

# REMEMBERING THE MERGER 50 YEARS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1968-2018



The Indiana United Methodist Conference Commission on Archives and History, along with the Indiana United Methodist Historical Society and the United Methodist Archives at DePauw would like to encourage the churches of the Indiana Conference to recognize the 50th year anniversary of the union between the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church which formed the United Methodist Church. *"For Together We Are More!"*

In each of the following articles we offer some history about what led up to the merger and what some of the challenges and opportunities were that the merger presented.

## **ARTICLE #1**

### **RECOGNIZING 50 YEARS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the EUB-Methodist merger. It was in 1968 that General Conferences of the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) and Methodist churches approved the merger of two denominations to create the United Methodist Church. In Indiana the union was overwhelmingly supported by churches and delegates to the annual conferences. The vote in support of union in the EUB Indiana Conference North was 241-21.

The decision for merger was the easy part. The difficult part was to figure how to take two traditions, two structures, two sets of bishops and superintendents, two camping programs, two women's organizations, two youth organizations, two mission boards, two Sunday school publishing companies, two hymn books, two pension programs, and make them function as one.

These practical challenges far outweighed the theological and missional issues. Despite the fact that the two denominations shared a common Wesleyan theology and a common episcopal (meaning they have bishops) system of church government, each had developed its own special traditions (perhaps "habits" is a better word). What do we call the group that does evangelism? How do we make appointments? What hymns do we love best?

What was required on a general church level was a whole new structure complete with new boards and agencies. What was required on the annual conference level was a complete new drawing of conference and district boundaries. This was not as great a problem in some areas of the country where there were few EUB's and they simply were absorbed into the Methodist system. But in Indiana, as in Ohio and Pennsylvania, there were strong EUB conferences. Committees decided that five Indiana conferences would reorganize as two. Together the two conferences would total 1,682 churches and 413,740 members. The prevailing philosophy for the new conferences was that this was a new church for a new day and while it was good to maintain as many traditions as possible, the merger was an opportunity to start afresh with new vision and new ways of doing things.

## **ARTICLE #2**

### **WHY THE EUB-METHODIST UNION MADE GOOD SENSE**

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) merger (or union). At the time a number of persons were adamant that the coming together of two denominations should not be called a merger but a "union." The word "merger" suggested a joining in the corporate world for business purposes. The word "union" was a more Biblical word and suggested something like a covenant, a uniting for mission in the world.

Either way, the time seemed right. All of the predecessor groups that made up the two denominations shared a common heritage of pietism out of Germany and revival fervor out of England. The doctrinal backgrounds were Arminian (Arminius was a Dutch theologian who questioned strict Calvinism) and Wesleyan (from John Wesley). While the early leaders came from different denominational backgrounds -- Francis Asbury originally Anglican, Philip Otterbein German Reformed (influenced by Mennonites), and Jacob Albright a Lutheran influenced by Methodists -- they shared in common an evangelical zeal that transcended their denominational loyalties. They represented the beginnings of what would be called in history The Second Great Awakening. Methodism was successful primarily among English-speaking people, but there were a number of German-speaking people concentrated primarily in Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic states also caught up in the awakening. They were influenced by Methodist preaching but needed pastors who could minister in their own language. So, Philip Otterbein, who was a friend of Francis Asbury, helped to form a group known as the United Brethren in Christ. Joseph Albright helped to form a group known as the Evangelical Association. Both churches were patterned after Methodist doctrine and polity (how the church is organized--in this case with bishops).

For a number of years both the Evangelicals and the United Brethren reflected their German heritage and ministered largely to German-speaking people migrating to America. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, both groups,

along with the Methodists, began to direct a religious culture influenced by revivalism and perhaps described best as American evangelicalism.

It was soon realized that what groups held in common transcended what separated them. This led to earlier mergers. In 1939 the Methodist Episcopal Church (the northern church) and the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church united in a new denomination called simply The Methodist Church. In 1946 the United Brethren in Christ Church united with the Evangelical Church to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB). Even at that time there were persons who began to say: "Let's take the logical next step and unite with the Methodists."

By the 1960s the time was right.

## ARTICLE #3

### WHAT ABOUT DOCTRINE?

In 2018 the church is celebrating 50 years of the United Methodist Church, formed with the uniting of two denominations. One of the tricky problems to be worked out before the EUB-Methodist merger could take place had to do with doctrine. While both groups were Wesleyan and while, in fact, both the United Brethren Church and the Evangelical Church had in their earliest days adopted Confessions of Faith with affirmations borrowed from the Methodist Articles of Religion, there were some differences. Some EUBs assumed the new united church could simply write new Articles of Religion based on the two denominations' statements.

Not possible. The Methodist doctrinal standards were written into the Constitution by action of the 1808 General Conference and could not be altered except by constitutional amendment (which would be almost impossible to accomplish). A special, highly regarded commission, was appointed in 1968 to find a solution. Headed (and dominated by Dr. Albert Outler of Perkins) the commission suggested that both the Methodist Articles of Religion (as well as Wesley's Sermons which are also part of the standards) and the EUB Confession of Faith be adopted as the doctrinal foundation for the new denomination.

But there was more: the commission prepared an interpretative statement entitled *Our Theological Task* to be included in the *Discipline* which would put the confessional statements in historical context and allow for new interpretations of doctrine.

These suggestions were overwhelmingly approved at the 1972 General Conference by a vote of 923-17. A number of new ideas were introduced to the church in the document, *Our Theological Task*. 1) **Pluralism**. The church would allow for a variety of theological viewpoints to co-exist; 2) **The Quadrilateral**: the authority in doctrinal matters would rest on a four-way test of Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason; 3) **The Conciliar Principle**. Just as the church universal (especially the Catholic Church) had depended on ecumenical councils to make authoritative (and sometimes new) interpretations of truth, so United Methodist official councils such as the General Conference, would continually be able to make authoritative interpretations of doctrine (an example is the present statement on Baptism).

Within a few years the doctrinal statement would come under criticism. Pluralism was coming to mean that "anything goes" and that United Methodists did not have standards in any meaningful sense. The quadrilateral seemed to downgrade the importance of Scripture and was being misused. The Conciliar Principle was not really part of the United Methodist ethos and no one could figure out how it was supposed to function.

In 1984 the General Conference appointed a new doctrinal task force to correct the weaknesses. The present statement was adopted in 1988. The word *pluralism* and the idea of *conciliar principle* disappeared. The quadrilateral was clarified so that Scripture was primary and tradition, experience and reason were not independent sources of truth but were related to Scripture. Unlike the Articles of Religion, the statement *Our Theological Task* can be reviewed and amended by the General Conference.

## ARTICLE #4

### THE SOCIAL CREED

2018 marks 50 years of the United Methodist Church, formed with the uniting of two denominations. The EUB-Methodist merger took place at a time of great social upheaval (1968). A number of groups wanted the new united church to take strong prophetic social stands in the times of student unrest, Woodstock and the unpopular Viet Nam war. While the EUBs had nothing like a Social Creed they did have resolutions and statements that appeared in EUB *Disciplines*. The Methodists, on the other hand, had operated on or off with a social creed ever since 1908, when an unofficial group called Methodists Federated for Social Service in the northern church prepared a "creed" that was adopted by the General Conference and placed in the 1908 Discipline. The statement was perhaps more a statement of social principles than a creed. The thrust of the first creed was basically economic: abolition of child labor, rights of workers, including release from employment one day in seven, and principles of arbitration and negotiation for workers. The creed was then adopted shortly after by the Federal Council of Churches and the southern church.

In the 1920s and 30s the creed, still under the auspicious of the Methodist Federation, became highly critical of capitalism and as a result of a conservative backlash the 1936 General Conference of the ME Church and the Methodist Protestant Church adopted no social creed at all. However, with the merger of three Methodist bodies in 1939 the social creed made another appearance. The Uniting Conference of 1940 adopted a creed with less stringent criticism of capitalism. Again, however, by 1952 the creed had again become controversial. The General Conference broke ties with the Methodist Federation and created a new board (the Board of Social and Economic Relations) to shepherd the creed.

When the merger talks began between EUBs and Methodists there was tremendous excitement about using the merger as an opportunity to address socially and morally the church's positions in the rapidly changing social scene of the 1960s. Though the EUBs did not have a history of a unified statement on social issues they were as enthusiastic as the Methodists in the development of something new.

Bishop James Thomas chaired the Commission on Social Principles that would guide the newly unified United Methodist Church. The new statement differed from all previous statements in that it was labeled *Social Principles*. It started with a theological preamble and ended with a short creed-like statement appropriate for congregational worship. It is fair to say that no legislation before the 1972 General Conference generated more debate, discussion, and revision than the Social Principles statement.

When finally adopted it was considered progressive and forward-looking. The United Methodist Church was the first major Protestant denomination to have a thorough and comprehensive statement on the principles that informed church thinking in moral and social issues.

In light of the present (2018) discussions in the church on human sexuality, it should be noted the Social Principles addressed for the first time the matter of sexual orientation with a strong statement supporting the sacred worth of all persons. It was at that time an amendment from the floor added a sentence stating that the "practice of homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teaching". It is that statement that is the center of much of the controversy facing the church today.

## ARTICLE #5

### EUB-METHODIST UNION AND THE CENTRAL JURISDICTION

During 2018 United Methodists are observing the 50th year anniversary of the EUB-Methodist merger. One major development that came about as the result of the merger was the elimination of Methodism's Central Jurisdiction. The Central Jurisdiction was the organization of black Methodist conferences that existed alongside of but separate from the main body of primarily white conferences in the United States. This arrangement had come about as the result of the 1939 merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant

(MP) Church. In the days of segregation the Central Jurisdiction was a compromise in the plan of union to make the merger acceptable to the southern church.

Some background. The Methodists were the first denomination successfully to reach and Christianize blacks in America, both slave and free. Methodist camp meetings were probably the first institution in America where blacks and white met together socially on more or less equal terms. But racial prejudice is hard to overcome. Because blacks were made to feel like second class citizens, even as brothers and sisters in Christ in the church, two primarily black groups withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church to form new denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in the New York area, and the African Methodist Church Zion in the Philadelphia area. Despite these losses blacks still made up 20% of Methodist Episcopal membership by 1820 (compared to about 6% today). In 1870 another black Methodist denomination, the Christian African Methodist Church (CME) was formed by Methodists who were former slaves. That denomination started with 67,889 members and had grown to 366,613 by 1922.

By 1964 African American Methodist membership totaled 373,395. Since the unification of the EUBs and the Methodists would already require extensive restructuring, it was only logical that the Central Jurisdiction should be eliminated and black churches become a part of newly forming geographical conferences. In Indiana the Black churches of the Lexington Conference had in the early 1960s already merged into the Indiana conferences. In other parts of the country the churches were merged into the geographic conferences in the years 1968-1972.

All this brought many changes to African American Methodists during the time of the merger.

## ARTICLE #6

### LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In 2018 the church will be celebrating 50 years of the United Methodist Church, formed with the uniting of two denominations, the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) and the Methodists. For most persons in local churches questions about the union were not so much about should bishops be elected for life and who is going to publish the Sunday school material, but how will we get along with that church down the street since we are now part of the same denomination.

Most parts of the country had few EUBs and in those areas EUB churches were easily absorbed into the heavily Methodist conferences. But in Indiana it was a different story. Methodists and EUBs had been wildly successful in their years of ministry in Indiana. Perhaps too successful for some communities. Indiana United Methodists would now have 1,682 churches and 413,740 members. What shall be done in Claypool Indiana where the town of 458 people would have two churches, a former EUB and a Methodist church just blocks apart? Or what about in Wells County where 23,000 total inhabitants had 22 United Methodist Churches to choose from. On one rural county road one could pass three open country United Methodist churches in a two-mile stretch.

Then there were the cities. All of the predecessor groups now forming the United Methodist Church had been successful in Elkhart. The result was that a city of 43,000 persons would now have 14 United Methodist Churches. Fourteen United Methodist pastors could make up a ministerial association all by themselves. And none of the churches were weak. First EUB was formerly First Evangelical Church, which at one time had a Sunday school of 1,000, had hosted the General Conference and was once one of the strongest churches in the denomination. Grace Methodist had once been Grace Methodist Protestant, the second strongest church in the Methodist Protestant Indiana Conference. Trinity Methodist was a premier church for the Methodists and likewise as Castle EUB Church (named after the famous Indiana United Brethren bishop) in the EUB north conference. But even then the churches were not strategically located. A number of the churches were bunched near the down town while some of the suburban areas would have no UM churches.

This, of course, had been discussed by committees working on unification. Even if not outlined in an official document the word spread that in the interest of good stewardship and for the sake of mission there would need to be mergers or yoked parishes. When the denominational unification came a number of local church mergers were attempted with mixed results. One merger was most successful however. In Elkhart four near down-town churches, a former Methodist Protestant (Grace), a former Methodist Episcopal (Simpson), a former Evangelical (Albright), and a former U.B. (Good

Shepherd), came together and became the nucleus of what was basically a new church start in Concord Twp., namely Faith Church, under the direction of Larry Kurtz and (eventual bishop) Frank Beard. The church today is worshipping nearly 500 persons each Sunday.

## ARTICLE #7

### METHODIST – EUB MERGER – HYMNALS

For those in the United Methodist tradition the hymnal functions almost like a Book of Common Prayer. In a very diverse and sometimes divided denomination the hymnal unites us. That is not to say that various hymnals published by the denominations that now make up United Methodism have been without controversy. Methodists hymnals historically have favored Charles Wesley's hymns shored up by other European hymn writers. In the first official hymnal of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1848, 558 of 1148 hymns were by Charles Wesley. All of the rest except for two were of European origin. Meanwhile revivalist Methodists were composing indigenous gospel song and song books by the scores. They were criticized as "ditties" by the Methodist elite. The "official" hymnal carried the admonition that Methodists were to buy only hymnals signed by the bishops. The next official ME hymn of 1878 had 1,117 hymns of which 66 were of Episcopalian authorship, 22 Congregational, 14 Unitarian and only 10 from the M.E. Church. Only three of its 1,117 hymns were associated with anyone west of Rochester, N.Y., or south of Washington D.C. The issue was appropriate music. Evidently no one west of Rochester could produce appropriate music. By this time, according to Jane Ellen Lorenz, 44 different Methodist-inspired but unofficial hymnals had been published, almost all of them west of the Appalachia Mountains.

The United Brethren, meanwhile, were also publishing hymnals but their General Conferences did not try to control what was acceptable and what was not acceptable for the churches. In the Otterbein Hymnal published in 1890 the editor explained the philosophy: "The Church of the United Brethren in Christ emphasizes the necessity of Christian experience—experimental religion, the fathers would have phrased it—and recognizes revival effort as the characteristic phase of its church activity; hence, its hymnal must furnish amply expression for its full and varied Christian experience and large facilities for revival work."

The 1935 Methodist hymnal, a joint effort of the M.E. Church, the M.E. South Church, and the Methodist Protestant Church, was published at the height of the social gospel movement. Charles Wesley was reduced to just 56 hymns in that hymnal. The hymnal was touted as "New hymns for a new day." There was a separate section for gospel hymns titled "Songs of Salvation." This is the hymnal many of us grew up with.

When the Evangelical Church joined with the United Brethren Church in 1946 leaders of the new denomination wanted to help seal the merger with a new hymnal. There were differences of opinion not because of music styles or theology but because of personal preferences. The hymnal, published in 1955, gradually won the hearts of EUBs.

In the early 1960s, when it was apparent that the Methodist-EUB merger would soon take place, there were many who felt one of the first items of business for the new denomination would be a new hymnal. It was not to be. The EUB hymnal was less than 10 years old, and many EUBs were reluctant to abandon that reminder of their heritage. The Methodists, meanwhile, were under great pressure for a new hymnal (most of the new hymns for a new day never caught on) and so another official hymnal was published in 1966 just before merger. Since hymnals have a 25-30 year life this pretty much guaranteed there would be no UM hymnal for a while.

In retrospect it was a good decision to wait. By 1988, when the new UM hymnal was approved, the church was ready. The 1988 has been one of the most successful denominational hymnals ever produced. Wesley hymns were increased to 70; gospel hymns, thanks in part to EUB influence, were increased to 100. Hymns like "It Is Well with My Soul," "Victory in Jesus," "In the Garden," and "He Lives" were finally declared acceptable for United Methodists. Inclusive language was used whenever possible; hymns from the African-American tradition were introduced.

In a day when there are tensions in the denomination, the hymnal is a unifying force.

## ARTICLE #8

### THE MERGER AND CAMPING

While some aspects of the Methodist-EUB merger affected mostly the general church and some the local church, one area that affected the annual conference, at least in Indiana, was camping. When five conferences (3 Methodist, 2 EUB) merged into one, it was necessary to address different conference camping cultures, different ways of organizing the camping program, and the number of different facilities.

The camping ministry has its history in the frontier camp meetings, which in early Methodism were often held at the time of the fourth quarterly conference when churches of the circuit would gather together, often overnight because of distances, to conduct business and then worship together. The camp meetings were basically outdoor revivals and were wildly successful in contributing to the dramatic growth of the church in Indiana in the early 1800s. By the 1840s and 50s Methodists and EUBs began to secure more permanent sites (camp grounds) for their meetings: Maple Grove (UB), Santa Claus (German Methodists), Deputy, Acton, Silver Heights, Battle Ground, and other district sponsored sites. The Evangelicals developed Oakwood in 1894 and the Methodist North Conference Epworth Forest in 1924. Battle Ground camp meetings had crowds of over 10,000 in the 1880s.

Over the years the emphasis at some of the camp grounds changed from revivalism to Christian education. The "Institute" plan emphasized lectures (or sermons), classes, and inspirational programs. "Institutes" worked best for older youth and adults. Elementary and junior high youth transitioned into more traditional camping, living together and learning skills in an outdoor setting. But the conferences were at different stages in how these transitions were working, or whether there was any transition at all. They were also at different stages as to how they were managed. Perhaps the most successful camping program (probably in the whole denomination) was that of North Indiana Methodist Conference which during the 1950s and 60s was district based and enrolled sometimes over 3,000 senior high youth each summer. The junior high program, also district based, was enrolling 1,700 youth. The conference was so committed to camping that in the late 1950s the churches of the conference raised 1.3 million dollars to improve Epworth Forest and Epworth Heights. A large part of its success was the tradition that pastors would commit a week each year to the program.

That tradition did not necessarily carry over into the merged conferences. Where six districts could enroll 3,000 senior highs before merger, by 1970 ten districts of the merged church could enroll only 2,402. Orin Manifold, in his history of Epworth Forest, explained: lack of tradition in churches brought into the merger, lack of district cohesiveness, and diminishing support from superintendents all contributed.

There were issues also with the number of camp sites. The two Indiana conferences at the time of merger found themselves with 12 sites, some in various states of disrepair. It was necessary to sell and merge programs for the most effective ministry.

Thanks to good leadership the conferences developed new programs, made some shifts in use of the grounds and carried on. Today the Indiana Conference still has one of the finest camping programs in the connection.

## ARTICLE #9

### THE MERGER AND TOTAL RESTRUCTURING (PART 1)

Of all the issues facing merger for the EUBs and the Methodists, the matter of how to restructure the new denomination commanded the most time, money and effort.

The merger could not have come at a worse time (or a better time, depending on one's perspective). The nation was facing unprecedented political, social and racial upheaval. The 1960s brought serious race riots in Watts in 1965 and Detroit in 1967. It brought Woodstock and the drug culture. It also brought the rise of gay and lesbian activism, liberation theology, the Secular City, the Death of God movement, and Viet Nam. The shooting of Martin Luther King and then

Bobby Kennedy came only days before the Uniting Conference in 1968. Serious riots broke out at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in the summer of 1968.

Within Methodism *Black Methodists for Church Renewal* (BMCR) had organized, as had another group, *Methodists for Church Renewal*. The latter group organized demonstrations at the General Conference of 1968 in which persons seized the conference floor, marched, sang, demonstrated and sent a strong message: the church had not dealt with its own sexism and racism and outdated ways of doing things. This was the day of Freedom and that meant freedom from institutional restraints. In a climate of freedom how could the church demand that clergy pledge themselves not to use tobacco or alcohol? Youth demanded a new philosophy of youth ministry in which they not be given answers but “tools” so they could find answers for themselves.

The conference reflected the changing times by supporting the controversial Project Equality, by setting up a 200 million dollar Fund for Reconciliation, by establishing a new social concerns magazine, later called *Engage*, and by passing a resolution proclaiming the “right of non-violent civil disobedience in extreme cases.” With all of this came also the emergence of identity group caucuses.

While there was a lot of anger and frustration expressed at the 1968 General Conference, there was also a lot of hope. That hope was related to the Methodist-EUB merger. The merger would serve as an opportunity to start over, to make right the injustices of the past, and give the church new vision. This would start with restructure, that is, how the church would be organized. For sure any structure would need to insure a place at the table for previously marginalized groups. As a symbol of the problem it was pointed out that the Board of Education during an earlier quadrennium was composed of 39 members, of which 37 were white male liberals. Only seven were pastors; thirteen were associated with universities or seminaries; most of the rest were bishops or bureaucrats from other agencies. It was out of situations such as this that the new structure sought to reflect diversity and inclusiveness.

## ARTICLE #10

### THE MERGER AND TOTAL RESTRUCTURING (PART 2)

While the Methodist-EUB merger was officially approved by the 1968 General Conference it was not until 1972 that the structure was hammered out and approved. The structure was hailed as reflecting a New Church for a New Day. The following were a few of the highlights:

- 1) Church programming would be concentrated in four major program “boards” with divisions. These were: Church and Society, Discipleship, Higher Education and the Ministry, and Global Ministries. These four boards would assume the work done by ten different boards before merger. The shift toward the importance of these general boards is reflected by the number of paragraphs it took in the Discipline to cover their functions and purposes. The 1972 Discipline devoted 62 paragraphs to the local church, 8 paragraphs to the annual conference and 491 paragraphs to the general church agencies.
- 2) While most of the boards reflected the Methodist side of the merger and would be located in Methodist locations (Nashville, Washington and New York), one major agency would carry-over from the EUB tradition, namely, the Council on Ministries (COM). This board, in the EUB tradition, would coordinate, review and evaluate the work of the program boards, make changes in missional priorities, and recommend priorities for the church’s ministry. In other words, the program boards would report to the General Council on Ministries. This same structure would carry-over into annual conference, district, and local church structures. The Council on Ministries idea worked fairly well on the annual conference level. It did not work on the local level because it basically added an unnecessary committee layer (the church already also had an Administrative Board). It faced serious problems on the general church level because the major boards did not care to be coordinated or evaluated. After several quadrennia the Council on Ministries on the general church level was eliminated and replaced with the Connectional Table.



- 3) Quotas were established to ensure diversity. The Board of Global Ministries serves as an example. One-third of the board would consist of persons picked by the Women's Division; one-half of non-episcopal members would be women; not less than 25% would be laity; 20% would be under age 35 of whom 50% would be under 25 divided equally between those over 18 and those under 18 at the time of election; 20% should represent minority interests and 10% youth interests. If there were any overseas representatives they would come in the at-large categories. In order to make the table large enough for everyone there would be 72 members of the board. The Women's Division would itself consist of 72 members. Membership in each board would include at least 8.7% former EUB during 1972-76 and at least 4.3% during 1976-80. On every board there would be at least two from each of the following ethnic groups: Hispanic Americans, Blacks, Asian Americans and Indian Americans. This added great levels of complexity.
  
- 4) Youth Ministry would be totally revamped. After youth demonstrations at the specially called 1970 General Conference were cheered by the delegates, the new structure basically reflected the demands of the demonstrators (who were mostly college age). Youth would operate much as United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men, more or less independently from the program boards. Youth would manage the Youth Service Fund (nearly \$400,000 was being raised by youth for ministry each year). A new agency, the Council on Youth Ministry, would be staffed by youth and would represent youth concerns. These, according to the purpose statement, would be to empower youth throughout the church, facilitate renewal in the church, facilitate the formation of minority youth caucuses, be an advocate for free expression of the convictions of youth, call together youth to support change in existing socioeconomic and cultural conditions and in theological points of view. The former Methodist Youth Fellowship with its mottos, banners, and slogans would be scrapped because it was considered "Mickey Mouse." In addition youth would be represented on all other agencies of the church. The Council on Youth Ministry would consist of twenty members, all youth (ages 12-18), of which ten would be ethnic minority, all selected by jurisdictional youth caucuses; five conference youth coordinators (one from each jurisdiction), and a staff or board member from seven agencies of the church. In October of 1976 a national gathering of conference youth coordinators was assembled to discuss youth ministry. At that meeting it was shared: in 1967 in the former Methodist Church there had been 13 youth staff under the Board of Education, 15 secretaries, 52 full-time conference directors and 1,200,000 pieces of youth curriculum produced each quarter. By 1976 the merged church counted one part-time adult staff, one secretary and 400,000 pieces of youth curriculum material per quarter. One consequence was that giving to the Youth Service Fund simply dried up.

The Council on Youth Ministry was voted out of existence in 1980. As far as the merger is concerned, on the positive side conference youth work was not greatly affected either by the merger or by what was happening on the national scene. This was even more the case on the local scene.

## **ARTICLE #11**

### **THE MERGER AND UNITED METHODIST WOMEN**

Ever since the days of Susanna Wesley women in the Wesleyan movements have played a prominent role in the advancement of the Church. The first Methodist preaching in America took place in 1766 after Barbara Heck goaded her cousin Philip Embury with the words, "You must preach to us lest we all go to hell..." If women did not preach in early Methodist camp meetings they were at least known as exhorters. Many women served as class leaders. Wesleyan Methodists who split from Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842, ordained women and it was in a Wesleyan Church that the famous Seneca Falls meeting took place. Phoebe Palmer, who launched the American Holiness movement, was a feminist who argued for women as preachers and who with friends established the Five Points Mission in New York. When men were slow in advancing the cause of missions, in the 1860s the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was birthed, to the dismay of some church leaders who did not appreciate what was considered an independent agency sending out missionaries apart from the official mission board. In 1872 women were received as delegates at the M.E. General Conference. In 1866 Indiana's own Methodist Protestant Helona Davisson became the first woman fully ordained to preach in a church now in the lineage of United Methodism. Ellen Niswonger was ordained in the United Brethren Church in 1889.

Women like Francis Willard led the crusade for temperance and advocacy for women and children in the late 1800's. In almost every one of the Holiness churches that splintered from Methodist bodies in the late 1800s and early 1900s women were ordained: The Church of the Nazarene, the several Churches of God, the Assemblies of God, and numerous Pentecostal groups. It is said that in the early days of the Pilgrim Holiness Church fully one-third of the clergy were women.

Perhaps it was because some avenues of service (such as ordination) were closed to women in the Methodist and EUB traditions that women's groups became so strong. Many Ladies Aid Societies kept churches functioning in the early 1900s. After the 1939 merger of the M.E. Church, the M.E. Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) became the largest body of organized women in the world. By 1953 it numbered 1,733,413 members in 30,101 societies in the U.S. alone. It supported 566 missionaries, 288 deaconesses, and 1,200 other workers. This does not even count the overseas churches and their women's groups. The official publication, *The Methodist Woman*, had a circulation of 275,000 copies.

In 1956 women were given full clergy rights in the Methodist Church. At the same time women were becoming more accepted in all of the leadership roles of the church. Ordination and other avenues of service may have diminished the importance of the WSCS. In one of my early churches a woman did not take a position with the WSCS because she had been elected chair of the trustees. Still, at the time of the Methodist-EUB merger in 1968, the merged church would still count 1.6 million members of the new organization known as United Methodist Women (UMW) and it was still the largest women's organization in the world. By this time the various women's organizations had been incorporated into the church's larger Board of Global Ministries. As part of the negotiations for this linking with the Board the Women's Division was given authority to nominate their own members to the Board. Because the Methodist women's organizations were so strong for the most part the EUB women in the general church level were absorbed into the larger Methodist structure.

Local UMW units adjusted to the merger with few problems, as did annual conference groups.

## **SPECIAL LOCAL INDIANA NOTE:**

A congregation right here in Indiana was one of the very first merged Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist congregations in the nation -- Walkerton United Methodist Church.

Beginning as early as 1965 the Walkerton Evangelical United Brethren and the Walkerton Methodist Church began conversations about uniting their ministries. In May/June of that year Joint Committees on union comprised of 10 lay members from each church were formed. By October of 1965 the Joint Committees presented strong recommendations of support for the merger to their respective congregations at meetings in their respective churches. By January of 1966 congregational meetings were held in each church with a vote of approval from both churches.

The congregation of the Walkerton Methodist Church walked the one block in snow and cold to the Evangelical United Brethren Church for a Union Service January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1966. Then in November 1966, The National General Conference voted to approve the merger. This was approximately two years before the national merger of these two denominations took place.

We in Indiana once again demonstrated that we were leading the way.

***These historical sketches are a project of the Commission on Archives and History of the Indiana Conference written by Rev. Riley Case and edited by Rev. Paul Wagner. If you wish to comment and/or add stories contact Riley Case, [rbcase1@gmail.com](mailto:rbcase1@gmail.com).***