

HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



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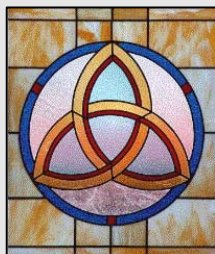
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A Message from our President



Greetings, HSUMC Members!

It had been my hope back when we had our Zoom meeting in the Fall that I would by now be able to announce our next in-person gathering. Alas, we are still not quite there yet despite the progress that has been made at moving through our global pandemic. Instead, I will be getting with our leadership to plan another virtual meeting for this fall with eyes on 2022 for our next in-person gathering.

In the meantime, I thought it would be interesting to challenge our group to share some more localized Wesleyan/Methodist history. Debbie and I have been blessed to serve in several historic churches and communities here in the Florida Annual Conference. During our seven years in Key West at the First United Methodist "Old Stone" Church, we helped celebrate their 150th anniversary. We learned that it was from this church that Methodist mission work was begun in Cuba and up the Florida Keys. We also had the privilege of helping merge three of the remaining four United Methodist churches in Key West into the Key West UMC which has now celebrated its 25th (and 175th of Methodism in Key West) anniversary.

In our appointment to Grace UMC in Merritt Island we got to be in ministry with a bunch of rocket scientists (Merritt Island is the home of Kennedy Space Center). Another member of our church was JoAnn Rose, widow of the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Ray Rose. As her pastor, I loved to hear stories from JoAnn about their time at Lovely Lane Church in the 1950's when Ken was Pastor. While Ken was pastor, the name was restored to Lovely Lane and the Museum created. JoAnn passed along several personal artifacts of theirs to me knowing my love for Methodist history. One of these items is an 1877 bound annual report of the Light Street ME Church (antecedent of the Lovely Lane Church) which not only has a

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complete history of the church and all the pastors and lay persons who served her, but also the current membership at that time. Exploring this book linked me with family members who were active in the church in 1877.

My current appointment, First UMC of Homestead, Florida traces its history directly to the founding of the city with its ties to the construction of Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad that connected the Florida East Coast Railroad to Key West in 1912. Homestead had both northern and southern versions of the Methodist Church with the first dating back to 1909. It only took these two congregations 20 years to figure out what it would take our predecessor denominations another 10 years: that we would be stronger as one. In 1929, North and South came together into one church here in Homestead. It was probably one of the earliest such mergers (there were some earlier in our country's southwest).



In addition to this bit of history, I also discovered that we have a part of a much larger rose window adorning our sanctuary that used to be in the Lady Huntingdon Chapel in Brighton, England. That chapel was built in the 1870's on the site of the



original chapel sponsored by early Methodist, The Countess of Huntingdon, Selina Hastings who became a member of The Methodist Society in 1739. When this chapel was razed in the 1970's, a member of First UMC of

Homestead was able to purchase the center portion of the rose window and have it shipped to the US and installed in our sanctuary. This beautiful window gives our congregation a tangible connection all the way back to the Wesleys and their 18th Century movement called Methodists.

Those are a few of the local (or locally provided) stories I've encountered over the years.



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GCHA General Secretary Column



Greetings United
Methodist Historical
Society,

Speaking of transitions, I am delighted to be writing to you all as the new General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History! These

past six months have been a dream come true for me, stepping into this position at such a time as this. For me, everyday life this past year (plus a few months) seemed like it was mired in inaction. My family, as much as all of us, has been quarantined at home for varying amounts of time, doing the same routine with the same people waiting for some sort of transition back to “normalcy” to begin. Upon reflection, however, what seemed like a stagnant year, was actually full of transition. My family welcomed a baby girl into our quarantined world, said goodbye to loved ones too early, moved to a new state, ended old jobs and began new ones. If I’ve learned anything over this last year, it’s that there is no going back to normal after COVID-19. We’re all in this state of transition together and what the outcome looks like is yet to be determined. For now, let’s focus on transitioning into a world that is more equitable for all, one that values history and the humanities, one that truly lives into our Wesleyan mandate to do no harm and do good.

Things aren’t the same at GCAH, either. We’ve been in an almost constant state of transition. Here’s a snippet of changes that are being implemented as we speak:

Our staff has been hard at work preparing new types of resources for Heritage Sunday 2021 under the theme, [“Pride, Shame, and Pain: Methodism’s History with Racism and Efforts to Dismantle It.”](#) Exploring United Methodism’s history of racism began under my predecessors, but I intend to keep GCAH focus on the work of anti-racism through an honest, open, and complete account of how Methodists have been complicit in sustaining and dismantling racism in our denomination(s). If

you haven’t already, please explore our workbook (and whole host of other materials), designed for individual, congregational, and group study use. The resources produced up until this point have reflected upon anti-Black racism and will be expanded in the near future to include other oppressed groups. We will be using our Heritage Sunday webpage to add additional resources for you all to use throughout the year. Keep checking back in with us as you plan the rest of 2021.

We are incredibly excited about our new podcast, [Un-Tied Methodism](#), available via Spotify. So far, we’ve released four episodes, all pertaining to the Heritage Sunday theme. Our first episode, “Racism in the System,” explores how racism and colonialism are embedded in our Methodist past and (in)visible in today’s denomination. The second, “Methodism in DC,” looks at the historic relationship between Asbury UMC, Foundry UMC, and John Wesley AME Zion, three Methodist-affiliated congregations just half a mile apart from each other, all with common roots. The third episode, “The Cross and Flame Logo,” asks why we have a logo and what different connotations does it have in the U.S. and across the globe. The fourth episode, “Wellspring UMC: A Local Church History,” hears from United Methodist leaders in the New England Annual Conference who found KKK regalia in the cornerstone of a local church. Our upcoming episode (end of June 2021) will examine why Methodists prefer Welch’s Grape Juice to Mott’s. Subscribe to this podcast in order to follow along as we examine the roots of the UMC (and its antecedent denominations) to understand why the UMC is the way that it is and maybe figure out where we might be going.

As a member of the Historical Society, you receive a subscription to *Methodist History*. Changes are coming to this journal about which I’m quite excited. Beginning January 2022, *Methodist History* will be an imprint of Penn State University Press. GCAH will still maintain ownership and control of its content, but all subscriptions will be handled through Penn State. I’ll have more details for you on the logistics of this transition and what it means for you as a subscriber. The main thing you need to know is that we’ll be transitioning from four issues

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Editor's Column: Mike Feely

A time of transition.....



Dear readers of the Historians Digest,

It is with great joy that we bring to you this first edition of the *Historian's Digest* for 2021! The theme for this issue is **"Transitions,"** which admittedly may be an understatement for the recent times in which we all have been living. All of us have had to adapt and change in some significant ways during this past year, and the *Historian's Digest* has gone through its own changes as well! After many years of great writing and editing, Pat Thompson retired from her position as editor of *Historians Digest*. She has left some huge shoes to fill, and her editorial duties have been taken over by me and Debbie Corbin. This issue is definitely a team effort, and I am grateful for Pat's guidance during this time, and Debbie's hard work in getting this issue to "press."

Our articles celebrate some significant pieces of United Methodist history, and some significant persons who cared deeply about United Methodist history. We hope that you will enjoy this issue. Our plan is to have two more issues coming out this year. The next issue will be in late September before our October 30 fall meeting. We will have a final issue for 2021 coming out in early December, and then hope in 2022 to be back on a regular schedule.

As for a little personal background, I serve as the new executive director of Mountain T.O.P., a UMC connected mission outreach in the south Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee. I have an M.Div. from Wesley Theological Seminary and am working on an M.A. in history at Missouri State University. I am active in the Holston Conference Historical society and will be serving (beginning this fall) on the

Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Archives and History.

As always, we welcome your feedback and especially welcome any articles that you would like to submit. This publication is designed to serve all with an interest in our United Methodist history, as well as our wider Methodist and Wesleyan history. We certainly are interested in articles from Methodist history in the United States but are also hoping to be publishing material related to Methodism around the world. We welcome your articles and announcements of every size and subject.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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Debbie Corbin



I am a "preacher's kid", "a missionary kid," a seminary graduate, pastor's wife, and mother of two clergy children. My experience in ministry, particularly Methodist ministry, is definitely varied, and my connections span generations in the past as well as into the future. I have worked in the field of Christian Education and teaching, but currently my role is focused on being a ministry support and partner to my husband, Ivan. History, and particularly genealogical history, have been important areas of interest and research in our household for years.

As we put together this new issue of the *Historian's Digest*, my role has been on the production end. While we have moved to a primarily digital format, we are mindful that not everyone is comfortable with reading a newsletter online. I understand this fully and I will usually print out all or portions of newsletters like this in order to have a hard copy for reference. We appreciate your understanding of the stewardship of resources that have gone into this decision.

Please let us know how we can make this a better and more informative publication for you.

Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Old Otterbein, Baltimore



*by Daniel B. Fisher and
Cynthia Horn Burkert*

In 1771 a movement of German-speaking Reformed Christians, seeking a “true spiritual life”, formed an independent church in Baltimore Town, in the Colony of Maryland. They purchased property at the corner of what is now Conway and Sharp Streets. Two and one-half centuries later, Old Otterbein United Methodist Church continues to embody the legacy of that group of German-speaking Christians. On the corner they purchased 250 years ago, their spiritual descendants still worship, celebrate, form disciples, and most importantly, go out in mission – a vital congregation for the 21st century.

Throughout 2021, Old Otterbein will be celebrating under the theme of “**RENEWAL: A True Spiritual Life**”, in cooperation with the General Commission on Archives and History and the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Old Otterbein claims the oldest church edifice in Baltimore still in use, built in 1785. But the building’s completion is not the anniversary being acknowledged in 2021. Rather, it is the spiritual fervor and the tangible commitments of a community of recent immigrants that are cause for celebration. They established the cradle church for two strands of the Protestant family: United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB). Since the 1968 merger of the EUB and The Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church, Old Otterbein has been designated one of the denomination’s Historic

Shrines (now known as Heritage Landmarks, one of two in Baltimore, along with Lovely Lane.) Having escaped the Great Baltimore Fire of February 7, 1904, that destroyed 86 blocks of the city and came within two blocks of the church, Old Otterbein has the distinction of being at the same site since 1771, and in the same building for 236 of those years.

As early as 1758, there was a German Reformed Church in Baltimore meeting on Charles Street near Saratoga. Of Baltimore Town’s several thousand residents, it is known that there were so few Germans that the Town’s German Reformed, in larger numbers, and German Lutherans worshipped together. However, disputes arose when it came time to buy property and the resulting split yielded Zion Lutheran (founded 1755) and the German Reformed Church, located on North Charles Street. A minister came directly from Germany to take charge of the congregation in 1760, without being called by or any connection to the synod, which was based in Pennsylvania. John Christopher Faber proved to be unsatisfactory to many in his flock, was described as “formal and languid”, and was said to lead “an offensive life.”

Philip William Otterbein was one of six young ministers recruited by Michael Schlatter, organizer of the Reformed Church in America, at around the same time. Otterbein arrived at age 27 to serve churches on the western frontier, where his service in Frederick, Maryland, was described in the Reformed church minutes: “He has almost worked himself to death.” Even though he was not to serve the church he inspired until 1774, in those intervening years he apparently preached often in Baltimore and inspired a growing evangelical faction within the Baltimore church. These Christians’ growing desire for “a true spiritual life” came in conflict with the synod in Pennsylvania, which seemed unable to satisfy their desire for inspired pastoral leadership. Indeed, various sources point to the uneven quality of ministers sent to the little church at Baltimore, although it is probably true that the more outrageous the experience, the more likely the story survived.

The evangelical movement separated themselves under the leadership of Benedict Schwope, who preached his first sermon in November 1771. The new church community purchased four lots from the Cornelius/John Eager Howard families for 90 pounds (\$240.30) and built a log frame chapel on what is now Conway and Sharp Streets. The group adopted the name, "The German Evangelical Church of Howard's Hill". Significantly, the deed was not executed in the name of the German Reformed Church, which firmly established this as an independent church.

The population of Baltimore Town at the time was approximately 5,000, most of whom lived to the east side. "Howards Hill" was open country from the church site to what is now the Washington Monument, about a dozen blocks to the north. Sharp Street was known as Walnut Street, where mature trees shaded a brick walk around the church.

The following year, Joseph Pilmore, who had been sent by John Wesley to organize Methodist societies in America, needed a place for his 40 Baltimore followers to meet. Benedict Swope made his chapel available to them. Indeed, from the beginning the church's story was entwined with the history of the Methodists. It was on this site that the Lovely Lane Meetinghouse congregation was organized in June 1772. Bishop Francis Asbury insisted that Otterbein be present at his consecration at the 1784 Christmas Conference at Lovely Lane Chapel, during which the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded. Four months after Bishop Otterbein's death, Asbury preached a memorial service for Otterbein in the sanctuary. In fact, the existing structure is the only church in Baltimore still standing where Bishop Francis Asbury preached.

The year the Methodists built Lovely Lane Meeting House, 1774 – one year before the American Revolution began at Lexington and Concord – Pastor Benedict Schwope decided to take his evangelizing to the western frontier, which at that time was Kentucky. The church needed a new pastor, and Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury persuaded the 48-year-old Philip Wilhelm (William) Otterbein to

accept. It is notable that he had previously refused the synod's invitation, and been refused when suggested to the synod.

He was to remain pastor of the church that would bear his name for 39 years, until his death on November 17, 1813. His tomb is on the south side of the church building.

The spiritual descendants of Otterbein and those spiritually hungry Baltimoreans who set themselves down on a corner in Baltimore Town, live on in the community of Old Otterbein United Methodist Church, with its roots in the 1700s, and a vital and ongoing witness, across four centuries.

Throughout 2021, Old Otterbein will be celebrating under the theme of "RENEWAL: A True Spiritual Life", in cooperation with the General Commission on Archives and History of the UMC and the Baltimore Washington Conference. Old Otterbein 250th Anniversary Committee invites you to participate in events throughout the rest of 2021. Many will be available online, and several live events will also be available through YouTube and Facebook. The February 28, 2021, anniversary inaugural worship with guest preacher Rev. Dr. Terri Rae Chattin, a child of the EUB with roots in the United Brethren in Christ, is available on their YouTube channel. Links to worship, an upcoming organ concert (to be released on YouTube March 28, 2021) and a schedule of upcoming events is at oldotterbeinumc250.org. Invitations to a formal worship celebration with Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling on September 19, 2021, (admission by ticket only) will be sent in July 2021. Worship will be streamed on Facebook and recorded on YouTube.

A Capital Campaign to address current and ongoing restoration needs will be launched later in 2021 through Friends of Old Otterbein, a separate 501.c.3 corporation.

For more information: Rev. Cynthia H. Burkert, Retired Elder and Co-Chair
cindyburkert216@gmail.com

Mr. Daniel Fisher, President, Friends of Old Otterbein danielbfisher@me.com.

Clyta Faith Richardson (died April 21, 2020) New England Conference

Clyta Faith Richardson passed away quietly in the morning on April 21, 2020 in Watertown, Massachusetts at the age of 104. She is survived by daughters Joan Wrenn of Walnut Creek, California and Marla Richardson of Newton Massachusetts, granddaughter Erryn Yaacobi of Boca Raton, Florida, great-grandsons Joshua, Jacob, Jaret and Jed, and great granddaughters, Noa and Emma.

Born in Tacoma, Washington in 1915 to parents James Moore Simpson and Allie Blanche Marshall Simpson, Faith was a dedicated Methodist. She married H. Neil Richardson in 1939, lived in Massachusetts while Neil was in seminary at Boston University, then in Syracuse, New York, where Neil was a professor, then back to Newton, Massachusetts where she lived for 56 years in a three-story house on West Newton Hill.

In the course of her life, Faith worked in the Methodist Church, first as secretary to the Newtonville church, then as administrative assistant to Bishop James K. Matthews in Boston and Washington DC. After that she was called to be secretary to the Council of Bishops, editor of the Book of Discipline (1980 and 1984), and then secretary to General Conference for two quadrennial. When the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church (HSUMC) was organized in 1969, Faith was elected as the first treasurer. She served one term as Treasurer until 1993 when she was elected as President and served until 1997. Faith later wrote a history of the Historical Society (and the previous historical societies which led up to the organization of HSUMC) entitled *A Methodist Chronicle*. Faith also served as a member of the General Commission on Archives and History, as well as a member of the New England Conference Commission, and several of its predecessor bodies.

Faith was graced with good health all her life, was interested in genealogy, travelled around the globe with her late sister Jean Simpson Hanson for Methodist conferences and genealogical research.

Faith was pre-deceased by her husband Neil in 1988, her sister Jean, daughter Marsha Richardson and grandson Drew Marshall Harrington.

Rev. Roy Howard (August 13, 1930-September 19, 2020) Holston Conference

Rev. Howard served eight years as a member of the Holston Conference Commission on Archives and History and served twenty-eight years as president of the Holston Conference Historical Society and wrote several articles for the society. The following personal remembrance was written by his brother, the Rev. J.N. Howard, also of Holston Conference.

When I was born my brother, Roy Howard, was six years old. He lived to be 90 so I knew him first as a little brother trying to keep up, then as a youth who would have an example to follow, and then as a life-long adult to know as a foundation who was always there. Since I knew him for 90 years, I believe it is safe to say that no one living at the time of his death knew him better. In those long years I never knew him to be dishonest even when at times it must have hurt to be so, and I never knew him to serve self at the expense of anyone else.

To understand Roy best, we should consider two foundational elements in his life. They are, first of all, his happy godly parents, and second, his church of a vital, singing faith.

In our home godliness was not paraded or debated. It was just there in character, respect, patience, love, and practice.

In our church a positive faith was consistently proclaimed in Sunday School, Youth meetings, and especially in worship. This faith was not only expressed in sermon, but even more in song which could not have fitted Roy better. At our morning services we sang the great classic hymns from the Methodist hymnal. At our well attended evening services we sang thoroughly through the Cokesbury Worship Hymnal and the Upper Room Hymnal. We were blessed to have in our congregation a member who was a bank vice president, Mr. Floyd Spicer, but who had a great gift for leading congregational singing. St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians that in the church each of us is given different gifts within the Body of Christ. Roy's gift was music, a gift that was greatly enhanced in our church setting.

When Roy was six years old, he told our parents he wanted to join the church. They took him to the pastor since that seemed an early age for joining. After the pastor quizzed Roy, he told our parents, "Roy knows more about being a church member than most adults."

Roy loved God and he saw the church as "God's Place." That belief set the stage for much of what Roy did in the churches and the conference across all his years. By the time he was in high school Roy became sure of his call to ordained ministry. We were blessed in our church, the Ridgedale UMC, to be able eventually to number in the teens those who answered the call to pastoral or full-life mission ministry.

Roy pursued his education at Emory & Henry College and Candler School of Theology and was subsequently ordained as deacon and then elder and then appointed to numerous pastoral appointments throughout Holston Annual Conference.

Because the church was "God's Place", Roy was interested in anything the church was doing. This meant the conference, its churches, its leaders, and all its history. He was not just a "history buff." He thought it was highly important to know what had happened in "God's Place", be it in local churches, his own conference or in the broader Methodist church movement. His work in conference history leadership was because of that intense interest in what was going on in "God's Place."

And all the while Roy was expressing and developing his Spirit given gift of music. In junior high and high school sang and soloed in choral groups; at Emory and Henry College he sang and again a soloed in the all-male chorus, The Collegians; when he became a pastor, he directed many of his church choirs, arranging music to fit the voices available in each place. Eventually he arranged music for himself and his two pastor brothers, J. N. and Marvin, to sing trios. For many years they sang together in revivals, camp meetings and in sessions of the Holston Annual Conference. In all these endeavors Roy was giving full voice to glad witness in "God's Place."

To some people Roy's conversations could sometimes seem blunt, but that was because he had never learned to dissemble or to "color" the truth. When I talked to Roy for advice or information, I always knew it would be straight forward with no shading of direct truth.

Roy was God's man. In serving churches, in playing or singing music, in researching history or writing it, he was doing it for "God's Place."

"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys of your Lord."

*Well done,
good and faithful servants!*

Rev. Dr. William Bobby McClain (May 19, 1938-November 18, 2020)
Baltimore-Washington Conference

Dr. McClain was a longtime supporter, member and friend of the work of the HSUMC. The following biography was written by Melissa Lauber and Erik Alsgaard of the Baltimore-Washington Conference staff and is shared with permission.

**A Brief Biography of
The Rev, Dr. William Bobby McClain**

Dr. William Bobby McClain earned his B.A. degree, *summa cum laude*, at Clark College, Atlanta. His Master's and doctoral degrees were earned at Boston University School of Theology. He conceived of and chaired the committee which produced the hymnbook, *Songs of Zion*, which sold more than 2.5 million copies and changed the composition of Christian hymnals of every denomination. He most recently co-chaired the committee for the sequel to *Songs of Zion: Zion Still Sings! For Every Generation*. After the publication of *Songs of Zion*, he wrote *Come Sunday: A Liturgical Companion to Songs of Zion*, and he is at work completing *African American Preaching and the Bible: The Preaching of Zion*, the third book in this trilogy.

In 1978, Dr. McClain established and served as the executive director the Multi- Ethnic Center for Ministry at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. There he wrote *Travelling Light: Christian Perspectives on Pluralism*. He is also the author of *Black People in the Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest* and with the late Dr. Grant Shockley and Dr. Karen Collier, *Heritage and Hope: African American Presence in Methodism*.

In 1991, his Clark Atlanta University alma mater awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his achievements in religion and civil rights. In 1999, he was named to the Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce Chair in Preaching and

Worship at Wesley Theological Seminary, the first fully-endowed chair in the seminary's history, where he taught preaching and worship for 34 years. He was the commencement speaker for Wesley's Commencement in 2013, held at Washington National Cathedral on May 13, retired from the seminary on December 31, 2013, and is now Professor Emeritus.

Professor McClain met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Montgomery, Alabama, where Dr. King was pastoring and McClain was a teen-aged preacher in his hometown of Gadsden, Alabama. After completing his seminary degree at Boston University, where King had previously received his doctorate, Reverend McClain returned to Alabama in 1962 to work with King and the civil rights movement and to serve as pastor of Haven Chapel Methodist Church in Anniston, Alabama, where he remained until returning to graduate school at Boston University in the fall of 1964.

From 1968 to 1978, Dr. McClain, an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, served as senior pastor of the historic Union United Methodist Church in Boston. During that same period he taught at Boston College, Harvard University, Northeastern University and Emerson College. While at Union, he and the Rev. Warner Traynham of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church in Boston organized the nation's first Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast on January 15, 1970. To this day, it is Boston's go-to event every January.

From 2001-2003 Dr. McClain served as the Senior Pastor of Philadelphia's Tindley Temple United Methodist Church where the great Charles Albert Tindley served as pastor and wrote many of his famous and beloved Gospel songs.

Called on frequently to lecture and preach in major pulpits and universities throughout this country and abroad, he has preached in Africa, Asia, the West Indies, New Zealand, and Europe. Professor McClain opened the 126th season of the New York Chautauqua Institution in 2000 as Keynote Preacher and Chaplain-in-Residence

with thousands in attendance to listen to his preaching each day. In February of 2009, he lectured in Honolulu, Hawaii, as the 30th Annual Britt Lecturer.

Dr. McClain serves as the Advisory Board Chairperson for the Center for Music and Worship in the Black Church Experience, a one-of-a-kind North American institute that provides training in the sacred music of the Black church and beyond to musicians and worship leaders for the enrichment of congregational worship in diverse contexts.

He also serves as Vice President of the United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History, and writes and reviews features in their publications.

In July of 2015, Dr. McClain was awarded the Roger Deschner Award by the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts. In September of 2015, he was honored as one of the Outstanding Alumni of Boston University School of Theology.

From July 1, 2017, until June 30, 2018, Dr. McClain served as Interim Senior Pastor for Union UMC in Boston for one year.

Dr. McClain is the father of two sons: William Bobby McClain, Jr. and David Wilson McClain. He and his wife, the former Jo Ann Mattos, who was the executive administrator of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church for more than 12 years, make their home in Fort Washington, Maryland.



"This is the sum of Christian perfection: It is all comprised in that one word, Love."

-John Wesley

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What stories have you discovered where you are serving or have served (or have attended)? We would love for you to share some of these for future inclusion in our newsletter happy hunting! Stay tuned for information about our next virtual meeting as well as plans for our first in person gathering.

In Christ's service,

Ivan G. Corbin

Ivan G. Corbin, President, HSUM

Request to join the **Google Groups HSUMC-chat** as another way to keep connected with other Historical Society members.

<https://groups.google.com/d/forum/hsumc-chat>

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per year to two issues per year, but these two issues will be larger issues. We aren't decreasing the number of articles per year, just the number of issues per year.

Towards the end of the year (fingers crossed) GCAH will have a new website! Our new design should be more user-friendly, easily accessible, and digitally focused.

As all transitions involve working out some of the kinks that pop up along the way, the above transitions will not be perfect. Like good Wesleyans, we will constantly and continuously seek perfection (but probably never achieve it). Feel free to reach out to us and stay in touch!

Ashley Boggan Dreff

Ashley Boggan Dreff, Ph.D.

General Secretary

General Commission on Archives and History

Historical Society of the United Methodist Church General Meeting

November 21, 2020, 1-3 p. m., Easter Standard Time

Via Zoom

Summarized by Sarah Mount Elewononi, Secretary

Minutes

We started out with 85 participants, and had 97 by the time we voted on the budget, and still 87 people at the end of our time together. People were tuning in from Alaska, South Dakota, Texas, Florida, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Africa, and many places in between. This first ever meeting by Zoom is itself an historic event of the Historical Society.

Doug Tzan, Vice President, began the meeting with a brief introduction and disclaimer that this is the first Zoom webinar he has led. Nevertheless, it ran extremely smoothly.

Opening Worship

This was led by the Secretary, Sarah Mount Elewononi, who gave brief explanation for worship on Zoom. The unison parts and singing were conducted while everyone was muted to avoid the cacophony caused by lag time in virtual meetings. Sarah noted that the music came from *Songs of Zion*, a choice she made prior to the death of Bobby McClain. His work led to the creation of this wonderful worship resource and to the inclusion of many more African American spirituals than ever before in our current hymnal. The service was based on excerpts from *A Liturgy for When We Cannot Meet*, which was developed in March by 2020 by members of the Order of St. Luke in response to the pandemic.

Opening Affirmations and Prayer

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Christ is with us.

The Risen One has met us, blessed and fed us on the road that leads us home.

The community of the Holy Spirit is with us.

**We gather with the communion of the saints in light
throughout history and with God's people around the world.**

With brothers and sisters, absent in body but united in Spirit, we pray:

Holy One, Trinity of grace and power,

Maker and Mother, Beloved and Lover, Father and Friend:

Thanks be to you, O God!

You are ever the father who gives us bread, not stones.

You are the mother who never forgets we're her own.

**From the beginning of life to the closing of time,
you are the One who is with us to the end.**

Song of Faith - I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

I want Jesus to walk with me;

all along my pilgrim journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, comfort me;
when my heart is almost breaking, Lord, I want Jesus to comfort me.

When I'm in trouble, Lord, stay with me;
when my head is bowed in sorrow, Lord, I want Jesus to stay with me.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world, you speak to us words of life.
Call forth in us rivers of living water, and feed our deepest hunger.
In trying times, in times of loneliness or confusion, in times we feel most alone,
remind us that we are never alone, for you are with us always.

Hear us now, and pray for us in our weakness with sighs too deep for words, as we lift up:

- ❖ Those whom we love – those present with us and those from whom we are separated . . .
- ❖ The prisoners, and those held captive physically, mentally, or spiritually . . .
- ❖ The sick and the suffering . . .
- ❖ Those who care for the sick, both medical caregivers and families who wait and watch with them . . .
- ❖ Those who mourn the loss of loved ones, the loss of freedom, the loss of security, the loss of a livelihood, or the loss of a sense of order and control . . .
- ❖ Those with more questions than answers, and all who long for your guiding light for their path . . .
- ❖ The lonely, the isolated, and those who long for a loving touch . . .
- ❖ Those whose remaining days on this earth are few, and for those walking in the valley of the shadow of death . . .
- ❖ Those whom we too easily forget, and those whose needs are known only to you . . .

God of compassion, hear our prayers; fill us with your grace, and inspire us to be instruments of mercy and hope, for we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Welcome and Introductions

Ivan Corbin mentioned that we had originally planned to meet in August on St. Simon's Island. But COVID has turned our world upside down. We have been looking forward to this presentation by Dr. Anna Louise Bates about a time when they didn't have the advantages of communication through the internet. Ivan also mentioned that we would hear from Rev. Alfred (Fred) Day. We offer our profound gratitude for his work as General Secretary of the Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) during this time of uncertainty in the UMC. And we are delighted that the new General Secretary, Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff, is with us. She was the Saddle Bag award winner last year. The Ministry of Memory Award and General Business will also be part of the agenda.

Keynote Speaker

Introduction

Dr. Anna Louise Bates is author of "'Give Glory to God before He Causes Darkness:' Methodists and yellow fever in Philadelphia" in the April 2020 issue of *Methodist History*. (A subscription to this journal is one of the benefits of being a member of the Historical Society.) She is Associate Professor of Historical Studies at Empire State College in Newburgh, New York where she teaches American Constitutional, Women's and Religious History. Her PhD is in US Legal History from Binghamton University. Her MA and BA are in Historical Studies from University of Houston, Clear Lake, Texas. She is author of *Weeder in the Garden of the Lord*:

Anthony Comstock's Life and Career (University Press of America, 1995). She is the Chair of the New York Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History.

Address

Dr. Bates gave one update about herself; because of COVID Newberg, along with 12 of the 30 locations in the New York State University system, have transitioned to teaching completely on line, so she is working from home.

Dr. Bates began with a testimony researching and writing about Methodism and yellow fever did for her own personal and spiritual life. She had no expectation that there would be a global pandemic when she started working on this over two years ago. Until she began to research, she had never explored Methodist interpretations of disease and sanctification. A year before the article was accepted for publication, during a time she'd set aside to work on it, Dr. Bates got pneumonia. This knocked her out for a year. The article serendipitously was accepted by *Methodist History* just before COVID began. Dr. Bates sees God's hand in all of this. This article is about an epidemic that paralyzed a large portion of the US from 1792-1798. Dr. Bates has gained a deeper appreciation for how Methodists see disease.

The epidemic began in 1793 in Philadelphia, which was our capital city at the time. It was also the seat of Methodism in the US, which had been growing at a good pace before the Revolution and then suffered some setbacks. But by 1793 the religion had picked up some steam. The membership in Philadelphia had grown to 384 members. Methodism was still a newcomer among churches – a small denomination. But it had two locations St. George's and Ebenezer Chapel. Both locations had meetings all week long and two worship services at each on Sundays. There was a growing number of African American congregants.

Yellow fever was not a new disease, but had been ravaging the American Colonies for over 100 years. People observed that it followed the footprint of the slave trade. What we know now is that yellow fever is a virus spread by mosquitoes. It traveled from Africa in the bodies of the slaves and those involved with the slave trade. Wherever ships with slaves would dock at a port, yellow fever spread. Haiti (then called San Domingue) was another source of the disease in America. As their revolution was brewing in the 1790s (the rebels finally prevailed in 1804) French slave owners would frequently pack up themselves and their slaves and come to the US. This is what happened in 1793. People in Philadelphia started coming down with the disease which Dr. Benjamin Rush identified it as yellow fever. But there was a lot of misunderstanding about the disease. It was not discovered that yellow fever is not directly transmitted person to person, but by mosquitos until the late 1800s and early 1900s. Dr. Walter Reed and others figured that out. In 1790s people, including Benjamin Rush, believed the disease was locally generated – perhaps by rotting coffee that had been dumped on a nearby dock was the source. People started dying gruesome deaths; the most severe symptoms included black vomit and bile, and yellow skin leading to death.

By end of 1793 10% of Philadelphia's population (5,000 of 50,000) had died from the disease. It is still proportionally one of the biggest epidemics in American history. Methodists were rocked by this.

Among the Philadelphia Methodists was a large number of African Americans – especially at St. George's. And there was a growing rift in the church which was becoming more middle class. There hadn't been an American middle class before, so the new demographic was starting to define itself. The people who identified as middle class were artisans, industrial factory owners and managers, generally more moneyed. They started developing behavior and cultural norms that set them apart from slaves, slave owners, and laborers – a class division. Methodists at St. George's started to show this. The trustees were middle class. This was a divergence from the original intent that Methodism was for everyone.

Philadelphia had largest population of freed African Americans of any city – and they were attracted to Methodism. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were among them. Francis Asbury licensed both as preachers at the Christmas Conference in 1784. They both were serving in Philadelphia, holding meetings and were very popular. The middle-class members of the congregations, however, were expressing their discomfort with the emotional, experiential nature of worship services. Dr. Bates mused that the Baptist tent revivals of the 20th century were more like this kind of worship that what has been practiced among present day Methodists. The services Jones and Allen led were usually separate from the whites; sometimes in a different place than the chapels because the whites were becoming less hospitable. In 1792 the familiar episode of Jones and Allen being pulled from the “wrong space” (in the new addition St. George’s) during a prayer service took place. As a result, Jones left the Methodists and joined another congregation. But Richard Allen stayed in spite of this disgrace. A Free African Society was formed and Richard Allen joined this quasi-religious association of African Americans but also continued at St. George’s holding separate meetings for the blacks.

In 1793, as many people started dying of yellow fever, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones “showed their metal.” A hospital was set up in Bush Hill and the city commissioners took on the difficult task of meeting the needs of the local population. The mayor, Richard Clarkson called on Richard Allen and the Free African Society for help. The experience of organizing the Free African Society taught Allen and Jones how to organize, call for help and commission people. So, they were well able get “boots on the ground” to tend to this disease. The African Americans were willing to do things and go places the whites wouldn’t. They went to areas that were the most devastated, such as places where there were children with dead parents. The descriptions of finding the children and taking them to orphanages are dreadful. When Dr. Bates traveled to Philadelphia and visited the sites, she read the descriptions and burst into tears.

The African American Methodists were willing to treat those sick with the disease. Allen was personally trained by Benjamin Rush – including treatments such as purging and bleeding that probably exacerbated the illness. When people died after such treatments, African Americans were blamed. Many people, including the mayor of Philadelphia, believed that African Americans were immune to yellow fever. They were not. Allen got the fever and ended up in the Bush Hill hospital for several months. The fever picked up in the summer and subsided in the winter (because the mosquitos died).

When the fever subsided the middle class Irish Catholic printer, Matthew Carey, wrote a very nasty tract against the African Americans who stepped in to help.¹ He ridiculed them of charging money for their service - the same wages paid to white healthcare workers. The African American workers found it very difficult to move the dead bodies because the mistaken belief that yellow fever was contagious led people to refuse help. Dr. Bates believes that this episode greatly contributed to Richard Allen’s decision to leave the MEC and form the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Richard Allen’s responses to Carey is *The Life, Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*

The 1793 epidemic subsided – followed by a few more outbreaks. Then the outbreak in 1798 – rivaled the one in 1793. The middle and upper classes, people who could afford to do so, left the city desolate and left behind all the poor. Some of the Methodists stationed in Philadelphia chose to stay behind to help including Ezekiel Cooper and John Dickens. Dickens was Superintendent in charge of publishing. His work made a huge contribution to the growth of Methodism because the Methodist Book Concern published all the literature used by the denomination. Dickens and his family lived in a rented house and worked at St. George’s in the printing

¹¹ *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever...*

business. He and his 16-year-old daughter Elizabeth died from the disease. Dicken's and his wife's journals are incredibly moving. John Dickens accepted his death remarkably well.

The work of the Methodist Book Concern was stalled for a year because of the epidemic. It was picked up by Ezekiel Cooper but needed help from Asbury Dickens to sort out the finances of the business. Dickens had published other literature – primers for schools etc. which took about a year to organize, to Cooper's consternation. Then he began publishing Methodist literature again.

Yellow fever had two profound impacts

1. Gave the final push that African American Methodists needed to have to form their own denominations. Allen and Jones knew Methodism was for the masses. Allen believed that the Methodist style of worship was best suited for his people.
2. Took John Dickens from his vital publishing work

Participants were invited to put questions in the chat.

Question: Did yellow fever impact NYC or other population centers?

Answer: Yes – several Methodist leaders died in NYC though it never hit New York as hard as Philadelphia. Up to 1808, which was the last big episode. Journals left by circuit riders who travelled between Philadelphia and New York expressed their fear that they wouldn't be welcomed as they traveled from one city to another.

Question: Any lessons that apply to our circumstances today?

Answer: Dr. Bates has been teaching a class about the History of American Medicine and Public Health at Empire State College for a program that attracts a lot of health care workers. A large number are African Americans. Because it's an on-line format, healthcare workers can easily take classes. Dr. Bates had some frank discussions with African Americans in her class who were working in NYC hospitals last spring when it was the epicenter of COVID-19 in the US. They were working longer hours and doing dirtier jobs than their white colleagues. Highly trained African American health care experts were cleaning the halls because white people wouldn't do. This is the same thing that happened to the African Americans in Philadelphia. African American communities have been disproportionately devastated in both time periods. Personally what Dr. Bates learned has positively impacted her faith and practice of Methodism.

Question: What was John Dickens's title? Was he renowned in his work?

Answer: He was the Superintendent of the Methodist Book Concern. He was very well respected. Asbury loved him – held him in such high regard that he found a way to support Dickens' wife and family after he died. Dickens was also regarded highly by the community in Philadelphia.

Question: What is the title of Jones and Allen's response to Clarkson?

Answer: "A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People of the late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the year 1793: and a refutation of some censures, thrown upon them in some late publications." This pamphlet made Jones and Allen the first copyrighted black authors in America.

Comment: It is comforting to read of the efforts to help people and stop the epidemic when so much was unknown.

Comment: Now prisoners are being used to help with COVID.

Comment: One leading causes of death for circuit riders in New Orleans and Florida was yellow fever which ran rampant in the South. *And Are We Yet Alive* really meant something at every Annual Conference.

Business

Treasurer's Report Kerri Shoemaker

This report runs from August 31, 2019 until November 20, 2020 because of the timing of our Annual Meetings.

Income \$14,240.25 (budget was \$11,230)

This represents an increase in membership dues plus gifts over and above membership. The special call for donations last spring resulted in checks in the spring, summer and even now.

We also note a pass-through collection for McKendree Chapel which came to \$1,037.

Expenses \$12,993.50 (budget was \$11,230)

The largest expense is for *Methodist History* and there is an extra issue because of the timing of our Annual Meetings. We also paid a little bit more in speaker fees in St. Louis.

Ending balance \$3,790.45

We had more income than expenses this year. It has been good that we increased dues.

Motion to approve the report - Passed

Vote on Budget 2021

Same as last year – Income \$11,230 and Expense \$11,230

We won't have as many expenses for this year's Annual Meeting, but we may need to pay something early for next year's meeting.

Motion to approve the budget - Passed

Membership update Chris Shoemaker

Kerri Shoemaker gave this report on behalf of Chris who was on a pastoral call.

217 current members including 4 new members

- 20 life members

- 1 Special for GCAH

- 196 annual members

- 26 joint members with Annual Conference

- 149 regular memberships

- 1 student membership

- 20 sustaining members

There are 61 people getting digital and 135 getting print copies of *Methodist History*. Life members get paper copies unless they elect digital.

We have 24 total new members since May 2019

Question: If you join with digital membership can you access back issues?

Answer: Back issues of *Methodist History* are on the website for free. Membership includes the newest issues which are not available on the website for several months.

Of the 24 new members – most have given a little above the dues.

Chris sends out a reminder in the quarter that dues are due, but the executive committee decided to no longer bill in the 4th quarter – just roll that in with the first quarter. There were very few in the 4th quarter and it's more efficient to just skip that quarter.

The Annual Membership Rates are:

Print Publication \$50

Digital copy \$25

Student \$10 with Digital only

Sustaining member \$100 (\$50 of this is a tax-deductible gift)

Joint Annual Memberships (offered through some Annual Conferences)

Print Publication \$45

Digital \$20

Life Membership \$800 – automatically print, but digital is an option

Look out for out-of-date membership forms. They will no longer be honored. Chris asks anyone involved with Conference or Jurisdiction leadership to make sure they use updated forms.

We are considering how to make it possible to pay digitally instead of by check.

All back issues of *Methodist History* are available on the GCAH website. And the back issues of *Historian's Digest* are on the Historical Society website. Only the newest issue will be withheld so that those who pay get access to it first.

Ivan expressed our appreciation that we are still in the black.

Next year's meeting Doug Tzan

Annual meetings move from Jurisdiction to Jurisdiction. This year we were scheduled to meet with the South Eastern Jurisdiction at St. Simon's Island, Georgia. We are hoping to go there next year. It all still depends on how the pandemic shakes out. We try to rotate around the connection; we were in South Central Jurisdiction last year in St. Louis, Dayton in 2018, Alaska in 2017, Delaware in 2016. We are trying to make them more accessible to people in this way.

Today is a teaser of what you can expect at an annual meeting: mostly presentations about local UM history of that place – local currents and themes. Tours of local historical interest, worship and meals together are also part of in person meetings. As soon as something is firm will get that out to folks.

Proposed Date: July 27-30, 2021 at St. Simon's Island, George with the South Eastern Jurisdiction if we are safe to gather again.

We aim to continue to offer a live feed during future meetings. That will take some more technological training and volunteers to run cameras.

Introductions

We have added two people on the executive committee. One to replace Pat Thompson as editor of *Historian's Digest* and another to manage our website. We thank Pat for her many years of service and we are glad to give her a break.

Mike Feely is the new editor of *Historian's Digest*. Mike lives in Knoxville Tennessee, part of the Holston Annual Conference. He is currently a graduate student of history at Missouri State University. He is excited to be involved and has asked Pat a lot of questions. They first met at Emery last year at a celebration of the Bicentennial of Methodist Missions and she invited him to take the position. He invites members of the society to submit articles to *Historian Digest* newsletter.

Debbie Corbin will manage our HSUMC website. We need a manager because websites that go unattended end up being hijacked and linked to undesirable businesses, and we are at great risk for lost passwords. Debbie is married to Ivan. She hopes to incorporate whatever we need. She's learning the site at this point. It's updated some. Let her know if there is anything else that needs to go on it.

New General Secretary – Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff

Ashely is currently in North Carolina with her two young children. She's very excited to be stepping in. This has been her dream job for 10-12 years. They are currently looking for houses in NJ. She doesn't have anything too profound to say at this point. She loved meeting us last fall at the Annual Meeting in St. Louis and expressed her gratitude.

Question: When was her baby born?

Answer: Hannah was born in May, now 6 months old. Harvey is a good big brother.

Ivan expressed how thrilled we are to have Dr. Boggan Dreff as our new General Secretary. We wish her well in finding a home in NJ.

Farewell from current General Secretary Alfred Day 2014-2020

Fred, who served as General Secretary for 6 ½ years, extended greetings from his home in Cape May Point, NJ. Fred offered congratulations to the Historical Society and the board for this historic meeting reaching nearly 100 people in attendance. This is a remarkable example of the opportunities of this moment – to have an attendance that is double the size of many that we've had in years past. Welcome to new people – including the 24 new members since 2019. God is brining life out of death, causing hope to rise over despair – and turning challenges into opportunities for transformation.

Fred also congratulates Dr. Dr. Bates Louise Bates on her serendipitous case study – uncanny in its timing – exposing diabolical diseases of pandemics and racism – one ugly ball for us to face. Exposing the dual dynamic of faith and action – the dialectic of seeing divine judgement and opportunities for mission. Methodists have been and continue to be an abiding subject of scorn and derision – look at this moment in time and name the racism that continues to be present in the church and opportunity for racial reconning.

Congratulations to Dr. Boggan Dreff – who was too humble to mention that she is a legacy United Methodist from a long line of clergy and lay leadership – one of the brightest and best young historians in the denomination – someone Russ Richey, Ken Rowe and Jean Miller Schmitt are looking to work with in making an update of the Methodist Experience in America. Dr. Boggan Dreff is an experienced denominational leader, who has attended the Connectional Table and General Conferences while being an active mom.

Fred has tried to lift GCAH from flying under the radar seen as existing only for “academies and history geeks” to be less about what we put on the shelves and more about what we pull off the shelves to claim the identity

of our United Methodist DNA. We are a people who believe in a God of inclusive, unconditional, love that is to be experienced. Lives change because of this experience and then the world changes because people can't sit still.

Fred hopes his work has made GCAH more interesting, available, accessible, and forefront in people's thoughts. He's thrilled to hand the reigns over to Dr. Boggan Dreff.

Fred ends his term giving thanks for friends and colleagues, travels, pilgrimages, conferences and convocations, life changing perspectives with various minority communities in the denomination. The UMC is incomplete without all stories fully told. He's also thankful for the journals, books, articles the Local Church Historian School, and for the staff of the Archives.

Also wants to remembering William Bobby McClain – VP of General Commission of Archives and History – a leader in preserving and promoting UMC history and a history maker in the UMC. Influential as historian, homilist – *Songs of Zion – Black People in the Methodist Church: Wither Thou Goest?* – just a few ways. His writings are an uncompromising fearless voice calling for justice, pointing out the evil and wickedness we renounce in our baptismal vows. We keep his wife Joanne in our prayers.

Also, remember Charles Yrigoyen Jr. – who served for 20+ years as General Secretary. He is presently in a weakened state of health. Keep Chuck and Jean in prayer.

Fred also wants to lift up Cape May, New Jersey. In 1874 it was a rising Victorian beach resort and it became the meeting place of a post 1844 General Conference commission. Leaders of ME North and ME South met for first time in decades since the split. There were African Americans present, yet still on the periphery. This meeting led to the reunions in 1939 – and then 1968.

Question:

Ivan asked what's Fred's vision for archives? Can we serve whatever denominations come out of the division?

Answer: Yes! It is up to board of directors and new General Secretary how that happens. The facility has space and the expertise to serve various iterations of the church – perhaps in a fee for service kind of way – maybe that umbrella can include AME, AME Zion and other versions of Methodism under one roof.

Saddlebag Award for 2019 Linda Schram announced that the winner for this year is *Outside Looking In: Early Methodism as Viewed by Its Critics* by Donald Henry Kirkham. There were 4 books submitted this year. We will try to work Dr. Kirkham into next year's meeting.

Ministry of Memory Award – Thelma Boeder and Frances Long

Doug Tzan introduced the Ministry of Memory Award, which is given by the HSUMC in recognition of and to encourage excellence in archival and historical work for a local church, Annual Conferences, Jurisdiction or Central Conference. It complements the Distinguished Service Award which recognizes national and international work within academia. Recipients of the Ministry of Memory have served with distinction. A nomination may be made in between annual meetings through our website: UMCHistory.org by filling out a nomination form. Nominations are kept in the mix for 3 years.

They types of work celebrated by the Ministry of Memory include: collecting records, recording oral histories, creating videos, leading archival or historical groups, teaching archival methods, caring for and preserving records, writing history, creating exhibits, and presenting history in other various forms.

This year we have two recipients:

Frances Long Kent Roberts from the North Texas Annual Conference, who nominated Frances, spoke first, calling Frances a “triple threat” as archivist, teacher and advocate dedicated to preserving history of the North Texas churches. She has served as archivist of her home church, First UMC in Richardson, TX for almost 45 years, for the North Texas Annual Conference for 30 years and for the South Central Jurisdiction since 2012.

She has been a tireless teacher of proper archival practices. She has been a principal mover in the local church historian workshop for the North Texas Annual Conference which meets every other year at the Conference Center in Plano. Frances travels throughout the Conference to teach local church historians and help them improve their archives. She keeps boxes of acid free folders in the trunk of her car. Frances is one of the first Conference members to gather records of closed Methodist churches to preserve the witness of those congregations. She is current on methods of storing electronic records and boldly pushes for their preservation. Frances has been collecting oral histories for decades, starting in Richardson, then working with retired ministers of the North Texas Conference. She is an advocate for churches telling their stories, she assists scholars and reporters in obtaining historical information and encourages local churches to write their histories. She is working now with her senior pastor and professional writers to create a new history of First UMC Richardson for their 140th anniversary.

Frances is the researcher’s best friend. Colleague Tim Binkley says, “every researcher and every request is important to Francis. She becomes visibly energized with each inquiry.” Bishop McKee, her pastor Clayton Oliphant, and the members of the North Texas Commission unite with Kent to express their pleasure that HSUMC has given this award to Frances Long.

Frances said, “Whoever the person Kent was talking about must be very tired! Thank you.”

Frances especially likes interviewing people because it adds emotion and voices to make the story real. When she was in college, she took stenography to be a legal secretary. She once attended a hearing at the Federal Court in Springfield MO of Robert Stroud (the “birdman of Alcatraz”). During the break the guard asked her and her colleague to sit behind Mr. Stroud while they interviewed him. She asked Mr. Stroud how he would feel if he was released to live with his sister? Frances will never forget the look on his face as he explained that he was scared because he had not had any freedom since he was 18.

Later, working with her lawyer boss she got into Court of Appeals records and found a testimony of her great grandfather at a trial about a neighbor’s slave. When she left her job her boss told her “you like people, research and listening with your ‘third ear’ – keep it up.” And she has. She appreciates the award very much.

Thelma Boeder David Werner, who nominated Thelma, was not present so Doug Tzan read from the nomination form.

Thelma serves as local church historian at Centennial UMC in Roseville, Minnesota. She served the Minnesota Annual Conference for 27 years (1978-2005) She led in creating and organizing the Minnesota UMC history archives, and sharing information within and outside of the Conference. She continues to serve as the Minnesota Conference Historian and has been a member of the Minnesota Conference Archives and History from 2007 to the present. Thelma is a founding member of the UM Historical Society of Minnesota, planning events and publishing their newsletter. Though that body is no longer active, she still serves on the board of directors which awards grants to historical projects. She has served as secretary and president of the North Central Jurisdiction CAH. Thelma has just completed a 22-year research project finding start and end dates for

every church and point in the Minnesota conference, creating short histories of each. This document can be found on the Minnesota Conference website (see the link below).

Thelma is also involved in La [Compagnie](#) des Hivernants de la Riviere St. Pierre that preserves and interprets the history of the fur trade in the Upper Midwest. She volunteers at The [Landing](#), part of the Minnesota river heritage park which presents how early settlers established their farms on the frontier. She is a lover and interpreter of Minnesota and Methodist History.

As Doug was unable to pronounce La Compagnie des Hivernants... Thelma did so and admitted that this is the extent of her French. She noted that since COVID she has not been able to do the work of interpreter at these places which she so much loves. Thelma loves to interpret at the church at the Landing, corset and all, because it happens to be a former Methodist church with quite a story behind it.

Thelma feels fortunate to have served over many years in all the ways mentioned and also on the General Commission of Archives and History and the Executive Committee of HSUMC. Indeed, she helped create this award when she was on the General Commission. Thelma was also the first Vice President and the treasurer of HSUMC at different times.

When Thelma accepted this award, she told us she believes that the local church is building block of all these stories. It was very soon after she began work as the archivist that she realized that many of our local points, classes, and societies hardly ever got noticed or even named in the records. So, in 1997 she began her quest to find out these details. Though she scanned every Conference journal, including the German and Swedish ones, there was lots of missing information. So, she went to the History Center in St. Paul to find the histories of local towns and was amazed to find more and more new place names connected to the United Brethren, Evangelicals or Methodists. The 658-page document is called [Planting United Methodist Roots in Minnesota, 1837-2018](#) (her draft copy was over 800 pages of notes which she collated). Thelma simply had to stop there though she knows there is still information to be found.

“I know,” Thelma said, “there’s more things out there.” We can find more information in family records, letters, and at the local sites. One example Thelma gives is with the United Brethren records – which were never in German in Minnesota, always English. There are many obscure places and they didn’t have enough preachers on the ground to cover all of the fledgling societies and class meetings. On one United Brethren list is a place called Summer – just one reference. Nowhere could she find such a place in Minnesota. But later, when she was going through family history, she read the obituary of Edward Wooldridge, her great-great grandfather. He had moved with his family from Pennsylvania to Marion, Minnesota (where the United Brethren were organized in the state) and they were a United Brethren family. The obituary stated that Edward had started a society where he lived, but couldn’t keep it going. Thelma knew that Edward lived in **Sumner** in Fillmore County. The puzzle was solved!

Thelma believes that each of these places, even the ones that don’t last long, represents someone’s hopes and dreams of starting a faith community. It was important for at least a little time. Thelma is thankful for the society honoring her for reaching her goal of honoring all these people and places in Minnesota United Methodist history. “It’s been so much fun! I still love to do this sort of thing. I’m like Frances,” Thelma said, “we can’t stop.”

Dave Werner arrived at the meeting a little late – due to some time-zone confusion – and endorsed our congratulations to Thelma.

New Additions to the Communion of Saints

William “Bobby” McClain, Roy Howard from Holston Conference, Cathy Morgan from the Virginia Conference, Nancy Anderson from the Western North Carolina Conference, Fred Seifert Jr. (who was 93) from Peninsula-Delaware Conference, and Faith Richardson (104 years old and HSUMC’s first treasurer) from the New England Conference have all died in the Lord.

Closing Prayer by Ivan Corbin

Gracious God, we thank you so much for the ministry of memory and for being with us today at this historical meeting, gathering virtually when we normally gather in person. We are delighted with the gift of presence of so many who would not have been able to be with us in person. Thank you for drawing us together in this new, and wonderful way.

We are thankful for the award winners, presenters, and for both our outgoing and incoming General Secretaries. We thank you for awakening us to your grace and goodness.

We pray for the end of COVID and we pray for our nation and our world, as we struggle with all the judgments and prejudice we hold against one another, and the divisions, pain and suffering they cause. We pray that we may learn from our history and move forward toward the grace of Jesus Christ who calls us to be his children and be family to one another.

We pray all of these things in Jesus holy name. Amen.

Membership Information

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP DUES

- 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
(you can select either a **print** or **email** (PDF) subscription to [Methodist History](#))
- LIFE MEMBERSHIP: \$800
(you can select either a **print** or **email** (PDF) subscription to [Methodist History](#))

All subscriptions include our Society’s newsletter: [Historian’s Digest](#)

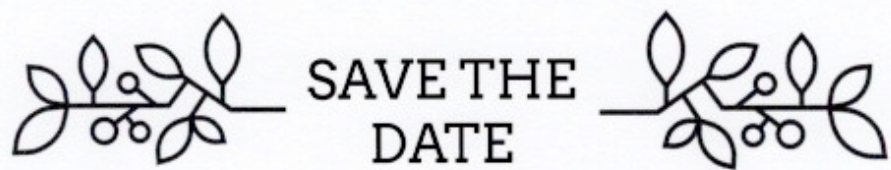
Some United Methodist conference historical societies offer reduced joint memberships. Contact your conference society for more information.



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

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Membership information and form are also available at
<https://www.umchistory.org/join>



Historical Society 2021 Annual Meeting

October 30, 2021 ● 1:00-3:00 PM

via ZOOM

More details will follow in August and September.

Historian's Digest
c/o HSUMC Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 1087
Wadley, GA 30477
"ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED"