400 books, 82 reels of microfilm, 220 audiocassettes, 50 VHS cassettes and DVDs, 20 framed works of art and nearly two dozen unique historical artifacts.

The archive also includes newspaper editions of “The Call” and its predecessor publications dating back to 1827. (Holston’s official newspaper, “The Call” converted from newsprint to digital in January 2011.)

In addition to Sheffey’s Bible and the saddle belonging to the Rev. Charles Andrew Pangle of Wise, Virginia (a picture shows him saddling up in 1912), the archive includes a 1792 “Book of Discipline.”

A graduate of the University of Memphis with a bachelor’s degree in cultural anthropology, Ferkin says he’s not only impressed by the early Methodists’ founding of colleges that still exist today, including Tennessee Wesleyan. He’s also impressed that Methodists seemed “ahead of their time” in dedication to social justice.

“Religion as a whole gets labeled with a reactionary connotation, and there were and still are divisive debates within Methodism about the role of the church in social issues,” he said. “But going through different items in the collection has illustrated to me that there were many people in Methodism who saw combating social inequality and injustice as inseparable from their faith.”

Ferkin cited a magazine that shows Methodist college students fighting segregation and racism in the 1940s and 1950s, a time when “most of white America was indifferent to civil rights.” In the 1960s and ‘70s, the same “Motive Magazine” showed Methodists speaking up for the rights of women and the LGBTQ community and against the Vietnam War.

“I want the archive to be a place that celebrates diversity and openness, a place that allows for everyone to be

able to utilize in their own way,” Ferkin said. “I want to demonstrate that by showcasing how many Methodists throughout history took stands against injustice and sought to promote a more equitable world for everyone.”

Thirty new collections have been added to the archive since Ferkin started in 2019, and he’s interested in adding more, especially items beyond the 1990s, where the archive seems to “top off.”

An upcoming initiative and challenge, both Ferkin and Scott noted, is accessing the written histories and other artifacts of local churches that disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. As Holston Conference approaches its 200th anniversary in 2024, historians are discussing ways to commemorate the milestone as well as how to relate with disaffiliated churches -- “because we share a common history,” Scott said. For Ferkin, the archives’ mission statement provides guidance in how to approach the next era:

The Holston Archive seeks to preserve and provide access to local and regional Methodist history to both assist in maintaining the history and legacy of the United Methodist Church in Holston and to assist in facilitating Holston communities to be able to tell their stories.

“My job is not just to maintain these documents and artifacts, but to allow people to interact with them in a meaningful way,” he said.

The pieces of stories that are now carefully cataloged and cared for on the bottom floor of Sherman Hall are ready and available to shed light on where the Methodists have been and where they’re going.

Annette Spence is editor of *The Call*, the newsletter of the Holston Conference, which includes 842 United Methodist congregations in East Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, and North Georgia. This story originally appeared in the November 16, 2022, edition. Reprinted with permission.



Save the Date

HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

May 15-18, 2023

In Pennsylvania

Hosted by Susquehanna Conference
and NEJ

More details to follow. Check the
HSUMC website for details: TBA
<https://www.umchistory.org>

HSUMC Membership Information

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Membership information and form are also
available at

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Grain and the Gospel: The Shetland Mission

By Heather Leslie Hammer

Most people think of Scotland with Presbyterian roots, but if you travel far north to the Shetland Islands, you'll find Methodist chapels everywhere. In fact, today there are thirteen Methodist congregations in Shetland, which comprise a District of the Methodist Church of Great Britain. Though the Shetland Isles measure a mere 567 square miles (less than the size of London) and boast only a population of 23,000, Methodists are their largest denomination.

A twelve-hour ferry takes passengers from the city of Aberdeen in Northern Scotland to Lerwick, a town on the island called Mainland of the Shetland Islands. Shetland is so far north, that it does not appear on most maps of Great Britain, unless in a small inset box. With sixteen habitable islands, Shetland is the farthest north bit of land in the United Kingdom.

Haroldswick Methodist Church on the island of Unst is the most northern of all Methodist Churches. This beautiful Norwegian stave kirk reflects the proximity of Norway and the Norse influences in language and culture on Shetland. At the winter solstice, the people of Unst enjoy only five and a half hours of daylight. In every season, this part of the world is windy, cold, and remote.

Setting has always been an important aspect of mission work. First, the *location* of the Shetland Islands made them distant and hard to get to. And second, *time* in history meant that the 1800s with great social change made nineteenth-century Shetland ripe for mission.

Irish Catholic monks had arrived at St. Ninian's Isle in the fourth century, the first to bring Christianity to the Northern Islands. St. Ninian built a chapel on a grassy island connected to Mainland, Shetland by a narrow tombolo, a natural sand causeway with sea on either side. The island today only inhabits seabirds and sometimes sheep, that is, when a shepherd walks his flock across the sandy strip. Otherwise, only an occasional tourist enjoys the peaceful walk and spectacular view.

In the sixteenth century, Scotland became Presbyterian, influenced by John Knox, the Reformer from East Lothian, Scotland. What is today the Church of Scotland was then called the Established Church, or the "Kirk," founded in 1560. In general, the Kirk supported Scottish landowners, called "lairds," who leased land to Shetland "crofters."

The life of John Wesley, the father of Methodism, spanned the eighteenth century, 1703-1791. Itinerant ministry took Wesley by horseback to villages throughout England, Wales, Ireland, and, in 1751, into parts of Scotland, but not as far north as Shetland.

After Wesley's death, the Wesleyan Movement sent Methodist ministers from England to Australia, Canada, India, Antigua, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, China, and Shetland by its Missionary Society established in 1818. The poor tenant families of the Shetland Islands opened their hearts to Methodist missionaries who brought grain and the gospel by ship from England.

The nineteenth century was a period of great upheaval throughout the British Isles. The linen industry led; then cotton, jute, and woolen mills followed. The first steam engines came to Scotland in 1831, and engineering and shipbuilding grew rapidly. Industrialization caused cities to grow, resulting in increased urban poverty and conditions of poor sanitation and disease. The effects of urbanization hit Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland first. Shetland, in the far north, remained agrarian longer, but poverty burgeoned nonetheless, due to an unjust system where the wealthy lairds held their tenants beholden to them. The impoverished crofters fished, produced meager crops, and knit for the laird. They were required to pay their tithe, or else they were cleared from the land.

In 2018, my husband and I visited the very croft house where my great-great-grandparents lived in the hamlet of Exnaboe in South Mainland, Shetland. With my father's genealogical records I have constructed a timeline of the lives of Ann and Robert Leslie and their nine children from 1829 to 1873. Using their birth and death dates, as well as the causes of their deaths, I have written a historical novel, called *Shetland Mist: A Shetland Family in the Methodist Movement*, available from Wipf & Stock Publishers and on Amazon.com.ⁱ

My family's story is typical of the plight of crofting families in Shetland in the nineteenth century. Ann and Robert Leslie lived in a two-room stone croft house with attached byre for the animals and barn for the grain. The children came along every two to three years. They were home-schooled and they shared the chores. Robert was a fisherman on a sixareen, an open sailboat with six oars. He fished in the deep waters most days and nights, and he gave his catch to the laird as required payment for the rent. While he was away, Ann tended the fields of barley and oats, cared for the cow and sheep, cooked, taught the children their lessons, and kept a garden. In every free moment she knitted. Knitwear brought in money from traders in Lerwick and went to pay the laird a portion of the crofter's tithe.

The first Methodist to preach in Shetland was a layman by the name of John Nicholson. Born in 1790, Nicholson had grown up in Shetland in a croft house and in his teens went to serve in His Majesty's Royal Artillery Company. At the Tower of London he met a Methodist who led him to worship at Wesley's Chapel in City Road. He attended class meetings and became an exhorter in the London East Circuit. Then in about 1819, Nicholson took the model of Wesleyan discipleship back to Shetland and developed class meetings with Bible study, prayer, and mutual support for the people on the west side of Shetland's Mainland.

Nicholson met a Scottish Methodist preacher, the Reverend Daniel M'Allum, MD, born in Inverness in 1794, who promoted the idea of raising funds and sending missionaries to the Northern Islands. The Reverend Adam Clarke, a scholarly Scot from Ireland, was elected President of the Wesleyan Conference in 1822. At the age of fourteen Clarke had been personally invited by John Wesley to attend a Methodist seminary. Clarke became a leading theologian and three-time Conference President, as well as the most instrumental missionary leading the effort to bring Methodism to Shetland. To demonstrate his commitment, Clarke gave ten guineas toward the erection of a Methodist chapel in Lerwick, the main town.ⁱⁱ

In 1821 the Conference appointed the Reverends John Raby and Samuel Dunn, young English ministers, to the Shetland mission. After serving there two years, Adam Clarke recruited two more missionaries, John and Mary Lewis, who arrived in Lerwick in 1823.

John Lewis kept a journal, which has been edited by Harold R. Bowes and titled *Two Calves in the House: Being the Shetland Journal of the Reverend John Lewis 1823-1825*. The journal details the life of a nineteenth-century island preacher, walking through the bogs and rain, preaching in chapels and homes, traveling on open boats in stormy weather, and sleeping in crofthouses—even with calves and sheep in the same room. Almost every day, John Lewis led a two-or-three-hour worship service. His wife led bands and counseled with the Shetland women, whose grief was great when their husbands and sons were lost at sea and babies died of typhus or cholera.ⁱⁱⁱ

Samuel Dunn formed the Lerwick Society and purchased land for a chapel and mission house in Lerwick in 1824. By 1827, Adam Clarke claimed that “the Shetland mission was the most important and successful of all missions, either foreign or domestic.” Methodism could boast 1,435 members out of a population of 30,000 in 1831. In 1860 the Lerwick church was rebuilt with a manse, and by 1866, two-fifths of Scottish Methodists were Shetlanders. The people of Lerwick celebrated a Methodist Jubilee in 1872. Today the Shetland Museum Archives describe the close connection between Shetland and Methodism. The roles of the laity in class meetings, serving as trustees, stewards, class leaders and local preachers, reveal much about the daily life of Shetlanders during the 1800s.^{iv}

Why was the Methodist mission so successful in Shetland? The answer is grain and the gospel. Methodism brought needed “meal roads”—grain during times of famine—and roads to deliver it by pony-drawn cart. It brought preachers—clergy and lay—to speak not about sin and damnation, as the Established Church preached, but about serving God and one’s neighbor. People supported each other in bands and societies and met regularly for Bible study in class meetings. The Methodists were Arminian, focused on free will, rather than on Calvinism and predestination. The ministers and Shetlanders built chapels of local stone with imported wood from Norway for benches, for there were no trees on the island. A great religious revival swept through the British Isles, and in 1843 the “Great Disruption” created a turning point when Free Churches broke away from the Established Church, and people walked out of their churches and found new ways to live faithfully. Whereas the Church of Scotland supported the lairds and trucking system, the Methodists did not. Methodist congregations grew and provided hope to people who often had barely enough to eat. The people in this remote place were hungry for grain to eat and spiritual food to nourish their souls.

In 1886 the Crofters Holdings Act eliminated the system of crofters paying tithes to landowners and instead granted the people land tenure. By then the lairds had cleared many crofters from their land and created large profitable sheep farms. My great-grandfather emigrated by steamship to America before that in 1873.

Robert Leslie, settled in Tolono, Illinois and worked as station agent at the railway depot where two great railroads crossed. He married another Scottish immigrant, Mary Campbell. Their children all attended the University of Illinois just up the tracks in Urbana, and two earned advanced degrees at Boston University School of Theology. William Leslie served as pastor of St. Mark’s Methodist Church in Brookline, MA for many years, and Elmer Leslie taught Old Testament at B.U.S.T. Elmer’s son was my father, Robert Campbell Leslie, who taught pastoral psychology and counseling at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. His brother, James Stewart Leslie, another Methodist minister, served in campus ministry at Ohio Wesleyan in Delaware, OH. His daughter, Kristen Leslie, teaches pastoral care at Eden Seminary in St. Louis, MO., and I am a United Methodist minister in Livermore, CA, grateful for my Shetland roots.

Today in Shetland there are jobs because oil was discovered at Sullom Voe in the North Sea in 1979, and life changed for the people of the northern islands. Planes fly into Sumburgh Airport daily with products from around the world. We all know that the Shetlanders have their cell phones, because we’ve watched Detective

Jimmy Perez on the BBC series, “Shetland,” based on books by Ann Cleeves. Although there are some patches of remote land where there is poor reception, Shetland is now well connected with the world. Cruise ships stop at the Lerwick harbor every summer, and the Methodist Church serves sandwiches to the visiting tourists.^v

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ⁱ Heather Leslie Hammer, *Shetland Mist: A Shetland Family in the Methodist Movement* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2022).

ⁱⁱ Adam Clarke, *The Life and Labours of Adam Clarke*, (London: Longman & Company, 1842), Chapter XIII, pp. 210-225.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=GERfAAAAcAAJ&pg=PR9&lpg=PR9&dq=Adam+Clarke+in+Shetland&source=bl&ots=17DTzC7tWq&sig=mvGcon0Ei5Yet2pI15b4Uxo8Yw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiyvJCNgYfVAhVL6GMKHYrRARkQ6AEIPzAF#v=onepage&q=Adam%20Clarke%20in%20Shetland&f=false>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Harold R. Bowes, *Two Calves in the House: Being the Shetland Journal of the Reverend John Lewis 1823-1825*, (Lerwick, UK: Shetland Amenity Trust, 2005).

^{iv} Shetland Museum Archives,
info@shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk.

^v The Rev. Dr. Andrew Fox is the Superintendent Minister of the Shetland District of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, and minister of the Adam Clarke Memorial Methodist Church in Lerwick, as well as churches in Scalloway, Fair Isle, Whiteness, and Ireland (Shetland). For more information:
<https://www.shetlandmethodistdistrict.org.uk/who-we-are>
https://www.mywesleyanmethodists.org.uk/content/chapels/scotland/adam_clarke_memorial_chapel_lerwick



and
Happy New Year!