

MINUTES

The South Carolina Conference Historical Society Of The United Methodist Church

Meeting At

The Sandor Teszler Library, Wofford College

Spartanburg, South Carolina

Saturday, November 7, 2015

The South Carolina Conference Historical Society of the United Methodist Church met for its Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 7, 2015, in the Conference Classroom of the Sandor Teszler Library at Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Eleven persons signed the Attendance Register. Those attending gathered for fellowship and refreshments prior to the meeting.

Call To Order. The Annual Business Meeting was called to order at approximately 10:30 am by the Society's President, Ms. Joyce E. Plyler, with words of welcome to those attending. She led a devotional period reflecting on a recent worship experience at the Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas, which is the church affiliated with Southern Methodist University where Ms. Plyler's daughter is a student. The sermon on that Sunday by the Reverend Paul Rasmussen, senior minister of the church, was on "roots" of the faith reminding the congregation that our faith has roots, The sermom was based on John 1:14 . . . "the word became flesh and dwelt among us . . ." reminding the congregation that the "law" came to us through Moses but that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. As with Methodism's Wesleyan emphasis on Scripture and reason, Jesus showed both truth and grace, neither being the one and only right way. This combination of one and the other speaks to the tension in the church – not one or the other but both, not law or grace but both law and grace. Ms. Plyler suggested that we must look at the truth of history but with the element of grace. She noted that our roots are found in our past. If we only hold on the past, then we are trapped; however, if we don't hold on to the past, then we are lost. This is the tension that we live with as historians. She concluded the devotional period with prayer.

Time of Remembrance. The Reverend Roger M. Gramling, Secretary-Treasurer, led in a time of remembering five members of the Historical Society including one life member who have died since the last Annual Meeting. The following names were called:

Dr. Margaret W. "Peggy" Cain(Life Member)(January 2, 2015)

Miss Ruth Suddath Green(January 8, 2015)

The Reverend Dr. Robert Wright Spears(February 10, 2015)

The Reverend William Randolph Kinnett(August 14, 2015)

Dr. Thomas Boyle Clark, Jr.(October 27, 2015)

Mr Gramling shared a brief sketch of the activities and accomplishments of each person who was remembered and concluded the time of remembrance with a reading from the 1964 Ritual of The Methodist Church.

Report of The Mark. Dr. A. V. Huff, Jr., Editor, reported that the Fall issue was mailed in advance of this meeting and trusted that everyone had received it. He looks towards the preparation of the Spring issue. Submitted articles and items are welcomed.

Report of the Commission on Archives and History. Mr. Kinney was not able to be present for the meeting of the Society but arrived as the meeting was being concluded.

Report of the Secretary-Treasurer. The Reverend Roger M. Gramling, the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, distributed copies of the Financial Report and the Membership Report for the period April 1, 2014, through October 31, 2015, which are made a part of these Minutes. The report was reviewed and the income and expenses items noted. Mr. Gramling reported a balance on hand at October 31, 2015, of \$22,908.73. This figure includes \$20,652.49 designated for the Burdine Lodge Restoration Project and \$430.44 in net proceeds from hosting the SEJ Historical Society Annual Meeting in June, 2014. Unrestricted balance at October 31,

2015, was \$1,825.80. He recommended that the net proceeds from hosting the 2014 SEJ Historical Society Annual Meeting be now absorbed into the unrestricted balance as all known expenses from that meeting have been paid. He added that additional gifts to the Burdine Lodge Restoration Project this past week have brought the total to \$20,852.00 and the number of gifts now total 228.

He also reported that Life Memberships remained at 35, at October 31, 2015; Individual Annual Memberships have increased to 72; Institutional Memberships up to 7; and Commission Members remain at 8, for a total of 122 members, up from 108 at March 31, 2015, a significant increase in membership for the Society.

The report of the Secretary-Treasurer was approved as presented.

Dues Increase. Mr. Gramling shared a recommendation from members of the Executive Committee that the annual dues for the “individual” and the “senior” categories of membership be increased by \$5.00 effective January 1, 2016. He advised that this increase is necessary if the Society is to continue to be as active as it has been for the last several years. He noted that the unrestricted balance which supports the Society’s operations is down by approximately a thousand dollars. He also reported that this is the first time in his fourteen years as an officer of the Society that a dues increase has been considered. Under this recommendation “senior annual dues” would be increased from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and “individual annual dues” from \$10.00 to \$15.00. Upon motion by Dr. Huff, seconded by Mr. Huggins, the recommendation was approved.

Election of Officers for 2016-2017. Dr. Huff presented the slate of proposed officers for 2016-2017 on behalf of the Nominating Committee. They were as follows:

President – J. Robert Huggins
Vice President – Joyce E. Plyler
Secretary-Treasurer – Roger M. Gramling

There were no nominations from the floor and the slate of nominees were elected as presented.

Mr. Huggins asked for the privilege of expressing his appreciation to the Society for the confidence and trust being placed in him to serve as President. He stated that “Methodism” has become his passion. Entering the ministry later in life having prepared for a career in business, he recounted an experience in Dr. Daniel Bell’s Methodism Class at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary which made him acutely aware of how little he knew about Methodism and provoked him to learn as much as he could. This quest for knowledge about the history of Methodism has led him to a monthly column in the Advocate on Methodist history and the quest for old books as he frequents antique stores. He expressed his opinion about the need to get young people interested in the history of the church. He stated that he will put his passion into this work and thanked the society for the privilege of serving in this way.

Introductions. The presence of Society member, the Reverend Robert “Bob” Carlisle at the meeting was noted. Mr. Carlisle, who lives in Anderson but who is originally from the community of Carlisle, is a direct descendant of Coleman Carlisle, a prominent Methodist and leader of his day, who is mentioned in Asbury’s Journal.

Announcements of Coming Events and Activities. The President called attention to the following list of coming events and activities:

November 20-21, 2015 – SEJ Heritage Preservation Workshop, Lake Junaluska
May 10-20, 2016 – General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Portland, Oregon
May 23-26, 2016 – Historical Society of the UMC Annual Meeting, Dover, Delaware
June 5-8, 2016 - Annual Session of the South Carolina Conference, Florence
July 13-16, 2016 – Southeastern Jurisdictional Conferene, Lake Junaluska

Program Presentation

“Treasures of the Archives”

Dr. R. Phillip Stone, Ph. D., Archivist, South Carolina Conference and Wofford College

Ms. Plyler introduced Dr. Stone who had been asked to present the program for the meeting of the Conference Historical Society. Dr. Stone was pleased to introduce Dean Kevin Reynolds, the new Dean of the Wofford College Library. Dean Reynolds spoke briefly noting that the mission of the library and that of the historical society were clearly aligned, that the archival materials were a most acceptable part of the collection, and that he was pleased by this relationship with the Society. Dr. Stone also introduced the Reverend Luther H. Rickenbaker, a member of the Conference Commission on Archives and History, who has served as the Senior Research Assistant in the Archives since 2011 working mostly with materials related to the Methodist Collection.

Dr. Stone described the role of the Methodist Archives at Wofford as the official repository of the permanently valuable records of the South Carolina Annual Conference and its agencies and in that role it also collects materials about the history of Methodism and Methodists in South Carolina. As such, its collection currently includes the following: Conference Journals and Minutes of the Conference dating back to 1830; some conference boards and commission records, collecting what may be available; some general church records and some records of the Southeastern Jurisdiction; records of the United Methodist Women; *Advocate* records; some historical society records; newsletters published by Epworth Children's Home; some charge conference records, some district journals and records; a few local church records, including some records from churches that have been closed; old circuit records; miscellaneous items related to South Carolina Methodism; pictorial directories of clergy members, some of which have now been digitized; papers of individual clergy, some from early, some from later periods; and the Mary Belle Winn Collection.

Dr. Stone noted that our “connection” is one of the treasures of the Archives. It is our connection that allows us to connect the past to the present and the present to the future. An example of the Archives' connectional treasures is an original Enoch Wood bust of John Wesley which Wesley sat for in 1781. It came as a gift to Wofford from Mary Poole Cunningham. Dr. Stone added that Mrs. Cunningham's husband, the late Dr. Francis Cunningham, had baptized him at Bethel Church when Dr. Cunningham was its pastor. Dr. Stone stated that the archives maintains our connection by helping local churches maintain a connection to the conference and by helping individuals strengthen their connection to their Methodist past including their ancestors and their local churches.

He continued that one of the greatest treasures is the stories told through the documents, letters, manuscripts, and artifacts of the archives. For example, the original early conference journals were written in hand in large bound volumes and handed from one Secretary to another. The printed versions did not always include all of the details which the handwritten ones did. For, example a handwritten version of the conference minutes details the particulars of why a minister was expelled while the printed version did not give the particulars. Another example is a 1963 letter typed on toilet paper, but never sent, from Dr. Melvin Medlock to Bishop Paul Hardin, Jr., representing his wishes not to be moved from Central, Florence, to Wesley Memorial, Columbia. The letter is an allegorical story about a lion offered in trade for a giraffe with the result that the zoo has to close.

Dr. Stone noted that in reviewing the papers of the late Eben Taylor, issues of “the Devil's Advocate” were found. This form of satirical “underground” newsletter of the 1960's and 1970's was frequently circulated among the ministers of the conference describing various events in a disguised language.

Other treasures include the original edition of the *Advocate* from 1837 and the letters of missionary Mary Belle Winn, a South Carolinian, who worked in China from 1923 to 1949. These letters describe her life including her travels to her appointment in China, her life on the mission field, missionary meetings and conferences, and her observations of life in China. Her letters are full of stories.

One of the most unusual and fascinating letters in the archives collection according to Dr. Stone is the “Sancho Letter” which describes in the form of a personal testimony the life and experiences of a slave named Sancho converted to Methodism by Bishop Francis Asbury.

Dr. Stone then invited those present to accompany him to the archives to view first hand the items which he had described in his presentation and other “treasures” in the as well.

There being no further matters to come before the Society, the meeting was adjourned with appreciation to Dr. Stone for his excellent and interesting presentation and for the opportunity to visit the archives.

The meeting of the Conference Commission on Archives and History followed the meeting of the Historical Society.

Respectfully submitted,

Roger M. Gramling
Secretary-Treasurer