

MINUTES
Annual Meeting
The South Carolina Conference Historical Society
At
Sandor Teszler Library, Wofford College
Spartanburg, South Carolina
Saturday, April 23, 2022

The South Carolina Conference Historical Society of the United Methodist Church met on Saturday, April 23, 2022, at the Sandor Teszler Library on the campus of Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina. (The meeting was the annual meeting of the Society postponed from 2021 due to pandemic. It was the first time that the Society had met since October, 2019.) Those attending began gathering at 10:00 am for refreshments and fellowship hosted by Dr. R. Phillip Stone and his associates in the Conference Archives. Twenty-one persons signed the attendance register.

Business Meeting. The Business Meeting of the Society was called to order at approximately 10:30 am by the Society's President, Ms. Joyce E. Plyler with a prayer of thanksgiving for the privilege of being able to meet again in person. It being her last meeting as current president, she spoke of the privilege and pleasure it had been for her to have had the opportunity to work with the Society and how much the Society had meant to her. Noting the demands of both learning about history and helping others to learn about history, she shared the passage from Revelation 3:2-3 to "wake up" and continue to do all that we can to persevere in our efforts.

Ms. Plyler expressed appreciation to Dr. Stone for hosting the meeting at Wofford and for the preparations made by him and those working with him for the privilege of this visit to the newly remodeled archives area in the college library.

Report of the Secretary-Treasurer – Financial and Membership Reports. The Reverend Roger M. Gramling, the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, presented his report. Due to the need to postpone last year's and the previous year's annual meeting because of the pandemic, his report covered the period October 1, 2019 through December 31, 2021. Mr. Gramling reported a balance on hand at October 1, 2019, of \$29,646.09. Income for the period totaled \$9,490.00 which included gifts to the Burdine Lodge Restoration Project of \$4,705.00 and gifts to the Society of \$1,975.00. Expenses for the reported period totaled \$33,397.38 which included the \$30,000.00 transferred to the Pickens County Historical Society to be applied to the cost of the Burdine Lodge Restoration. The balance at December 31, 2021 was \$5,738.71. He added that since the first of 2022, \$690.00 has been received in new and renewal dues, \$450.00 in gifts to the Society, and \$307.00 in expenses bringing the to date balance to approximately \$6,500.00. Membership increased from 109 to 128 for the period. This figure includes 48 Life Memberships.

Report of the Editor of *The Mark*. The Reverend Dr. A. V. Huff, Jr., Editor, reported on the Historical Society's newsletter, *The Mark*. Selections from the Historical Trail Project have been regularly published in recent editions of the newsletter in order to share this information with the membership. The Secretary-Treasurer is assisting in the formatting of the newsletter.

Report of the Conference Commission on Archives and History. Dr. Stone reported on behalf of himself and Mr. Rickenbaker, Chairperson of the Commission. Dr. Stone announced that Mr. Joseph R. Gainey has been added to the staff as an Assistant Archivist working with the Archives but more particularly with Special Collections. Dr. Stone stated that 120 reference questions have been received in the Archives so far this year. The Archives continues to receive a large number of obituary requests. Dr. Stone also reported that Mr. Rickenbaker is working on processing the papers of the late Reverend Eben Taylor. Dr. Stone expressed his pleasure at having the Society meet in the newly renovated archives area as it is the first group to meet in the new space.

Report on the South Carolina Methodist Historical Trail Project. Dr. Huff reported on the progress being made. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Gramling for his assistance in writing some of the historical descriptions. He indicated that as the work proceeds, the sites are shared in the pages of *The Mark*. He stated that about two-thirds of the site histories have been written. Those remaining will require additional time and effort in researching and composing the descriptions. In response to a question, Dr. Huff indicated that the histories can certainly be reprinted in church newsletters and papers. Sharing information about these sites is encouraged. The descriptions are not copyrighted.

Report on the Burdine Lodge Restoration Project. Mr. Gramling reported that the Burdine Lodge was opened and dedicated in a special program on Saturday, November 13, 2021. As reported in *The Mark*, members and officers of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society and the Pickens County Historical Society joined Methodists from the area, friends of the Hagood Mill Historic Site and Foundation, descendants of Samuel Burdine, and many Pickens area residents for the opening and dedication of the restored Burdine Lodge at the Hagood Mill Historic Site.

The program included words of welcome from county and state representatives. Music was provided for the occasion by the Grace United Methodist Church Choir and included several Wesley hymns. A brief history of Francis Asbury and his connection to the Burdine Lodge was provided by the Reverend Roger M. Gramling, Secretary-Treasurer of the Historical Society. Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, Resident Bishop of the Columbia Area, led the dedication and blessing of the structure in which Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat celebrated the Lord's Supper on November 18, 1800.

Ms. Plyler reported that as President of the Conference Historical Society, she was presented three pens, handcrafted by Mr. Ken Nabors from wood from one of the structure's logs, as an expression of appreciation for the \$30,000.00 contributed through the Society for the restoration project. The Historical Society adopted the restoration project as a fundraising effort in late 2013. Ms. Plyler presented one of the pens to Dr. Stone for the Conference Archives. She announced that a second pen would be sent to the congregation of Antioch United Methodist Church which is the successor church to the Methodist Society organized in the Burdine home. The third pen was presented to Mr. Gramling in appreciation for his leadership and work in organizing the project and leading the fundraising efforts.

The historic log house became the home of Samuel Burdine, an early Methodist, in 1796. It served as a meeting place for a Methodist Society, and a lodging place for Asbury traveling from North Carolina to South Carolina through the Saluda Pass. The structure

was donated to the Pickens County Historical Society by Nell Davis Patton and her family. It was disassembled at its location in the Dacusville Community to be restored and preserved among other exhibits at the Hagood Mill District Site.

Docents at the Hagood Mill Historic Site reported that on the Saturday following its dedication some 300 persons toured the structure which has been furnished with period pieces. As a part of his report, Mr. Gramling shared photographs of the opening and dedication event.

The SEJ Historical Society. The Reverend Franklin B. Buie requested the privilege to share information with the Society about the Annual Meeting of the SEJ Historical Society scheduled for July 26-29, 2022, at Epworth By The Sea on Saint Simons Island, Georgia. The Historical Society of the United Methodist Church will be joining the SEJ Historical Society for the meeting. The theme of the meeting will be the Wesleys' presence in Georgia, "Walking With Wesley" and will include trips to sites associated with the Wesleys at Savannah and on St. Simons. The Reverend Dave Hanson will speak on the Wesleys at Fort Frederica, and Mr. Buie will speak on John Wesley in South Carolina and the decision to go to Georgia. Information about the meeting is available on the website of the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church and through the Moore Methodist Museum at Epworth By The Sea.

Mr. Buie, who is Membership Chairperson for the SEJ Historical Society, shared information about the Society and ways to become a member and invited persons to join. He also shared his thinking about how the Society could be open to possible changes in the United Methodist Church through transforming the SEJ Historical Society to a "Southeastern Methodist Historical Society" welcoming other groups and agencies in various current or future denominational bodies in the southeast who share a common Wesleyan and Methodist family heritage.

Time of Remembrance. Mr. Gramling led a time of remembering members of the Conference Historical Society who have entered the Church Triumphant since the last annual meeting of the Society. The following persons were remembered:

- The Reverend Joseph Frazier (12/07/1935-12/10/2019)
- Mr. James Andrew Neal (11/14/1942-03/14/2020)
- The Reverend Dr. Edgar H. Ellis, Jr. (07/20/1935-07/18/2020)
- Mrs. Carolyn Eleazer Clamp (02/02/1935-09/19/2020)
- The Reverend Dr. George W. Watson, Sr. (08/25/1933-02/16/2021)
- The Reverend Thomas C. Pearson, Jr. (07/04/1951-05/06/2021)
- The Reverend George Walton Farrell Cox (10/07/1931-12/07/2021)
- Mrs. Darien G. Pickens (12/18/1934-02/27/2022)

Mr. Gramling concluded the "time of remembrance" with a prayer from the 1866 Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Nomination and Election of Society Officers for 2022-2024. Ms. Plyler introduced the time for the election of officers to serve 2022-2024. Officers of the Society serve on a calendar year basis. Officers are elected for a two-year term. The President and Vice President may serve two consecutive two-year terms. The Secretary-Treasurer may serve terms without limitation.

Ms. Plyler shared that she and Mr. Gramling had served as the Nominating Committee in consultation with other members of the Executive Committee of the Society. Having previously conferred with each nominee, she presented the following recommended slate of nominations for officers:

President – The Reverend Meredith M. Dark
Vice President – The Reverend Joseph D. Kovas
Secretary-Treasurer – The Reverend Roger M. Gramling

Ms. Dark and Mr. Kovas were each invited to share information about themselves and how their interest in history came about. Ms. Plyler opened the floor for additional nominations. There were none. The slate of nominees were elected as presented. Ms. Plyler expressed her satisfaction at having Methodist Ministers leading the Society even though she was reared in a strong Methodist Family within a long lineage of Methodism and Methodist influence describing herself as a daughter of “Methodist privilege” whose parents were devoted to the Methodist Church.

With the business portion of the meeting being completed, Ms. Plyler introduced Dr. R. Phillip Stone, Conference Archivist, and Dr. A. V. Huff, Jr., Conference Historian, for program presentations.

PROGRAM PRSENTATION
“Early History of the Conference Historical Society”
(Summary of Dr. Stone’s Presentation)

Dr. Stone stated that the Conference Historical Society had its beginnings in the 1856 session of the South Carolina Annual Conference held at Yorkville, South Carolina. The Conference met in the Court House beginning on November 19th. On the first day of the Conference a resolution was adopted calling upon the Governor of South Carolina to declare a Day of Thanksgiving and Humiliation. At the next business session of the Conference, there was a call for a committee meeting to organize a conference historical society.

The Society was to be organized under the name The Historical Society of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A copy of the Constitution of such a Society in the Baltimore Annual Conference provided a template. The purpose of the Society focused upon “collection and preservation” of documents and records as well as “objects of curiosity”. Specific materials would be asked for as well as books and artifacts. Such property of the Society was to be held at Wofford College which became the repository of the Society. The founding document provided for a large number of officers including three vice presidents, three archivists, and nine managers. There would be an “annual meeting” of the Society at the session of the annual conference. It is recorded that ninety-six persons signed on as members, mostly clergy and a few laymen. However, membership in the Society was open to both men and women. There was to be an annual address or lecture at the annual meeting, the first such taking place in 1857. The first address was given by the Reverend Whiteford Smith.

The Reverend A. M. Shipp spoke in 1858 on the history of Methodism in western North Carolina. His address was of such length as to necessitate an adjournment to

resume three days later for him to finish his address. (The addresses from 1898-1930's were eventually published and are available.)

In reflecting upon the thinking behind the formation of the society in 1856, possible reasons include the "dying out" of the first and second generations of those present in the early years of the conference and the recent historical events which led to the division of the Church in 1844 and the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, ten years previously including the need to record and preserve the history of that division and the reasons and rationale for it as viewed by the Southern Church.

As a result of the division of the South Carolina Conference in 1915 into the South Carolina and Upper South Carolina Conferences, each conference had an historical society. The speaker for the annual address was shared by both conferences. Both conferences supported the collection at Wofford College. The conferences were reunited in 1948.

In 1931, the Historical Society observed its 75th anniversary reviewing its accomplishments. In 1964 the General Conference created a "Committee to Frame an Archival Policy" to be appointed by the Council of Bishops which would report to the 1968 General Conference. The Conference continued to rely upon the Historical Society for preserving the Conference's history. However, this changed in 1968, when the General Conference mandated(Par. 1411.1) that there be an Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History. While provision was made for a Conference Historical Society organized by the Commission(Par. 1411.2), the Commission now became the historical agent for the Conference and assumed responsibilities previously performed by the Conference Historical Society. This move necessitated a reorganization of the historical society in the annual conference. While there has always been a close relationship between the Conference Commission and the Conference Historical Society, the historical society was no longer recognized as the historical agent for the annual conference.

PROGRAM PRESENTATION
"THE PASSIONATE JOURNEY TOWARD MERGER:
A FIFTY-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON THE CREATION OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA
CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH"

(Dr. Huff's presentation is presented in its entirety.)

(In introducing his presentation, Dr. A, V. Huff, Jr., noted that in looking over the steps which led to the 1972 merger of the two South Carolina Conferences, he was impressed by the fact that most of his life was involved in one church-related controversy or another. Being born in 1937, his early years were impacted by fall-out from the 1939 Unification of the three major branches of American Methodism.)

On June 5, 1972, the members of the two existing South Carolina Conferences of the United Methodist Church gathered on the Wofford College campus in Spartanburg. One was established in 1866 in the wake of the Civil War by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the other was created by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1796, but adhered to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1845. Both conferences contained elements of the Methodist Protestant Church, which had separated from Episcopal Methodism in 1830 and reunited to form The Methodist Church in 1939.

The final session of the 1866 Conference convened in Leonard Auditorium in the morning, and the final session of the 1785 Conference (designated by the year at which Bishop Francis Asbury made the first appointments to South Carolina) convened in the afternoon in Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium. That night the new conference held its first session in Memorial Auditorium.

The sessions in 1972 were the culmination of unfinished business deriving from the creation of The Methodist Church in 1939. One of the major roadblocks to unification was the treatment of the black membership within the new church. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South was overwhelmingly white in a land racially segregated by law. The creation of the jurisdictional system was geographical with one glaring exception—a Central Jurisdiction would include the black conferences and membership. In the Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference there were 83 nay votes, and 11 abstentions. They sat in silence as the conference celebrated the majority vote. In South Carolina more than 100 persons joined black denominations, and the black churches of the former Methodist Protestant Church became a part of the black conference as the Berkeley District. In the old Southern church there were complaints that the Central Jurisdiction was a move toward eventual integration. South Carolina became the center of a new denomination—the Southern Methodist Church.

After World War II the rising tide of the civil rights movement had its effect on the church. The women of both South Carolina conferences cooperated in the formation of Bethlehem Centers in Spartanburg and Columbia. But the two conferences took different attitudes toward the civil rights movement itself. Not until 1954 did a joint committee meet to discuss program areas where cooperation might be possible. The cautious views of the whites met the blunt views of black leaders. The white committee turned its responsibility over to the new Board of Social and Economic Relations. At the same time the black conference memorialized the General Conference to abolish the Central Jurisdiction.

In 1956 General Conference adopted Amendment IX to the Constitution to allow black churches and annual conferences to transfer into regional jurisdictions when all parties agreed. Little action resulted. Not until 1964 did the General Conference adopt the goal of an inclusive church and direct that no reference be made to the Central Jurisdiction.

At the 1964 session of the Central Jurisdictional Conference annual conference boundaries were realigned to ease their transfer into regional jurisdictions.

Against the background of the civil rights movement in the state, the white conference in 1966 voted to approve the transfer of black conferences into the Southeastern Jurisdiction. A motion was offered to set 1972 as the date for merger in South Carolina and to request the bishop to appoint merger committees to work on the mechanics. The date failed, but the call for merger committees was adopted.

At the 1968 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference the black South Carolina Conference was transferred from the Central Jurisdiction. The two South Carolina Conferences were distinguished by date. Both became part of the Columbia Area, though at first there was considerable apprehension over Bishop Paul Hardin, Jr., among the

black leadership. The two bodies began to hold joint pastors schools and leadership training.

Between 1967 and 1969 the merger committees of the two conferences met and divided into subcommittees. Underlying the debates over pensions, minimum salary, and other questions was the often unspoken issue of racism.

Working toward the General Conference goal of 1972, the merger committee appointed a smaller task force to draw up a plan for merger. In 1970 the larger committee adopted the proposed plan and submitted it to the annual conferences. A year of open meetings was held, and in 1971, the 1866 Conference approved it overwhelmingly; the 1785 Conference defeated it, 528-432.

Bishop Hardin appointed a Committee of Six in the 1785 Conference to draw up a modified plan. A special session of the annual conference approved the plan; it was defeated by the 1866 Conference almost unanimously. A Committee of Six from each conference met to perfect a plan, and in January, 1972, the two conferences met in joint session in Columbia in the Township Auditorium. Both conferences adopted the plan of merger by wide margins, making way for the meetings in Spartanburg in June. A new chapter in what John W. Curry, Sr., called “the passionate journey” began.

After Dr. Huff’s presentation, a time of discussion and reflection followed as several members shared some of their own feelings and impressions of the merger process and the spirit of the time.

Guided Tours of the Archives

Dr. Stone led small groups on tours of the newly remodeled Archives area of the Library pointing out the nature of the collections both for the Conference and Wofford College. Fellowship followed as the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Roger M. Gramling
Secretary-Treasurer