

Wesley  
United  
Methodist Church

*Dover, Delaware*



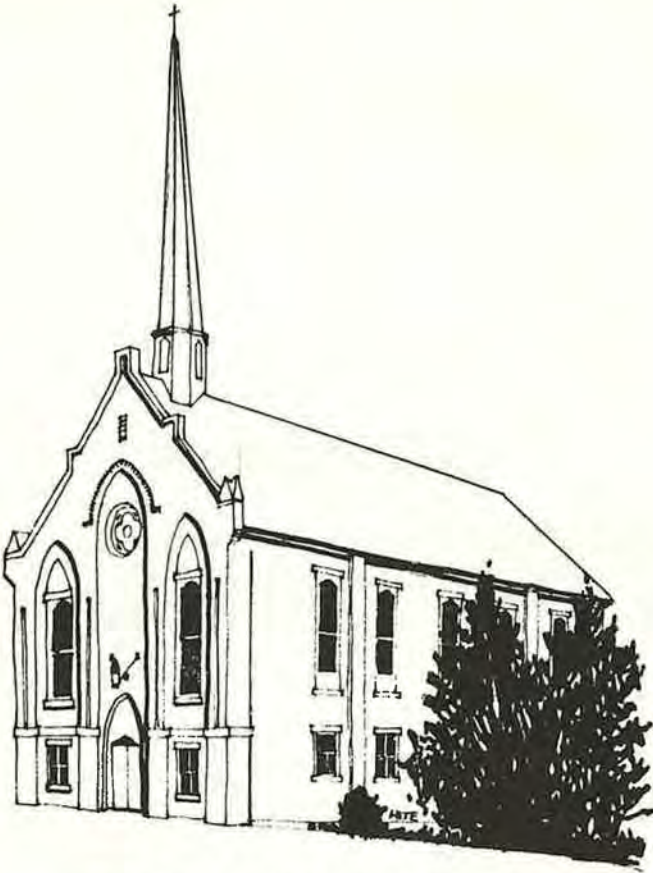
Original Wesley Chapel First Record of use 1784

Sketches by Gerron Hine from Early Trustee Records

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Wesley Church 1982 Sketched by Gerron Hite

## DEDICATION

*This history of Wesley Church in Dover, Delaware is dedicated to "all the faithful servants of Jesus Christ who from their labors rest" and who have served the church through the years 1778-1982. It has been a noble history and a priceless heritage.*

## *Acknowledgements:*

This is to thank not only those who participated in the writing of this book, but also those who looked up old records and photographs, typed the book and/or letters, proofread, and advised.

The writers were: Rev. Allen Clark, Grover Johnson, Yolande Thomas, Mrs. John A. (Ruth) Trader, Dr. Paul Johnston, Mrs. William (Ann) Holden, Rev. George Godfrey, Rev. Robert Whitlock, Rev. William Hemphill and I, Joseph Bellmeyer, who is writing this thank-you.

Those who helped in many other ways are: Nancy Haines, James Hutchins, Debbie Kitzmiller (who helped many long hours typing), Beverly Freeman, Mary Bellmeyer, and Everett Bryan, many who loaned photographs, and those who supported the effort financially.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

We acknowledge with gratitude contributions from the persons listed below which made the printing of the history possible:

Mrs. Marion P. Ayars, in memory of her husband, George W. Ayars

Rev. and Mrs. Franklin B. Bailey

F. Bryan Bailey, Jr., in honor of his father, Rev. Dr. Franklin B. Bailey, and in memory of his mother, Laura A. Bailey, and his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bailey and Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Bohlken

Mrs. Hilda Bailey

Elsie L. Barone, in memory of her husband, George M. Barone

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Bellmeyer

Miss M. Caroline Budd, in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Henry G. Budd

Mr. and Mrs. Carleton E. Carey, in memory of Howard and Ella Abbott

Arthur and Elizabeth Carlson, in memory of Arthur Gunnar Carlson, Sara Pederson Carlson, John Vander Fay and Mary DeShields Fay

Rev. Allen Clark

Mr. and Mrs. Wesley A. Coote

Gladys M. Creadick

Mrs. Jessie Y. Derickson, in memory of her husband, Wilmer T. Derickson

Misses Deborah and Melissa Fleischer, in memory of Max Fleischer

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gleadow, in memory of Clara Boss

C. Robert Godfrey

Rev. and Mrs. George C. Godfrey

Mrs. Anne M. Goodrich, in memory of her brother, Bill Milbury  
Mr. and Mrs. William E. Hallett, Jr., in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Hallett, Sr.  
Mrs. Myrtle Harrington, in memory of Walter B. Harrington  
Charlotte R. Hawkins, in memory of her husband, Robert C. Hawkins  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Holt  
Mrs. Ruth Holt, in memory of Walter E. Holt  
Newton and Jane Hudson, in memory of Frank E. Lynch  
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Hutchins  
Anne C. Hynson, in memory of Charles T. Hynson, Jr.  
Arthur and Helen Judd, in memory of Myrtle and Norman Cabbage  
Miss Delsie Kemp, in memory of loved ones  
Mrs. Dorothy Kilvington  
Mrs. Barbara Merrell, in memory of Harvey Merrell  
Rev. and Mrs. F. Douglas Milbury  
Neighbors of Clara Boss, in her memory  
Mrs. Elva S. Nelson  
Mrs. Nellie Norbet  
Mr. Charles Paradee, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pippin  
Mrs. Mary Roper  
Mrs. Gladys D. Roscoe, in memory of Kathryn L. Montague  
Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Sapp, in memory of Clara Boss  
Mr. and Mrs. C. Spencer Scotton, in memory of Mrs. Maude B. Hearn  
Mr. and Mrs. William H. Sterling, in memory of L. Beatrice Mast and Edna Cariss Anderson  
Dick and Vicki Stoops, in memory of William F. Stoops and Marie K. Nielson  
Mrs. Miriam Teaff, in memory of O. D. Teaff, Sr.  
Miss Yolande Thomas, in loving memory of George H. and Clara S. Thomas  
Mrs. Ruth Trader  
Mrs. Virginia Vapaa, in memory of her husband, George K. Vapaa  
Lillian H. Wallace, in memory of her husband, J. Christopher Wallace  
Emily C. Ward, in memory of Norman L. Ward  
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Willis  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Zeman, in memory of Howard H. Steele and Alfred W. Zeman

# PREFACE

Wesley Church is rich in history, so this book has been published to keep its history alive for the future.

An interesting article from *Garden of Methodism* by E. C. Hallman summarizes the association of Francis Asbury with Wesley Church: "Bishop Asbury preached in the new chapel on October 2, 1784. On May 25, 1801, he preached in the Court House. Bishop Asbury visited Richard Bassett often when he was Governor of Delaware, Senator from Delaware and Chief Judge of the State. He visited with Bassett on February 27, 1780, April 10, 1780, preached December 23, 1783; visited July 4, 1796, October 16, 1797, May 28, 1800; April 10, 1810, April 8, 1813; preached April 9, 1815; visited the town of Dover and preached there January 10 and February 7 and 8 and March 8, 1779; February 27, March 26 and November 26, 1780; November 25, 1781; October 28, 1782; September 27, 1783; October 2, 1784; preached in the "new chapel" November 15, 1784, October 1, 1785, held quarterly meeting October 25, 1785, preached October 23 and 29, 1788, held quarterly meeting November 29, 1788, also October 16-18, 1789; preached November 28, 1789, December 18, 1790, June 1, 1800; May 25, 1801; April 28, 1802; April 21, 1805; April 9, 1806; March 28, 1807; March 27, 1809; April 22 and 26, 1810, April 11, 1813, April 11 and 16, 1815." (*Garden of Methodism*, pp. 105 and 110) As you can see, he was just about a yearly visitor.

Wesley Church has been the site of the Wilmington Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the following dates:

1871—March 8—Dover, Delaware—Presiding Bishop Levi Scott

1880—March 17—Dover, Delaware—Bishop E. G. Andrews

1896—March 18—Dover, Delaware—Bishop H. W. Warren

1904—March 18—Dover, Delaware—Bishop J. M. Fitzgerald

1918—March 20—Dover, Delaware—Bishop F. M. Bristol

1923—April 4—Dover, Delaware—Bishop William F. McDowell

1926—March 24—Dover, Delaware—Bishop William F. McDowell

Peninsula Conference, Methodist Church:

1941—January 22—Dover, Delaware (Special) Bishop Adna W. Leonard

1951—May 17-20—Dover, Delaware—Bishop Charles W. Flint

1956—May 24-27, Dover, Delaware—Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam

I first became acquainted with Wesley Church as a student at Wesley College in 1951, when Dr. John A. Trader was pastor. There was a strong connection between the college and the church. I remember as a student minister coming to Annual Conference in 1956 when so much discussion went on about closing Wesley College. The balcony was full of students protesting the closing. It was decided to raise \$1,500,000 for the continuation of the college.

As Senior Minister of Wesley Church, I was pleased to participate in the Bicentennial Celebration of 1978. It was a special year celebrating our past and having inspiring programs of preaching, music and the arts. I appreciated

the work of the committee headed by Mr. Joseph Bellmeyer. The publication of the history of Wesley Church is another fine step to recall the past and march into the future. We are thankful for the 204 years of ministry that Wesley Church has given to the Dover community. We are proud of its contributions and its traditions, its continued service to its members and friends.

John Wesley certainly had a great influence on the name of Wesley Church, which was incorporated in 1799. Wesley was one who felt his heart "strangely warmed." Many have come in and out of its doors hearing sermons preached, music rendered, Sunday School lessons shared, and their hearts "strangely warmed." The church has had a priceless history. It has tried to be faithful to the gospel for over two hundred years of service to Christ and his Kingdom. We are grateful for the devoted lives and stalwart faith of men and women who have made the glorious heritage of the past possible. We are grateful for the strength that has been given, the sacrifice that has been shared, and the unquenchable zeal of those who have preached, served on boards and committees, and who have lived serving their Christ as Master.

Wesley is Dover's downtown church on the corner of State and Loockerman Streets and on the Plaza. It is central to the ongoing life of Dover; it is the hub for people in the Dover area. It has been the church with the open door throughout its history.

Wesley Church has brought its members into a deeper knowledge of the quest for faith over the centuries. We have seen the importance of submitting ourselves to Christ and letting him draw us together in worship, study, praise and service. Let us continue to devote ourselves to the way of Christ's cross, which leads through the realities of life to the way of truth and righteousness. Let each of us respond with a "yes" to a new life in Christ for our present age and to allow him to transform our innermost selves, our motives, and our actions. Let us together proclaim the Gospel in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we seek to be instruments of change and reconciliation now and in the future as well. We pray for strength for the cause of justice, "to love mercy and walk humbly with our God." We seek God's grace and guidance as we make our pilgrimage here on earth and in our efforts to let the church be the inspiration to the community of Dover. We hope that through our continued ministry, others may share in the renewal of our world, rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and keeping hope, faith and love as the everyday substance of our living.

As a challenge for the future, let me share these words:

"Do more than exist, LIVE.

Do more than touch, FEEL.

Do more than read, ABSORB.

Do more than hear, LISTEN.

Do more than think, PONDER.

Do more than talk, SAY SOMETHING." (Source—unknown)

## *Now A Little About Myself:*

My wife, Carolyn Leister Godfrey, our son, Guy, and our daughters, Beverly Ann and Mary Beth, and I moved into the Hazel Road parsonage on June 9, 1977. We have found the Hazel Road location to be very beautiful and restful. In 1980 a family room was furnished by renovating the basement. This has added to the loveliness of the home.

During November and December of 1981, I found myself in the hospital four times, twice in Kent General in Dover and twice in Hahnnemann Hospital in Philadelphia. I am most grateful for the continued support of the congregation and their prayers. They reassured the pastor and his family of their love and generous sense of caring. I am indebted to the staff—to the secretaries, Nancy Haines, Vicki Stoops and Patricia Riddleberger; to the Associate Minister, Frank E. Tulak, and to the former Minister of Visitation, The Rev. Hartwell Chandler, for carrying the workload of the church so beautifully in my absence.

In January 1982 we were sorry to receive the resignation of Hartwell Chandler, who had served Wesley Church for ten years so very well. A reception and dinner were held in his honor and a gift of over \$600 was given in recognition of his service and dedication.

May each member of Wesley Church continue to make it an alive, vital and invigorating church in Dover.

Sincerely,

GEORGE C. GODFREY  
Senior Minister

May 12, 1982

## *Editorial Remarks*

It has been a most rewarding and rich experience to be privileged to work with such a dedicated group of Christians who gave so freely of their time and talent to record our Methodist heritage of the past two hundred years in Dover.

The major contributors to this history of Wesley Church were Joseph Bellmeyer as chairman, Allen Clark, Grover Johnson, Paul Johnston, Yolande Thomas, Ruth Trader and Caroline Budd, all of whom are to be commended for their labors.

As Wesley United Methodist Church now enters its third century of service to the Glory of God, each member of its congregation should pause to contemplate the future so aptly expressed by an unknown poet:

Life is a book in volumes three  
The past, the present, the yet to be.  
The first is finished and laid away;  
The second we are writing, day by day.  
The third and last of the volumes three;  
Is locked from view; God holds the key.

James H. Hutchins, Editor



# Wesley Church

## The Beginning

September 13, 1978, marked the two hundredth anniversary of organized Methodism in Dover, although thirty-nine years earlier the first known Methodist passed through this small colonial village. The twenty-four-year-old was making his way toward Philadelphia. J. T. Scharf in his *History of Delaware* mentions rumors that Whitefield preached in the old Academy located near the southeast corner of Bank Alley and Governor's Avenue, and Alice Ehinger in *Bridge Across the Years* states that he was not allowed to preach in the Presbyterian Church and thus preached in the Academy. His journal simply records ". . . dined at Dover, a small town . . . from whence having left a few books we rode pleasantly . . ."

The lingering influence of Whitefield's books and ministry helped to defend young Freeborn Garrettson from a raging mob that crowded The Green thirty-nine years later. Young Garrettson, with two and one-half years of itinerant ministry behind him, entered the town of Dover, determined to deliver there the first Methodist sermon. The previous spring he had been assigned to nearby Kent County, Maryland Circuit, where, near the end of June, he narrowly escaped martyrdom, having been knocked unconscious from his horse. When he continued preaching, proudly displaying his battle scars, his reputation spread throughout the Peninsula, and he was invited into nearby rural Delaware communities.

The elderly Mr. Smithers heard him in July at one of these meetings at Mr. Shaw's home a few miles west of Dover, not far from Thomas Chapel. This was probably the service referred to in Garrettson's journal, where he says that from Maryland he again traveled through Delaware. He stated:

In the neighborhood of Mr. S. the people had been deprived of the privilege of hearing for some time, so that when I came among them I found them hungering for the word. I preached from "who is she that looketh forth as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." . . . many of the persecuted children of God seemed as if they would take wings and fly away. O! it was a great day of awakening power . . . Many of our happy friends came from afar, and returned with their hearts all on fire for God.

Here you will note that in his journal Mr. Garrettson used the first letter of a person's last name. This was during the American Revolution, and both he and Bishop Asbury followed the same practice. It appears that since the Methodist preachers were considered Tories, they took this precaution in case their journals should fall into the hands of the Patriots.

We are fortunate in having from Mr. Garrettson three accounts of the beginning of Methodism in Dover. The first appeared in the *Methodist Magazine* published in England in 1794. In this account all of the names appear as simply Mr. S. or Mr. P. The second account is found in *The Life of The Rev. Freeborn Garrettson Compiled from His Printed Manuscript Journals* and published by Nathan Bangs in 1829 following Garrettson's death, which occurred in October of 1826. In this account the names of those who first appear as initials are all filled in. However, there are two ladies mentioned in both of these accounts who are not identified. One is simply referred to as "one woman" and the other as "an old lady." Although women played a more

prominent role in Methodism than in most eighteenth century denominations, this would seem to indicate some traces of male dominance.

All of the published accounts of Methodist history appear to have used only these two accounts of the beginning of Methodism in Dover, but the third account reveals the identity of these mysterious women. This account was published in the *Methodist Magazine* in England in 1827 under the title of "Methodism in America." The editor gave the following editorial comment:

The following sketches of American Methodism are abridged from "The Semi-Centennial Sermon from the New York Annual Conference, May 1826, by the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson; Preached and Published by Request of the Body." They contain several particulars which are justly entitled to the serious attention of the members of the Methodist Society, in whatever quarter of the globe their providential lot may be cast.

First, let us look at the account as it appears in the first two sources, and then take a glimpse of what the editor called the "not generally known particulars." It will be noted that Garrettson called Dover "a proverb of wickedness" and Dr. Luff, in his journal, confirms this opinion. He speaks of the corrupt youths of Dover whose drinking, card-playing, billiards, horse-racing, cock-fighting and boys' fights were continual. He refers to the "remarkable depravity in Dover youths . . . which, he says, "has been rather proverbial" and speculates that the presence of the court with much "idle time and money" caused it. I shall quote from the 1829 account and reflect in parenthesis the slight difference of the 1794 account:

September 12, 1778 was the first day of my entering the town of Dover, quite and irreligious place (a proverb for wickedness). I had desired for some time to attack this place, but had no opening till an old gentleman came one day and heard me preach at Mr. Shaw's. His heart was touched, and he gave me an invitation to preach in the academy. Scarcely had I alighted from my horse before I was surrounded by hundreds (of men), some cried one thing, some another; some said, "He is a good man." Others said, "Nay, he deceiveth the people"—and I was also accused of being a friend to King George. They cried, "He is one of Clowe's men—hang him! Hang him!" I know not what the event would have been had not the Lord interposed. There were so many voices heard, (the noise and tumult were so great) that I had no possible chance to speak for myself; and to all human appearance I was in a fair way to be torn to pieces every moment: I was, however, rescued by several gentlemen of the town, who, hearing the uproar (at this crisis several gentlemen of the town who were alarmed by the uproar) ran to my assistance.

The chief of these were Mr. Pryor, a merchant, who was formerly awakened under Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Loockerman, and the alderman of the town. The little squire pressed through the crowd, Zaccheus-like, and taking me by the hand, led me through the mob, desiring me to preach and he would stand by me. I mounted the stage at the door (of the academy); the people flocked 'round, both within and without. After singing and prayer, I gave out, "If it bear fruit well, and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down." It was not difficult for me to speak so as to be heard a quarter of a mile. Many who did come to the place heard me from their gardens and windows. We had much of the presence of the Lord with us. (But the Lord's presence was remarkably among us.) We rarely see such a weeping company (congregation) in a new place. One woman, who sat in her window more than a quarter of a mile off, was powerfully wrought upon (was convinced). She knew no rest day nor night, till she found a resting place in her heart from the God

of Jacob. (And had no rest in her soul until she found the pardoning mercy of God.) It was thought by some of my Christian friends, who accompanied me, that very few of the extensive congregation were left without a witness on their hearts of the truth of what was delivered: more than twenty got the word of truth so fastened that they did not desire to lose it, and it terminated, I trust, in a sound conversion of the souls of many.

The mob hung their heads; many of them were affected; their ringleader said, as I was informed, he would come and ask my pardon if he thought I would forgive him; I understood he betook himself from that day to reading the Bible, and never again, to my knowledge, persecuted the children of God.

In the evening I lectured at Mr. Smithers', the old gentleman who had first given me an invitation to the town. Many of the chief people of the place came to hear, and we had a very solemn time. I felt as miserable as Jonah under his withered gourd; it seemed as though I had given all to the people, and had nothing left for myself. Ah! said the enemy, the Lord will make use of you for the good of others, and then cast you away, as a parent does the rod of correcting the child. I was in such deep exercise that I could scarcely close my eyes throughout the night, but passed the greater part of it away in sighs and groans and silence before the Lord. I believe I was permitted to be thus tried to keep me (humble) at the feet of my savior.

It is interesting that after this most significant victory for Methodism in the capital of Delaware, which laid the basis for the defense of Methodism in all of America, its founder or defender should spend a sleepless night. At this time Bishop Asbury, Wesley's representative from England, in his hiding place at Judge White's twenty miles away at Whiteleysburg, Kent County, Delaware, expressed a similar note of despondence. Hear him as he proclaimed in his diary on the following Tuesday, September 15:

This was the day of peculiar temptation. My trials were such as I do not remember to have experienced before; and for some time it seemed as if I scarcely knew whether to fight or fly. My usefulness appeared to be cut off; I saw myself pent up in a corner; my body in a manner worn out; my English brethren gone, so that every surrounding object and circumstance wore a gloomy aspect. Lord, must I thus pine away?

Little did either of them realize that the seeds of success had been sown in the "Garden of Methodism," a term conferred upon the Peninsula by the early ministers because of its fruitfulness in producing men and means to carry on the great enterprise which the Revolution had largely halted in both the North and the South, but which continued to flourish on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia.

Garrettson's sleepless night did not dampen his boundless energy. Forty-eight years later, commenting upon this period of his life, he stated:

For a time I stood very much alone; but I was young, inured to hardships, and able to travel from twenty to forty miles, and to preach from one to four sermons a day. I never expect to be in such a field of labor again, though I would gladly go many thousand miles to get into one like it; for sinners were crying for mercy on every side, and large societies were formed.

Bright and early Monday morning he was up and on his way. He reported it this way:

Monday, September 13, I preached a few miles out of town, accompanied by many, and the Lord was with us. In the afternoon I returned and found many mourning after Christ; but the devil and some of his adherents were striving to make them believe that what I had told them was a delusion; but they were not successful. I joined those who were deeply awakened into a society; and the Lord

was with them, spreading his word and converting the souls of many. Among the rest there was an old lady stripped of her own righteousness, who had been a communicant in the church for many years; also ten of her children with their husbands and wives were brought under concern for their souls. I preached at her house, when sixteen or eighteen of her children and children-in-law were present . . . Such a family as this I have seldom seen in any part of America.

It was because of this family that we have the third Dover account from Garrettson, given just a few months before he died and not only revealing the identity of the first large family within the church, but also the identity of the woman in the window, which was even of greater significance. It appears near the end of his New York Semi-Centennial Sermon, which he introduced thus:

In looking over our magazine, I saw a delightful account of our worthy Brother Beauchamp, which reminds me of a paragraph in my journal, relating to his family. It may not be unsuitable to transcribe it here. In the year 1778, when I was forming what was called the Dover Circuit, in the State of Delaware, Mr. Smithers, a respectable old gentleman, came to hear the word . . . he invited me to come to Dover . . .

Some of the new information which he gives tells us that he promised to come on the Sabbath afternoon and that he was accompanied by three or four young converts. He also informs us the mob swore they would put him in prison but that he was defended by the magistrate of the town. In the earlier records he calls him the "alderman." He now tells us that this little nameless man also said, "I am the mayor of this town; preach, and I will stand by you."

Some authorities tell us that Dover was not an incorporated town at that time and thus had no alderman or mayor. However, it is quite common knowledge that in small villages of less than one thousand population, individuals often assume semi-official positions of leadership. Scharf says that Mr. Smithers was the one who took him by the hand and promised to stand by him. The editor of the *Peninsula Methodist* gives support for this. He reports preaching in Dover in the late 1800s and staying at the home of W. B. Smithers, who, he says, was a lineal representative of the worthy gentleman of the same name to whom Freeborn Garrettson refers as giving him the first invitation to Dover and interposing for his protection from an angry mob." The following month he reports the conversion of Mr. Smithers, who, he says, is the great grandson of Mr. John Smithers who heard Garrettson at Shaw's and invited him to Dover.

This account also clears up the mystery of the platform which some historians say was erected outside the academy. He explains that a table was set outside the door for him to stand on.

It is easy to visualize the twenty-six-year-old itinerant preacher standing in front of the old academy south of the corner of Bank Alley and Governor's Avenue, on top of a sturdy crudely built table that may have served as the teacher's desk, loudly thundering forth pronouncements of judgment to come. It appears that a western breeze carried his voice diagonally across The Green and into the open window of the old jail house that stood a few yards north of the old State House. Just inside the window sat Miriam Barratt, wife of Phillip Barratt, who was at that time sheriff of Kent County.

In this account Garrettson says, "the gaoler's wife, who sat at her window at some distance, was awakened, shortly after found peace, and became a heavenly-minded woman." Mrs. Barratt was the opening wedge into a number of connecting links that through blood, social, and political ties knit together some of the more prominent families not only in Kent County, but

throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. It is easy to see how the very religious Mrs. Barratt could influence her husband to accept the Methodist preachers into their home. The next month her husband was converted under Garrettson's ministry.

When Barratt ceased to be sheriff, he moved back to his farm near Frederica and in a little less than two years donated an acre of ground for the building of the chapel which bears his name.

Samuel Ayres, in *Methodist Heroes of Other Days* tells us that William Beauchamp was born in Kent County, Delaware, and when fifteen joined the church and at nineteen began to preach. An account in the *Methodist Magazine* of the death of Beauchamp caused Garrettson to reminisce and reveal that it was this family which had been referred to in earlier accounts. Mr. Ayres calls him "almost a bishop" and explains that at the 1824 General Conference he missed being elected a bishop by three votes. One minister said that he was not elected bishop because he was a literary man, and many at that time felt it would hurt the church to have such a man as bishop.

Garrettson informs us that it was Beauchamp's grandmother who, with eight married children and their spouses, helped to form the nucleus of the first church in Dover Circuit and that Mr. Beauchamp was "a young child who probably dated his first religious impressions as early as that period." Another prominent Peninsula Methodist who dates his conversion from Garrettson's first sermon in Dover was Thomas Haskins, a young law student from Caroline County, who took Methodism back to the Preston, Maryland area and later became a traveling preacher.

According to his journal, Garrettson appears to have spent about a week in the Dover area before he moved on. In a short time he made a favorable impression on some of the best families in the area. The fact that John Pryor had come under the influence of Whitefield's ministry helped to prepare the way for his reception. Mr. Pryor was a merchant whose daughter married Vincent Loockerman, and his granddaughter married Thomas Bradford. Both Bassett and Barratt has been reared on Bohemia Manor in Maryland, where Whitefield often preached and where a log church known as the Manor Chapel was built in 1774. Thus Mr. Bassett and Mr. Barratt had been exposed to Methodism before coming to Kent County, and although Mr. Bassett at first was reluctant to accept Methodism, he was quick to defend its preachers from the charge of being Tories.

Mr. Bassett was captain of the Dover Light Horse Troop in the Colonial Army, and was on duty at Morristown in the winter of 1777. Because of his military position, it appears that he was the leader of the mob that attacked Garrettson when he first entered Dover and afterward said that he would ask forgiveness if he thought Mr. Garrettson would forgive him. On January 5, 1783, Mr. Garrettson reports that he was back in Dover among his friends:

Surely God is among these people. The last Sabbath I preached here the Lord in mercy laid his hand upon one of the greatest persecutors in the town; finding no rest, he cried mightily to God, and he converted both himself, his wife, and his brother's wife; they are now happy in religion, going on hand in hand with the brethren; and he is resolutely determined on building a brick chapel. Shall we not give the glory to God, who can change the hearts of lion-like men and women in so short a time?

From later sources we find that Mr. Bassett furnished the money for the building of the first Methodist Church in Dover known as Wesley Chapel, and thus it appears that he was, like the apostle Paul, the leader of the opposition

who quickly became the champion of the cause. Surely Garrettson was the right man for the opening wedge of Methodism in Dover. By comparison with the established church clergy, he appears to be an enthusiast, yet he was not nearly so crude as many of the local preachers of the Methodist movement. He was from a well-to-do slave-owning Maryland family. Dr. Coke referred to him as "a man of property, who had emancipated his slaves for Christ's sake." He later married the daughter of Judge Livingston of New York and built a mansion at Rhinebeck in 1799. The Methodist historian, Abel Stevens, says, "Having erected his house, he enjoyed its beautiful seclusion with the zest which his good taste and very warm domestic affections could not fail to give such a home . . . His mansion became, and continues to be, the resort of his ministerial brethren, and a large circle of kindred and friends."

In 1807 Garrettson again visited the Peninsula and at the insistence of Governor Bassett attended some of the camps. At a camp near Milford he notes:

A few noisy, jumping, dancing Methodists, did I fear, more hurt than good . . . I have never been at a meeting where there were more fruitless human exertions, though I did what I could to prevent them.

Thus it can be seen that Garrettson, although a man of deep emotion, was not the typical noisy Methodist of the type often found in the rural areas. Such a man was well fitted to appeal to the better class citizens of Kent County. Sensing the opportunity that presented itself in Dover.

. . . he wrote to Mr. Asbury, who was at Judge White's informing him that his way was open into any part of the state, and requested him to make a visit to Dover. He did so, and brought in many whom Garrettson could not reach. Garrettson attributes much of their success to the favorable attitude of Dr. Magaw, minister of the Episcopal Church who helped to reduce the prejudices of the people against the Methodists.

Asbury responded quickly to the call, and in less than four months was himself preaching in the town of Dover. His journal indicates that he preached there eleven times during the year of 1779. Of the remaining thirty-five years of his public ministry, during which he traveled mostly by horseback a half million miles, he managed to visit Dover twenty-two of those years, preaching an average of two sermons each time he visited the town. I doubt if any other town as small as Dover was blessed with as many sermons from the renowned bishop. This would make a total of fifty-five sermons at Dover from Asbury as compared to twenty-six for Barratt's Chapel.

February 7, 1779, Asbury was invited to preach in the Dover Court House, but he felt that his ideas were not clear. However, one month later he spoke in a more optimistic tone: "Today my hopes were revived at Dover. The most genteel people in Dover treated me with great kindness and courtesy. I hope it will turn to their own spiritual advantage."

One year to the day after Garrettson's first sermon in Dover, Asbury reports: "Sunday, September 12, 1779, I preached to the people who came to church at Mr. Bassett's door, on Galatians 11:19. In the afternoon, in the woods, to the most people I ever saw here, and had liberty; some living emotions appeared amongst the people: we revive again! I had a very different feeling from what I had the last time I was here. I hope we shall yet grow in Dover."

Five months later, after preaching in Dover on a Sunday after the regular service at the Episcopal Church had ended, he reported that he went home

with lawyer Bassett, "a very conversant and affectionate man, who, from his own acknowledgements, appears to be sick of sin." He also found Mrs. Bassett under great distress with a gloom of dejection upon her soul, although she prayed much. He expressed a special love for them and a belief that if Mr. Bassett ever came to God, he would preach. In spite of this optimism he confessed that there was so much pride and unbelief in the Dover people that unusual faith and power were needed to speak to them.

About this time Mrs. Bassett's sister from Dorchester County, Maryland, was converted while on a visit to Delaware, and through her influence, others were awakened. This resulted in Asbury's sending Garrettson into Dorchester County, Maryland, to organize the first Methodist Society there. He met with such success that the opposition placed him in the Cambridge jail. Some accounts say that Mr. Asbury persuaded Caesar Rodney, Governor of Delaware, to secure his release through the Governor of Maryland. His bond was set at \$100,000, and Mr. Airey of Maryland and Caesar Rodney went his bond.

Mr. Pattison, in his life of Richard Bassett, says that sometime in 1778 Mr. Bassett first met Mr. Asbury at Judge White's while on his way to Denton, Maryland, on business. Judge White's home is located about a mile southeast of Whiteleysburg, just a short distance off Route 59 on Route 291. It was here that Mr. Bassett noticed as the family was passing through the house opening and shutting doors, some men in peculiar dress keeping to themselves in a private room. Upon inquiry, he found that they were Methodist preachers and protested that he could not spend the night. He, however, stayed and was charmed by Mr. Asbury's conversation and out of custom invited Mr. Asbury to call on him in case he visited Dover. Upon returning home, he quieted his wife's fears by saying it was not likely that Asbury would come.

Soon after, in 1779, he observed Mr. Asbury heading toward his door. Desiring company to help with the conversation, he stepped out and invited Dr. Magaw, Governor Rodney, and some others to tea. It is reported that the conversation continued until a late hour and a thirty-six-year friendship was begun.

Although Rodney does not appear to have become religiously attached to Methodism, his political ties to the Barretts, Whites, and Bassetts were so strong that he, on several occasions, used his political influence to defend them. In this respect, he is probably responsible for the success of Methodism in Kent County and throughout the entire Eastern Shore.

No doubt, as a result of the strong social and political ties, Governor Rodney in March of 1780 secured Garrettson's release from the Maryland jail and in April released Asbury from the necessity of hiding by recognizing him as a citizen of Delaware. He reports in his journal for April 1780, "I became a citizen of Delaware, and was regularly returned. I was at this time under recommendation of the Governor of Delaware as taxable." Again on February 5, 1781, he notes, "I called on His Excellency, Governor Rodney, to sign my certificate, which he did with great readiness and politeness."

In a letter twenty-four years later, Asbury responded to criticism that while others were in prison he had remained in hiding: "It is a mistake, I had access to the home of Governors Rodney and Bassett and Dr. Magaw's."

Another instance of Rodney's defense of the Methodists came about two years later during the Chaney Clow episode. Clow, who had been a Methodist, was accused of treason because of his attempts to aid the British and some attempted to brand all Methodists as Tories. Garrettson affirms that: "His Excellency, Caesar Rodney, at that time Governor of the State, was friendly

to religion. Our enemies were assiduous in their endeavors to prejudice his mind against us; inculcating the idea that we were Tories; and ought to be crushed as a body. He insisted on knowing how many of these insurrectionists there were of each denomination, and when they found there were only two Methodists among them, the Governor's remarks made our enemies look small before the court. They were all pardoned except C. Clow, the leader, who was hung."

About a month after Garrettson was released from jail, Asbury prepared to leave the state and stopped by Dover where he reported that he "called at Bassetts' and had a warm conversation with Warner Mifflin. We prayed, and Mrs. Bassett made a confession of finding peace."

Garrettson gives a report which he says he received from "Mr. Bassett's own mouth": "Mr. Bassett, being a man of the world and moving in the higher circles of fashionable society, became greatly distressed in mind on account of the Methodist, so that he had but little rest day or night . . . he concluded that . . . he would sell his property and move to some distant part of the country, so as to rid himself of the 'noisy Methodists'. One night during the session of the court he went to his bedchamber to rest. After falling into a profound sleep, he dreamed that he saw two devils in black, standing by his bedside, who, he thought, had come to take him away. He trembled and began to pray. The devils soon vanished, and were succeeded by two beautiful angels dressed in white, standing near his bed . . . He awakened in a sort of rapture, and immediately dedicated himself to the God who made him, and became a happy Christian . . . So, far from indulging a desire to move away from the Methodists, they now became the people of his choice."

Due to the private and unusual manner of Mr. Bassett's conversion, it is difficult to tell just when it took place. On November 13, 1784, Dr. Coke, on his way to Barratt's, Chapel, stopped at Bassett's home in Dover. He made the following observation: "I was most kindly received at Mr. Bassett's, one of the Executive Council for the State of Delaware . . . He is not in Society, but is building us a large chapel. Here I met with an excellent young man, Freeborn Garrettson. He seems to be all meekness and love, and yet all activity. He makes me quite ashamed, for he invariably rises at four in the morning, and not only he, but several other preachers; and now blushing, I brought back my alarm to four o'clock."

This wealthy Methodist preacher, recently arrived from England, was determined not to be outdone by the early-rising American preachers. Because he said that Bassett was not in the Society, some have assumed that he was not yet converted. This is doubtful, for one year earlier in November 1783 Asbury said, "I spoke at Mr. Bassett's in Dover to many people." On January 5, 1783 Garrettson reports that a former persecutor and his wife are "now happy in religion, going on hand in hand with the brethren and he is resolutely determined on building a brick chapel." Then he refers to Mrs. Bassett, having been a long time afflicted, and concludes, "Surely God has a church in this house."

There remain much mystery and conflicting reports about the First Methodist Church building in Dover. Garrettson calls it a brick chapel and Coke calls it a large chapel. This is in keeping with Judge Fisher's *Recollection of Dover* in 1824, when he refers to it as "a rather nice brick building." Although the actual size is not given, five thousand feet of white pine boards were ordered to lay the lower floor and to ceil the inside of the roof. A bit earlier, three thousand feet were ordered for the roof. Using these figures and allowing one-fifth for waste, there would be sufficient square footage for a



building 40' x 40', which would be somewhat larger than the Methodist Church (a couple of years after Wesley) in Smyrna, which was 30' x 30' and a bit smaller than Barratt's chapel which was built a couple of years before Wesley Church. Barratt's Chapel was 42' x 48'.

It is most difficult to determine just when Wesley was built. The earliest date was given by Judge Powell in his 1940 abstract on Wesley Church. He states that the church was built in 1780, which is the same year that Barratt's Chapel was built. Bishop Whatcoat's monument marking the spot of the old church on North Street, a little west of Queen Street, also bears the same date. Hallman, in *Garden of Methodism*, uses the 1782 date, which is the year the land was deeded to the trustees. Others have used 1784, which Bishop Asbury states in his journal, "I preached in our new chapel at Dover, in the State of Delaware, on faith, hope, and charity."

Although we would like to believe that Wesley Chapel was built as early as Barratt's Chapel, no serious Methodist historians have made that claim. The obvious source of this information is the old record book of the minutes of the Board of Trustees of Wesley Church, which contains detailed information from 1800 to after the Civil War. It contains a copy of the report given by Governor Bassett, as chairman of the Board of Trustees, to the Quarterly Conference at Camden on August 2, 1805. In this report, Bassett is recorded as saying, "The House originally in its erection cost about seven hundred and fifty pounds; it was put up in the year seventeen hundred and eighty by this informant." Although this was twenty-five years after the recorded date and ten years before Bassett's death, it does not seem likely that he would be mistaken in reporting such an important event. However, an examination of the record book indicates that the handwriting is the same for about sixty years. This suggests that this record was copied from an earlier source. It seems quite possible that the recording secretary made a mistake in copying Bassett's handwriting. The minutes of Dover Circuit Quarterly Conference records for the early period have not been located.

The rather detailed journals of Asbury, Coke, and Garrettson, which are very much like extensive diaries with weekly entries, would seem to indicate that the building was begun shortly after Vincent Loockerman donated the land to the trustees (William Kirby, Major Taylor, James Hall, John Pryor, and Richard Lockwood) on June 1, 1782. As previously noted, the first Sunday of the year 1783 Garrettson says, "he is resolutely determined on building a brick chapel," which indicated that either he has begun recently or was about to begin construction. Near the end of 1783, Asbury spoke at Bassett's home and made no mention of the chapel, which seems to indicate it was not yet ready for use. A year later, in November of 1784, Dr. Coke said, "He is building us a large chapel," again indicating that it was not yet completed, although Asbury, a month earlier on October 2, 1784, reports that he "preached in our new chapel at Dover."

The minutes of the trustees seem to confirm this timetable for, when years later Bassett was pressed by the trustees to present a statement of the amount owed to him for the building of the church, he presented a bill dated 1785. This would indicate that by 1785 all of the carpenters and masons' expenses were submitted to him. From this we can assume that the church was quite large for this period and that it was under construction for at least two years. Bassett, in an attempt to keep up with his friend Barratt, may have overextended. In fact, the windows were not glazed until 1801, and as late as 1802 the trustees appealed to the District Conference to assist them in removing the still

existing debt and in repairing the building. In this plea they admit that "it yet remains in an unfinished state and wants some repairs, arising mostly from the unfinished state of the building."

In the beginning, Dover was a part of the Delaware Circuit and was served by several traveling preachers who traveled the Circuit. In 1783 the Dover Circuit was created and Wesley remained a part of the Circuit until after the new church on State Street was built. During this time two ministers were appointed to travel the Circuit. The older, more experienced one was listed first in the minutes, and the younger one was usually referred to as the assistant. The list of preachers for Dover begins with this date, but the Society had been organized for five years and there are references in Methodist histories to many besides those listed having preached in Dover.

Some of the early preachers who preached in the Dover area but are not listed as pastors are Joseph Cromwell, William Gill, David and Benjamin Abbot, Thomas Ware and Ezekiel Cooper.

The first pastor listed for Dover is William Glendenning. He was a little Scotchman who, when Wesley sent Dempster and Rodda to America in 1774, came on his own responsibility as a local preacher but was soon accepted as an itinerant.

When Asbury finally left Delaware, after nearly two years of confinement because of the war, it was obvious that he missed it very much. He remarked, "I could not pray for our friends behind without weeping." Finally, when he started to return from the South, he said: "Set off for my favorite, Dover . . . I see the footsteps of Providence in my coming. The people regretted my absence, and the preachers would have been at variance, one with another. William Glendenning pleaded hard to come to Dover; but I did not think him so fit as Thomas Chew. Brother Glendenning is a good little man, and though his utterance is less strongly marked with the Scotch than formerly, it is not yet good."

Three years later in 1783, Asbury did finally let Glendenning come to Dover. Perhaps his dialect had improved sufficiently or maybe there was such a shortage of preachers the he gave in to his pleadings. It is noteworthy that Dover was so desirable that its first regular pastor begged the Bishop to send him. After Glendenning had been on the Dover Circuit a few months, his assistant, George Kimble, left. Early in September, Thomas Ware, a young convert, was persuaded by Asbury to take his place. Ware commented: "He told me that I must go down to the Peninsula, and take the Dover Circuit, which had but one preacher on it, that I could tell the people, if I pleased, that I did not come in the capacity of a preacher, but only to assist in keeping up the appointments until another could be sent; and that he would give me a testimonial to introduce me. But if they did not cordially receive me, he said I might return, and he would see me and compensate me for my time and expenses."

Fearing to do more harm than good and "with a very heavy heart," he set off for Dover. Although he did not mention it, Todd reports that the unhappy young preacher sometimes lost his place in the sermon and broke down in the pulpit and sobbed like a boy who had stumped his toe, until he became calm enough to proceed with his discourse. "Sometimes the tears of a sympathetic membership would mingle with those of the discouraged and humiliated preacher." When Ware later remembered this assignment, he said, "I was kindly received by the people on the Dover Circuit, and soon saw that that was the place for me. I was made to forget that I was among strangers, the

simplicity, unbanity, and fervent piety of Methodists on the Dover Circuit, were such that, after visiting a society once, it seemed long before I was to return to it again. Some of the members were wealthy, and in the higher circles of life; but they were not ashamed to bear the cross . . . The lady of Counsellor Bassett, and her two sisters, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Ward, possessed an uncommon degree of the true missionary spirit, and greatly aided the young preachers."

A few years later when he was sent to the city of Wilmington, he called it a "suffocating borough" and complained that there were crowds of ruffians hanging around outside the church while "scarcely fifty within, and such were their character and conduct that females were afraid to attend our meeting at night, and we had no alternative but to commence service in time to dismiss the congregation before dark." He longed for the good old days and was returned as a presiding elder.

Although Ware went on for fifty years in the leadership of the Methodist Church, his senior partner, Glendenning, went off with the O'Kelly schism and ultimately joined the Unitarians.

Glendenning may hold the dubious honor of being the first Methodist preacher to publish a story of his life. Lee tells us that in 1795 he published in Philadelphia *The Life of William Glendenning*. In this book he tells how the years after he left Dover he "traveled in Brunswick, in the state of Virginia, where my mind got more and more darkened, and I lost sight of my reconciled God." He proceeds to tell how he was rejected from the eldership because some said that he wanted gifts. This seemed to have upset him so that he stopped traveling in June of 1785 and admits that while out in the field, he would spend hours "blaspheming in the most horrid manner."

Glendenning was the only one besides Asbury of Methodist European Missionaries to America who continued in the itinerant ministry during the American Revolution and he desisted immediately after the Revolution. Perhaps this tells us something of the difficult adjustment to the more democratic way of life in America. Only Asbury successfully made that adjustment and his role as a leader was different from that of the ordinary pastor.

The Second Minister in charge of the Dover Circuit was Nelson Reed, one of the early preachers from Maryland. He was one of the first ministers to vote to change the rules of ordination and allow American ministers to administer the sacrament. At the 1796 General Conference, Reed responded thus to the Englishman, Dr. Coke's query, "Do you think yourselves equal to me?" "Yes, we do . . . and more than that, we think ourselves equal to Dr. Coke's King!" Thirty-five years after his Dover ministry, he was still taking an active part in the Conference debates. His picture, appearing in the *Methodist Magazine* in 1834, showed him to have a high forehead and long, straight shoulder-length hair.

Little is known about the third minister, Samuel Dudley, except that he was a "good and successful laborer in the vineyard." He began his ministry in Virginia in 1781 and retired into the local ranks because of family affairs in 1788.

Ira Ellis came to Dover from the Lancaster Circuit where he befriended Richard Allen, the black preacher who later became the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen remembered Ellis as "very kind and affectionate to me, building me up."

Jacob Brush was a native of Long Island, New York, and entered the itinerary just two years before coming to Dover. It is said that he was an active, laborious minister, and "a great friend to order and union. He suffered from

an inflammatory sore throat which hindered his usefulness and died young of the epidemical fever in 1795."

Jacob Brush was assisted by another young man who was converted the year before, and Dover was his first appointment as a traveling preacher. He was the first Dover preacher to die after the creation of the Dover Circuit and the *Conference Journal* simply said: "Aaron Hutchins, a man of clear understanding, gospel simplicity, and godly sincerity, blameless in his life, acceptable as a preacher, faithful in his labour which ended in the short space of four years. He was patient, resigned, and confident in his last moments."

Years later, a traveling preacher met Hutchins daughter who had a large number of his poems. One was entitled "The Good Samaritan", a part of which said:

"Samaritans I did despise,  
Yet one drew near and heard my cries;  
He gently raised me from the ground,  
Poured oil and wine into my wound,  
He kindly took me to an inn,  
A place where I had never been . . ."

The last line may have represented the personal testimony of the young traveling preacher whose annual salary of \$64 was inadequate for hotel accommodations.

Another one of the Eighteenth Century preachers was John Smith, who ministered in Dover in 1796. In 1828 he helped to form the Methodist Protestant Church.

William Bishop holds the rare distinction of having served the Dover charge three different times, each separated by more than ten years. His first term was in 1801, the year of the first great union meeting, when Wesley Church had many new converts. This may partially account for his popularity, but an aged fellow preacher giving his impressions at the Centennial celebration of Peninsula Methodism in 1870, remembered him as "genial in the social circle, full of wit and humorous anecdotes. When he felt free with his friends, he would hold them sometimes convulsed with laughter for hours, And he could not omit his wit and anecdote in the pulpit." He also served two terms as Presiding Elder.

Bishop was followed by Thomas Smith, who came in 1802. He also had the good fortune of being in Dover during the peak of the revival movement called the "second great awakening." He was quite different in disposition from his congenial predecessor. His biographer says that, "to those not well acquainted with him, he gave the appearance of a proud man, and was sometimes accused of being proud." He described him as "rather under the ordinary height of men, but inclined to corpulency, and very neat in his person and dress. His posture and gait were very erect and graceful, and his countenance was florid. All of which gave him an air of stiffness and a forbidding aspect to those who only saw him as he passed along."

The secret of his success was more in his preaching than his personality. His sermons have been described as "... short, energetic, and lively, without any labored exegesis." Once when preaching in Sussex County, someone complained about his twenty-minute sermons being too short. The next time he came he preached a twenty-minute sermon, sang a song, took his text, and preached another sermon. He preached three different sermons before he finally dismissed them. There is no evidence that the people in Dover ever complained about his short sermons, and at a time when preachers often talked two hours, he must have seemed unique. He once said, "My success . . .

was owing to my short preaching; it was that that got a congregation, and the congregation was the beginning of a revival."

Smith lived until near the middle of the century. We are fortunate that shortly after his death a fellow minister published the story of his life, compiled chiefly from his journal. For the year 1802 we have a fairly detailed report of the itinerary. This is the only known record of the preaching points on the Dover Circuit.

Smith tells that the Dover Circuit was a six weeks' circuit with fourteen preaching stations, nine of them having a chapel. Thus, it would take each preacher six weeks to go from one church to the other, covering the circuit. The weeks in between the pulpit would be supplied by local preachers who held a regular job in the community, but still exhorted when there was no one else to take the services. Judge Fisher recalls hearing one of these local men, Daddy Conelly, a Revolutionary War pensioner, who often misquoted the Scripture about man being evil "from the sole of his head to the crown of his foot."

The first Sunday in May Pastor Smith preached in Dover and after meeting the class took in forty-four members on probation. Then he proceeded around the circuit, and when he returned to Dover he remarked, "... had a good time at Dover; church is somewhat out of town but generally well filled." One month later his Dover entry records "... had a pleasant time in preaching and in meeting classes and in pastoral visits. Many a sweet season we have had while conversing on the subject of religion in families and singing the praise of God, and praying for one another. I have gone in the strength of some of these blessings for days."

Back in Dover again in the spring he made the following terse observation: "The Lord was with one of the weakest of the weak, and gave me light on my subject, fire in my soul, and favor with the people. Received three members on probation."

There was another reason, apart from the short sermons, for the unusual success of the Dover Circuit in general and Wesley Church in particular in 1802. Pastor Smith arrived in Dover at the end of the second great annual meeting. These meetings were begun in Dover, according to Smith, at the suggestion of Governor Bassett. Thomas Ware, the Presiding Elder from 1800-1802, connects these meetings with the great revival begun in Baltimore at the General Conference in May of 1800 and continued two weeks later at the Annual Conference at Duck Creek. After the Conference, Smyrna added 167 new members, bringing them to nearly 300. This seemed to be too much for Judge Bassett, who had built a large church in Dover nearly twenty years previously, hoping that it would serve as a center of Methodism in the state. This was the fifth time the district conference had been held in Smyrna and although Dover had large quarterly conferences, they had never yet had a district conference.

On his way from Baltimore to the Smyrna Conference, Bishop Asbury had preached in Dover on Sunday before the Conference started on Monday. He noted in his journal Sunday, June 1, 1800: "This was a day to be remembered; we began our love feast at half-past eight, meeting was continued (except one hour's intermission) until four o'clock, and some people never left the house until nearly midnight, many souls professed to find the Lord."

When the revival, which began in Baltimore, spread to Dover and continued on with such momentum in Smyrna, Governor Bassett was quick to sense what could have been the results for his church had the conference been

held there. Thomas Ware, the Presiding Elder, said: "At the close of this Conference, one hundred persons were received on trial in the church; and Governor Bassett, Dr. Ridgely, and others requested that a meeting might be appointed at Dover during the ensuing May, to be called the yearly meeting, to continue for one week. In compliance with this request, the appointment was made; and the meeting was no less extraordinary than the one held at the Conference." Upon securing the consent of the Presiding Elder of the district, the trustees with feverish activity began at once to prepare for the great event. Although the Smyrna Church was a frame building, it boasted of glass windows as early as 1786. Wesley Church, even though built of brick, had not yet glazed the windows. This may have one reason why no Conference had been held there.

On September 9, 1800, the Board of Trustees ordered two boxes of glass to glaze the windows below and above "as far as they will go." They also decided that the old pulpit should be taken away and an aisle be put through the center of the house from the entrance to the pulpit. Another meeting held on February 3, 1801, with Mr. Bassett present, decided: "Whereas it appears necessary to pull down the present pulpit and erect another more eligible and that there is not sufficient money . . . John Wiltbank, one of the Trustees, is willing to do the work and wait for the payment . . . until a collection shall be made under the direction of the Trustees at the annual meeting . . . the twenty-fourth day next May . . . as soon as he finishes the benches and windows, he is now about." The treasurer's report in June indicated that they spent a little over 135 pounds, a sizable sum for remodeling when you consider that the Smyrna Church had cost only 200 pounds when built."

Apparently Bassett, a long-time friend of Asbury, had persuaded the ailing Bishop to return to Dover for this meeting. He arrived on Monday, May 25, 1801, the second day of the meeting, and with his usual brevity, reported: "We found the people collected at the meeting house so numerous that they could not be well accommodated; we therefore adjourned to the State House, where I spoke to them from Haggai 11:5-9. Brother Whatcoat preached at the chapel, and I gave an exhortation and so ended the great meeting in Dover with us."

It may come as a surprise to find that the great Bishop was almost more concerned with horse-trading than with the meeting. He admits, "My mind was somewhat taken up with getting another horse, and he did not please me." The spirits of Asbury are definitely down after this, and he admits that "speaking long and tolerably loud to large congregations" may be a contributing factor. Immediately after this, he spends twice as much space reporting on a visit to Mr. Hughes's partly Methodist School in Smyrna.

It may be that Bishop Asbury was not in favor of Mr. Bassett's new venture of starting a week of special meetings just before the District Conference. This appears to be the first time this type of religious convention, sponsored by a local church and aimed at drawing people and funds from the whole district, was held. Could Bishop Asbury have feared that it would detract from the regular work of the organization? He did remark, "My foot and my fears are troublesome to me," but he does not tell us what it is that he feared.

Even if Asbury had some apprehension about this new venture, Ezekiel Cooper, for many years head of the Methodist Book Concern, certainly did not. He wrote to Dr. Coke in England on June 12, 1801, a glowing report: "The week previous to the Conference, there was a great meeting at Dover. It began on Whitsunday and continued a whole week. Thousands attended; people came from nearly a hundred miles to that meeting, and many were

there from thirty, forty, and fifty miles away. Our preaching house could not hold much more than a tenth of them. On Whitsunday I preached . . . I stood in a wagon and was surrounded by thousands . . . I received a letter the other day informing me . . . that more than a hundred had already joined the society, and many more were expected soon to come in."

Presiding Elder Ware was equally as excited about this meeting. He gives insight into another facet of the occasion: "There were but few of the principal houses in this metropolis in which there were not some converted during the meeting and more than once the whole night was employed, both in the church and private houses, in prayer for penitents, and in rejoicing with those who had obtained an evidence of pardon or were reclaimed from their backslidings. Having the charge of this meeting, its weight would have been more than I could bear, only that I had Brothers Cooper, Chandler, Spry and many others to sustain me in the arduous task . . ."

Jesse Lee, who published in 1810 the first *History of the Methodist Church*, said, "In the latter part of May there was a meeting called an Annual Meeting held at Dover in Delaware state, which continued for several days, and ended on the last day of the month . . . On the last day of the meeting about one hundred and thirteen persons, white and black, were joined in the Society."

These reports are from the clergy only. A layman reported it differently, but in no less glowing terms. Hannah M. Davis, a layman from the Dover Church, wrote a letter for the Centennial Conference held at Smyrna in 1870 in which she noted: "Previous to the Conference, which was held in Smyrna . . . Governor Bassett wrote circular letters to all the Methodist preachers, inviting them to a union meeting which had been appointed to meet in Dover, a few weeks before the Conference commenced, and on this occasion there were over a hundred preachers present in Dover. At this meeting Governor Bassett entertained eighty persons at his house, and Judge Davis also entertained the same number; at that time he lived where Joseph P. Comegys now resides . . ."

"On a certain morning, during the progress of the meeting, the men had all gone out to the church in the woods; the women all started in procession from Dover Green, with Mrs. Kennard at their head, singing all the way as they went, and when they reached the church, Mrs. Kennard was so filled with joy that she bounded into the door, shouting. Governor Bassett, who was standing at the altar, said to Judge Davis, with tears streaming down his face, 'Brother Davis, the millenium has come, the millenium has come,' for he truly believed it had.

"Judge Davis, in repeating this to me with tearful face would say, 'O! those women sang like angels. I wish you could have heard them; we have no such singing nowadays.'

"My husband, Joshua Davis, the eldest son of Judge Davis, was a boy at the time of this union meeting, and fed the horses of the persons who were entertained at his father's. This is, as well as I can remember, a verbatim account of the statements given to me from time to time by Judge Davis."

Both Mrs. Davis and Pastor Smith referred to the great Dover meeting as a "union meeting." The district superintendent called it a yearly meeting, but Bassett and the Trustees always referred to it as the "annual meeting," showing that they intended to make it a yearly affair. The following January a special combined meeting of the trustees and male members of the church was called, in which they voted to hold the annual meeting again and to begin it on Saturday evening, June 5. They authorized the trustees to make all necessary arrangements and "give general notice to the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and others as they claim proper."

The local preacher, John Wiltbank, who had labored so diligently preparing for the last meeting, had been appointed a circuit preacher, and so in February they chose Issac Davis to take his place. The next month, Mr. Bassett was unanimously chosen Chairman of the Board, and they immediately appointed an improvement committee to consider further repairs for the church and a committee to contract for a pasture for the accommodation of the horses of each of the members of the Methodist churches coming from a distance to the next annual meeting. Issac Davis and Joseph Harper were appointed on this committee. The next month they voted to send the following letter to the District Conference which was to meet in Philadelphia in May. This letter strongly reflects lawyer Bassett's influence in its legal phraseology and in its contents:

"The Memorial of the Trustees of Wesley Church . . . humbly beg leave to represent that your memorialists conceive there are few, if any, of the houses erected in the Peninsula or elsewhere for the purpose of public worship, that is more advantageously situated or likely to be of more real use than Wesley Church in Dover; from its situation and size it is found convenient to hold two quarterly meetings in the year in it and it is probable that an annual one will be continued to be holden there . . . It is well known to many of you that there has been and still is a considerable existing debt against the house and reflecting on exertions for other buildings erected for the same purposes, both to finish and complete them in different parts of our country; they are constrained to say they think Wesley Church ought not to be forgotten or neglected. Under these impressions we wish to bring the minds of the conference to this subject, and have a hope that some prompt measure will be devised by them adequate to the present existing circumstances attending this building." (Dover—April 28, 1802)

Evidence that there has been some unexpected problems faced by the church in handling such a large crowd is seen by the fact that the month before the meeting the trustees voted that at least one of the trustees be present at all times during the meetings to see that order was kept. They also determined that all of the money collected should be applied to Wesley Church. Mr. Bassett and Mr. Harper were appointed to see that an arbor at east and west ends of the meeting house on the south side, which would mean along North Street, was erected and completed within one week's time, which was the time for beginning. Mrs. Elizabeth Bassett made a present of two brass sconces for the use of the pulpit.

Judging by the comments of the clergy, there is reason to believe that the second annual meeting, although well attended, did not equal the first.

Presiding Elder Ware had no comment, but a careful reading of his memoirs reveals why. He explained that at the end of President Adams' Administration he opposed a proposition presented to the Philadelphia Conference to send Mr. Adams an address of approval for his administration and promise of support. Because of his effort to keep politics out of the church, and based on his remarks it was assumed he favored the Democrats. He explained the results this way: "While labouring on the Eastern Shore, the political fever began to affect the people in this region; and, somehow or other, my remarks came to be known to them, and I was thereby rendered exceedingly popular with one party, but lost all influence with the other. These, though they treated me with great kindness, had the address to effect my removal from the district. In 1802 I returned to the Philadelphia district."

Judge Bassett was one of the midnight appointments of President Adams to a federal judgeship just before he left office in the spring of 1801. One of the



first acts of the new Democratic administration was to pull the rug out from under these old Federalist judges by refusing to pay their salaries. This year the yearly meeting was held after the district conference instead of before, so when Asbury came through Dover on his way to the conference, he preached in Dover on Wednesday, April 28, 1802. This was the same day the trustees met and formed the letter to be delivered to the conference. In spite of the fact that the letter was presented directly to the bishop, there is no evidence that the conference responded with any financial assistance. Ware may have blocked this if there had been any disposition on the part of the ministers to aid a local church.

To make sure that the bishop and the letter arrived safely in Philadelphia on time, ex-Governor Bassett volunteered to take them as far as Wilmington in his coaches. This was the talk of the town, for Mrs. Ridgeley mentioned it in one of her letters to a friend. Could it be that on this trip Bassett told Bishop Asbury that Presiding Elder Ware, the forerunner to the office of district superintendent, had to go? The whole affair may have made the bishop sick, for he says, "I was sick . . . and had a disturbed stomach." This whole episode shows how powerful the laymen were in the early days of the church.

Were it not for Governor Bassett, little would be known about this second annual meeting. Jesse Lee says that it "began on Friday night, June 5th, and continued till the next Friday morning, and then broke up a little before the break of day," but he made no attempt to tell how many attended or were converted. The Rev. Mr. Smith, the newly arrived pastor of Dover, said that about twenty preachers and some three or four thousand people attended. He also tells us that Ezekiel Cooper preached again on Sunday on "this gospel of the Kingdom, a favorite subject with that divine." To make sure that the word spread, Bassett penned a lengthy letter to the bishop, which Ezekiel Cooper published in 1805 in a small book entitled *Extracts of Letters Containing Some Account of the Work of God Since the Year 1800: The Preachers and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to Their Bishops*. Here is a copy of the letter as it appeared in 1805:

Our annual meeting commenced on Friday evening the 5th inst., being the evening before the time intended. At candlelight our house was filled . . . Prayer meeting next morning at sunrise, a large meeting . . . Preaching at eleven o'clock and four in the afternoon, and at candlelight to crowded congregations. Not less perhaps in the daytime than from four to five thousand souls, and at night the house was filled. Sunday morning at sunrise the black people's love-feast began, and a precious time it was amongst them; a vast body of them were collected, and their conduct was unexceptionable; God verily is no respecter of persons.

Love-feast for the whites commenced at half past eight o'clock . . . Public preaching at eleven and four o'clock and at candlelight. I conceive I am within bounds when I say the congregations this day, had they been numbered, were seven thousand souls. I say "congregations" for such was the multitude it was found necessary to have three preachers engaged at the same time, the congregations at a proper distance from each other, and this was not enough, a fourth congregation might have been found . . . At my own house several were powerfully awakened, and at private houses in times of singing and prayer. On Monday sinners began to be greatly alarmed and powerfully agitated in mind. On Tuesday after preaching the sacrament was administered . . . I conclude there were not less than between twelve and fifteen hundred came to the Lord's table, white and coloured people . . . many backsliders were reclaimed. I presume there were not less than from twenty to thirty souls converted or sanctified in my own house . . . The two last days of our meeting were the best; I mean Wednesday and Thursday, and so it was the last yearly meeting . . . I am well assured if the meeting could have

continued longer, our meeting house would have been more than filled, day and night; but as the quarterly meeting began on Saturday morning at Milford, and the preachers few in number, were much wearied, it was thought best to conclude our annual meeting on Thursday night; but we continued till three o'clock on Friday morning. It gave me some grief that we did not hold out longer . . . Thomas Smith observed that he had not been half round his circuit, that he discovered a hundred or upwards that professed; and he believed most of them were soundly converted to God.

I am, with greatest regard,  
Your brother in Christ,  
RICHARD BASSETT

The letter reached Asbury in the middle of September in Tennessee, where he was attending a frontier camp meeting. He tells us in his journal that he "read an account of the work at the Dover yearly meeting and of the work of God generally" to possibly fifteen hundred souls.

From the notations in the trustees' minutes it appears that another meeting was held in 1803. The preparation for the meeting included securing pasture for the horses and making sure that two trustees attended each meeting to keep order. This was an increase over the last year, indicating that rowdiness must have been a problem at these mass meetings. No report of the attendance or results of this meeting have been found. On January 20, 1804, the trustees again considered the propriety of having another annual meeting and decided to begin one on the second of June. Nothing is known of the outcome of this meeting either.

The possibility exists that these annual meetings begun by two prominent Dover laymen may have been the beginning of the annual revival or protracted meetings which became a prominent part of the program of every local Methodist church up until the beginning of this century. Miss Herson states, "Regular revivals called yearly meetings were established in Dover in 1801 because of the influence of the Smyrna Conference."

Nathan Bangs, writing in 1838 and referring to the revival which began with the Smyrna Conference and lasted for 45 hours without intermission, remarks, "Here, then, was a protracted meeting held long before those which have been more recently established among us and some other denominations." Bangs calls it a revival which spread through the lower counties of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The Dover yearly meeting was a direct outgrowth of this meeting. The difference was that the revival in Smyrna was a spontaneous eruption out of the yearly conference, whereas the Dover meeting was held by the local church and planned a year in advance.

Dr. Nathaniel Luff, a Quaker physician from Frederica, was critical of Governor Bassett's participation in the Smyrna Conference revival. He observed, "At these meetings there is great noise and shoutings . . . and even the Governor of Delaware, it is reported, spoke publicly. Was he not like David, when he danced before the ark? Is not this the case with our President, who, tasting of divine comforts at these heavenly banquets, manifested himself uncovered in the eyes of the religious critics as a fool? Dr. Luff must have been even more astounded the next year when Governor Bassett brought this kind of meeting to Dover on a yearly basis. His action makes it plausible that Wesley Church was the originator of the yearly protracted or revival meetings.

Dover Church also played a prominent role in the beginning of the camp meeting movement which became an outstanding feature of Peninsula Methodism. The fact that they had brush arbors and outdoor preaching, with people attending from all over the Peninsula, gives the early union meetings of

Dover much of the character of latter camp meetings. The first camp on the Eastern Shore is reported to have taken place between Dover and Smyrna in 1805. An Englishman traveling through the country left an account of this camp in which he noted that "Governor Bassett appeared like an humble child among God's people, singing, praying, exhorting, etc., and Abraham Ridgely, Esq., late Secretary of State, was remarkably zealous and headed the civil authority to keep good order." He was assisted by seven justices of the peace and seven constables, and two sheriffs. Seats had been prepared for 4,000 people and 1,100 converts were reported.

The next year, beginning on July 15, 1806, a camp meeting was held near Dover, with seats prepared for 6,000 people. There were 1,320 conversions and the new Dover pastor, Henry Boehm, who made the Bassetts' home his headquarters, reports that Bassett, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost, obtained a wonderful baptism, and gave testimony before the listening thousands." Mr. Boehm felt that the patience in suffering and the triumphant death of Bishop Whatcoat at Bassetts' home just ten days before the beginning of the camp, had a beneficial effect upon the governor.

Henry Boehm was a German and the son of a minister. He was a careful observer who left a detailed report on the death of Bishop Whatcoat. Bassett was not only keeping the bishop, but also providing a room for the pastor of the circuit. Boehm refers to Bassett's home as a hospitable mansion. Bassett owned two homes in Dover; one was on the south corner of The Green and Bank Lane, the other on the northwest corner of Water and State Streets. On May 26 the single young preacher recorded in his journal, after a conversation with the dying bishop, a wish to continue faithful in the ministry, should he live fifty years from then. Boehm lived in good health past ninety. Fifty-nine years later he prepared his journal for publication and recalled the incident.

In describing the bishop's appearance, Mr. Boehm tells us that a few years before his death he lost all of his hair and was entirely bald, but, to his astonishment, "it began to grow, and his hair come out thick and beautiful, so that when he died he had a fine head of dark hair, not even sprinkled with gray." According to Boehm, he loved everybody and everybody loved him. He felt that Whatcoat governed by the law of kindness and that all of the preachers venerated him. There has been some discussion about whether the marble slab which Wesley Church still has, was on the floor over Whatcoat's grave or on the wall in the old church. Boehm says, "On the walls of the church in Dover was placed a neat marble slab." This is probably true, since the church had recently installed a new wooden floor. The bishop was buried under the altar of the old church and a monument now marks the spot on Water Street. Early Dover Methodists considered it an honor to have an English missionary bishop buried in their town.

Because of Boehm's excellent record-keeping, we know that not only did Bishop Whatcoat preach in Dover, but so did the first American-born Bishop McKendree on Sunday morning, April 22, 1810, at eleven, and Asbury immediately after. Not many churches have had sermons from two different bishops at one sitting. Boehm also tells us that on a Tuesday in October 1817 he accompanied Bishop George to Dover, where the bishop preached from John 2:17. It is also through him that we find that Freeborn Garrettson paid another visit to Delaware in April of 1821, which was forty-three years after his founding of Methodism in the area. How he must have rejoiced to see the changes and progress made!

The minutes of the trustees of Dover church show some of the problems that were a major concern to our founding fathers. Their problems were

not greatly different from problems of today. The problem of debts and how to meet them was an ever-recurring one. Another problem which keeps surfacing is that of repairing and remodeling the sanctuary. Finding a janitor (or sexton, as they called it) who would suit everyone was often difficult.

Judge Fisher, in his *Recollection of Dover in 1824*, recalls a little cabin on the northwest corner of a lot south of the old academy, where an old Negro named Eben Callahan lived. He remembered Eben as the sexton of the Methodist church for a quarter of a century. He also speaks of "an old colored man, Stephen Adams", who lived on King (State) Street just north of the theatre in a little one-story frame house and "held the high office of wood-carver of Dover". What he may not have realized was that as early as 1802 he had been appointed sexton of the Methodist church. By this time we learn that the Blacks had been assigned to the balcony, and prior to this it appears that there were no lights provided for them. Now the church decided that they could have light, but that they must help pay for it. Stephen was ordered to "make public collections from the black people on every Sabbath that there is public preaching and that . . . the black people be furnished with at least four candles at every night meeting in the gallery." His other duties were to keep the church clean above and below, to make fires, light candles, cut wood, open and shut the doors and windows, and any other thing necessary to keep the house in order. For all of this he was to be paid sixteen dollars a year, to be paid quarterly.

By 1810 Ralph Coursey was hired and the salary was increased to twenty dollars a year, but it was to be paid yearly. However, additional duties were added to the above list. He was to put the candles out as well as light them, to keep the keys to the doors of the church and the cemetery, keeping the gate thereof locked at all times, except when necessary to bury someone. He also was required to ring the bell and carry tickets to notify the townfolk of all such funerals. Some of the old residents of Leipsic were still carrying these tickets within this decade. As additional compensation for the extra work he was to have the privilege of digging all the graves and received \$1 for a common grave and \$2 for a pit grave, and one-half that amount for children's graves.

Between 1810 and 1816 the minutes are missing and one gets the impression that Mr. Bassett was spending most of that time at Bohemia Manor. Sometime during those years John Roberts became sexton, but in 1816 we find that he has "been disowned as a member of the church . . . and is hereby expelled from the performance of said duty any longer." After "mature deliberation thereon" they decided to hire Ebenezer Callahan, but went back to the old system of \$16 per year in quarterly payments. In 1818 it was found that John Roberts, former sexton, claimed the church owed him \$26.50 and that Ralph Coursey, a deceased sexton, was owed \$6.00.

One month after hiring Eben Callahan so many members objected to him that in order "to promote peace and harmony among all the members" he was expelled as sexton and Daniel W. Dahamel hired in his place. However, by the year's end they had gone back to Eben Callahan again.

Another problem which seemed to plague the church during this period was rowdiness which became worse after the War of 1812. Finally, by 1817 they added to the sexton's duties the task of using his "best endeavor to suppress all disorderly or riotous behavior in the time of meeting and in every case to bring to punishment every person who may be guilty of the breach of the law." There may have also been some vandalism, for he was to "see that no injury shall be done to the said house." One example of the kind of injury that sometimes

occurred is seen in a rule passed in 1808: "that all the members . . . both male and female, refrain from chewing tobacco and snuff in said church in the time of public worship."

Perhaps one reason for keeping the gate of the burying ground locked at all times was to prevent the burying of undesirable persons in the sacred soil. Illegitimate children apparently came under this category, for on April 10, 1805, the trustees considered the request of Rebecca Taylor to bury her bastard child. After consideration it was decided that the request "shall not be granted."

Another problem confronting Methodists in the early days before the use of instruments was the singing. In the minutes of the Conference of 1784 the question was asked: How shall we reform our singing? Answer: "Let all our preachers who any knowledge of singing by note, improve it, and sing by rule, and keep close to Mr. Wesley's tunes and hymns." Wesley Chapel came up with a novel idea in 1808, which may have been the forerunner of the choir for the Methodists. This solution was aimed at helping both the problem of rowdiness and music. The solution was:

Resolved unanimously that each of the Trustees of Wesley Church purchase or procure a chair to be placed within the altar, and that all times when public worship is performed, said Trustees shall take their seats within the same, for the express purpose of keeping order during public worship and encouraging and regulating, as far as possible, the singing in said church.

The idea of reserved seats for church leaders, separated from the rest of the congregation, was probably the origin of both the amen corner and the choir. Both became prominent features of 19th century Methodism.

From the research we find that Dover Methodism was at least partly responsible for the founding of Barratt's Chapel, the annual revival, the amen corner, the choir, and the Eastern Shore camp meetings. Anyone wishing to further pursue the history of this period will find an expanded footnoted copy in the church library and the state of Delaware Hall of Records.

## *Wesley Church* 1820—1870

The fifty year period from 1820-1870 saw a domestic change and traumatic war in the United States. Wesley Church, however, seemed little affected by the tumultuous growth of the nation. The most significant change in Wesley was physical: the new building conceived and erected in the early 1850's. Another change of note is that in 1857 Wesley became a separate station and was no longer the Dover Charge.

This latter change affects the membership statistics of the period. The Dover Charge in 1820 had "1181 white and 589 colored" members, the highest number for the whole period. This was, incidentally, 8.5% of the total Kent County population of 20,793. The lowest point of membership was in 1836 after Camden had been separated of 87 white and 58 colored. After 1864 there was no longer a separate "colored statistic." In 1870 Wesley Church numbered 294; 18% of the (then) Dover population of 1913.

Nationally the Methodist Church divided in the General Conference of 1844 into the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Wesley remained with the Methodist Episcopal body and was apparently little affected by the split until union with Grace and St. Paul's in the 1940's.

During this period the Dover Charge or Wesley was served by 58 pastors, several of whom became District Superintendents later. Apparently, annual changes were pretty much the custom, especially earlier in the period. By the 1850's and 60's, ministers were staying as long as four years. Probably the most outstanding pastor in terms of Methodism of this time was Levi Scott who served in 1827 with James Bateman for the Dover Charge. Levi Scott went on to be elected a Bishop in Boston in 1852. He is the only Bishop to have served in Wesley Church to date.

One item that seemed to concern the Board of Trustees on several occasions was the cemetery. The old cemetery on North and Queen Streets is associated with the rich heritage of Wesley Church. It consists of three parcels of land: the first, acquired June 1, 1782; the second, acquired June 23, 1823; and the third, acquired May 28, 1852. The deed of 1782 contained the names of James Dunning, Thomas Stevenson, Samuel Harrington, Isaac Crouch, and John Smith, who represented the members of the society called Methodists and provided for the purchase of one-half acre of land from Vincent Loockerman "in consideration of the sum of five shillings." The deed further provided that the land be used for the purpose of "building a preaching house or chapel thereon for the use of the Methodist Preachers and the friendly clergy of the Church of England". Additionally the deed required of the trustees that they "shall from time to time permit such persons as shall be appointed to the yearly conference of the people called Methodists held in America to preach and expound God's Holy Word and no other." Such persons may "continue to have and enjoy the premises for the aforesaid purposes, provided always that the persons preach no other Doctrine than is contained in the Reverend John Wesley's notes upon the New Testament and four Volumes of Sermons."

The second parcel, according to Walter Powell, was made by "John Manlove, as agent for the congregation of Wesley Church, Dover, (who) paid Thomas Bradford and his wife sixty dollars for the use of an additional strip of ground to the site and burial ground." The second parcel, consisting of about

one half acre, was apparently willed to Wesley Church.

The third parcel of ground, consisting of about one and one-half acres, was acquired by the trustees of Wesley Church from Ezekiel Lincoln and his wife and James Haverin and his wife in 1852. With this acquisition, the present size of the old Methodist cemetery is about two and one-half acres. In 1856 the Railroad Company opened up Lookerman Street taking part of the cemetery, but they did erect a "good picket fence from North Street to Lookerman Street." In 1865 repairs to that fence became necessary. Two years later the cemetery was added to and curbs and sidewalks were put in along Queen and Lookerman Streets.

The deed of 1782 is located in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Kent County: Volume D, Number 4, page 82; the deed of 1852 is in the same location, Volume 1, Number 2, page 193.

Among those prominent in the history of Wesley Church to be buried in the old cemetery was Bishop Richard Whatcoat, who died in the home of Judge Richard Bassett in Dover, 1806. The trustees of Wesley Church requested Reverend P. W. Chandler, President Elder of the Dover Circuit, to grant permission to bury the remains of Bishop Whatcoat under the altar of Wesley Chapel. In 1855 a monument was erected to the Bishop's memory. After the erection of the monument, the tombstone over the Bishop's grave was removed and imbedded in the wall of the vestibule of Wesley Church on State Street.

Other ministers buried in the old graveyard included the following: Reverend Ezekiel Cooper, who died in 1862; Reverend William Fletcher Talbott, who died in 1903; and Reverend John Wiltbank.

Other prominent members of Wesley Church interred in the old graveyard include: Cornelius P. Comegys, Governor of Delaware from 1837 to 1841, who died in 1851; Gove Saulsbury, Governor of Delaware from 1863 to 1871, who died in 1881; and Nathaniel B. Smithers, elected to the United States Congress in 1863, who died in 1896.

The Lakeside Cemetery is the more recent of the two cemeteries and was purchased by the church from Thomas Bradford on October 2, 1869, at a cost of \$1281.50. The parcel of land contained five and one-quarter acres and is located on the east side of State Street, south of Silver Lake. The deed is recorded in the office of Recorder of Deeds, Kent County, Book H, Volume 5, page 244.

Concerning the Lakeside Cemetery, the Board of Trustees adopted on June 7, 1875, the following resolution:

"This cemetery shall be known as the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Cemetery . . . belonging to the Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in Dover, to be used for burial purposes only, to be controlled by the Trustees of said Church."

The resolution further provided that the ground was to be laid out into lots and the purchasers were to receive a certificate of sale, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Board of Trustees, with the seal of the church attached. The Secretary was to keep a record of all lots sold, stating the name of the purchaser, the date of sale, the price paid, the section and the number of the lot marked on the plot. The Secretary was to keep a record of all interments, stating the names and ages of the persons and the dates of interment.

Earlier (1823,) burial rates were set at \$1.50 for persons 14 years old or above and one half for younger. On several occasions subscriptions were raised to pay the sexton whose primary responsibility was the upkeep of the cemetery and handling burials. In December, 1852, the cost of burial lots went

to \$1.50 for young ones and \$2.50 for adults. The price of the lots in 1875 was two dollars per grave, four feet by eight feet. No lot was to be sold with dimensions smaller than eight feet by sixteen feet, containing space for four graves.

An additional piece of land was added to the Lakeside Cemetery November 3, 1891, with the purchase of six acres of ground south of and adjacent to the original purchase. This section was bought from William G. Hazel and Caleb X. Pannewill at a price of \$1300. The deed is recorded in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Kent County, Book 1, Volume 7, page 160.

Chronologically, some additional information concerning the Lakeside Cemetery: in 1893, the trustees built a home on the north side of Monroe Street for the use of the Sexton; in 1915, the price of graveyard lots, eight by sixteen, feet was set at \$50; in 1922, the price was raised to \$75, of which \$25 was for current expenses and \$50 was for endowment; in 1940, the treasurer's report indicated that cemetery funds consisted of \$71,000 for endowment and \$21,000 for current expenses; in 1975 the Sexton's house was torn down to open up more lots and a house for the Sexton was purchased across State Street from the cemetery.

The following ministers are buried in the Lakeside Cemetery:

John H. Caldwell, March 11, 1899  
J. Owen Sypherd, September 2, 1902  
Henry Mason Baum, July 17, 1919  
J. M. Mitchell, September 26, 1921  
F. J. Corkran, October 18, 1921  
George Patchen Smith, September 30, 1925  
George C. Williams, November 14, 1925  
Harry Taylor, February 8, 1933  
James W. Easley, November 8, 1935  
Vaughn S. Collins, July 9, 1939  
Wilbur F. Corkran, May 13, 1939  
William R. Herons (not known)  
John A. Trader, Feb. 27, 1972

In speaking of subscriptions to pay the Sexton, etc., it is interesting to note that this was done through the Church School classes. These classes could scarcely be called "Sunday School" as the Sunday afternoon class (January 10, 1846,) had subscribed \$5.00, the Monday night class \$4.00, the Tuesday night class \$10.00, the Wednesday afternoon class \$2.00, and the Wednesday night class \$9.00. Adult education classes meeting other than Sunday mornings seems to be a traditional practice. The first mention of church school classes for children is in 1830.

The biggest event for Wesley was, of course, the new building. After years of various improvements on the original building, the Board of Trustees on May 3, 1850, passed a resolution to build a new church. On the 27th, the congregation approved the building site where it now stands. In July and August, the building plan was adopted, the contracts made, and the old building itself was sold. The property was given to the Blacks and was the site of Whatcoat Church until recently. Two other preparatory matters were decided: the building would be six feet from the street, and it was decided that it would be more fitting to erect a suitable monument to Bishop Whatcoat rather than transfer his remains, as noted earlier.

On September 23, 1850, the cornerstone was laid. It contained a copy of the 1799 Statement of Incorporation, a list of the original trustees, a copy of the



purchase and location of the original building, a list of prominent members past and present, and a list of the contributors for the new building. On February 2, 1851, the first sermon was preached in the new building, in the basement. The dedication exercises were conducted on February 9 by Reverend Charles J. Thompson. It may be noted that the Board of Trustees in the 1860's agreed to allow the women to repaint the interior.

On November 22, 1855, the church decided to become a station and purchase a parsonage. In 1856, the adjacent property (now the Keith building) was bought for the parsonage. As noted, in 1857, Wesley Church became independent of the Dover Charge. In 1865 the parsonage was repaired and a new stove installed in the church.

The camp meeting was an important part of the life of early Methodists on the Peninsula. People from a large surrounding area would gather in a grove for religious services and socializing for a period of one or two weeks. One of those groves was located on east side of the road just north of Camden on the way to Dover (a short distance south of the present Rodney Village Shopping Center. One street in the development there now is Asbury Avenue, reminiscent of the former use of the land.)

An article in *The Peninsula Methodist* of August 31, 1895, relates that after a particularly successful meeting in this "beautiful grove" in 1857, the Reverend Charles I. Thompson, a native of Cambridge, Maryland, but then stationed in Philadelphia, suggested purchasing that land organizing an association of churches to hold an annual camp meeting there. This was done and "\$2522 were paid on account of the enterprise." The Camden Union Camp Ground for M. E. Churches of Delaware and Philadelphia was incorporated by "act of the Dover Legislature" in 1859. Churches in Wilmington and Philadelphia were represented in the management and had "large company tents" on the grounds.

After the Civil War the Philadelphia Churches dropped out and in 1879 the Charter was renewed. The pastors of Dover, Camden, Wyoming, and Magnolia were members ex-officio of the trustees and managers. In 1905 the land was deeded to the Camden Union Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The 1895 article states, "On this ground many of the greatest and most distinguished preachers in this connection have preached the blessed gospel." One present member of Wesley recalls that the camp meeting was still a big event in her childhood. Most of the local churches would close (usually the pastor's only vacation period,) and the people had an opportunity to hear some of the best preachers and musicians. Wesley Church School records show that the school closed for two Sundays each summer because of the camp meeting.

Another issue that concerned the church for a time was the music program. On April 12, 1866, the choir petitioned the Board of Trustees for an organ or harmonium. A motion of approval was tabled until the 14th when it was decided to postpone it until the congregation was polled. Finally, on the 19th, the Board granted permission to place a melodeon in the "Sabbath School" and, since the congregation had voted 72 favorably and 14 opposed, agreed to allow an organ or harmonium in the church.

In 1869 the Board of Trustees determined to establish by-laws for trustees elections. On May 15 the by-laws were approved by the male members of the congregation.

Finally, a few items that reflect the changing attitudes of the times in general may be noted. On May 5, 1853, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution,

"That Brother Dunning prepare rules to bring up the church for the better preservation of decorum and propriety in the congregation." Mr. Dunning, incidentally, was for many years the chairman of the Board of Trustees and evidently devoted a lot of time to the church. On November 17, 1855, the Board adopted a resolution urging the church to observe the Governor's call for a Thanksgiving Day observance; and again, on August 5, 1864, agreed to observe the sixth as a day of National Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer as requested by President Lincoln. On January 27, 1866, a resolution was passed that the pastor would, "... announce from the pulpit that the Trustees consent to and approve of promiscuous sitting in our church." Presumably the general idea of promiscuity has changed in the last 112 years.

# *Wesley Church At Work*

## 1870—1920

This period of fifty years (1870-1920) produced remarkable growth for the Wesley Methodists in the number of adherents, until the year 1908-09 at which time a catastrophe occurred. Growth comes with accord and it is the intent of the section of this history to show a church doing God's work.

In 1850, the congregation built a new church on the present location. By 1870, it was necessary to enlarge this structure to accommodate the congregation. As far as can be determined at this time, Sunday services were held one in the morning, and one in the evening, but it was not a case of attending one or the other, an adherent was expected to attend both. One might inquire why no thought was given to have several services Sunday mornings and evenings rather than enlarge the church, but there was evidently no strong support for such an idea if it were feasible. At this time, there were 345 adherents and probationers under the leadership of Rev. J. H. Lightbourne (father of the Rev. A. W. Lightbourne, preacher at the time of the discord). In later years, the number of the Sunday Scholars (Sunday School students) was about one-for-one with adults, one could reasonably assume there were approximately 300-350 children also (this then totals 650-700). To bring this membership into a general perspective, Dover population for 1870 shows 1,913 persons—all ages and all colors. The population the previous ten year census was 1,289, an increase of 33% in 10 years.

During 1871, a new organ was purchased. This replaced the harmonium provided by the ladies in 1859. The cost of the organ was defrayed by a festival held by the choir. One might speculate that this had to have been an extremely successful event.

It is interesting to watch, in a way, the church leaders getting the money for payment of the bills incurred for the church expansion and organ. From the original Trustee's ledger, pages 76-77:

"The Committee appointed on the 5th inst. Report as follows viz. On the 6th day of April Ase 1870. The Trustees resolved that we make an effort to raise the money by subscription to extend the church on the back and from the street by adding twenty-four X thirty feet and make some other attractions.

On the seventh day of May, 1871, the Trustees resolved to proceed to contract for the extension and repairs as soon as the sum of three thousand dollars should be subscribed, and Mr. M. Shake, Mr. Andrew Smithers & E. M. Stevenson were appointed a committee to superintend the work.

Specifications were drawn and proposals requested to find materials and to do all work in extending and repairing the church. Proposals were received and the contract was awarded to Messrs Fisher & Buckman.

June 17, 1870—The contract between the Trustees and Fisher & Buckman was executed and Samuel D. McGonigal was elected Treasurer to receive and disburse the funds subscribed for the repairs and extension on said church. On the                    day of                    Ase 1870, the corner stone of the extension was laid by Reverend T. J. Thompson, assisted by other ministers in the presence of the congregation. On the                    day of October, Ase 1870, Reverend L. H. Lightbourne, our Pastor, preached the first sermon in the new Lecture Room.

December 13, Ase 1870—The work was so near completion that it was resolved by the Trustees to rededicate this church on the eighth day of January, next Ase 1871, and that subscriptions be taken payable in quarterly payments.

January 8, Ase 1871—The Church was rededicated to the worship of Almighty God. Preaching at 10 o'clock A.M. by Reverend D. W. Bartine, D.D., at 2 o'clock P.M. by Reverend M. Pleorbitt, at 6 o'clock P.M. by Reverend J. S. Willis. The dedication service was performed by Reverend T.J. Thompson, D.D. after the sermon in the evening.

Whole costs of extensions and repairs—\$7,635.26 + \$1,375.00 = \$9,010.26. Amount of subscription before Dedication—\$3,144.00, after Dedication—\$4,646.35 + amount of subscription on organ—\$694.18 = \$8,484.53. This left a deficiency of \$525.73.

The amount subscribed toward organ does not cover the costs of it by from \$1.50 to \$5.00. The large amount of our indebtedness has been closed by notes of the Trustees in their individual capacity as we could not effect it in any other way. We have enough or nearly so on our subscription book if paid to liquidate the debt except the balance on the organ.

Submitted by,

L.H.B. Day )—Committee  
J.A. Stevenson )

Approved by the Trustees—June 24, 1871”

To give some idea of the quality of life in Dover in the 1870's, the following is a quote from Wilmington Conference Minutes for 1871, “The members of the Wilmington Annual Conference in convention assembled have enjoyed the privilege of a brief sojourn in the pleasant town of Dover, hereby express their high appreciation of the Christian and Fraternal manner in which they have been welcomed and entertained during their stay . . . ”

During this period, 1873, the Conference Academy had been built. Its students did attend Wesley Church. In one church record it was said the students attended Wesley Church “in droves”. It was natural that close ties would develop between the academy and Wesley Church. Then came tragedy, for the school, and, in a sense, for the church; the academy burned down in 1876.

Good fortune does come at times to relieve trouble. In 1873, the number of adherents declined sharply from 338 to 234. There is nothing revealed in the Conference Minutes to show cause. However, came a series of tremendous gains far exceeding the normal growth of the area which was at 3% per year. From the years 1873 through 1878, Wesley Church adherents and probationers increased from 234 to 496. This high figure really reflects a 100% increase in five years. The rebound started in 1874. Preachers during the period were C. C. Watson and J. W. Caldwell. No doubt this rebirth was due to their efforts. One statement in the Conference Minutes for Wesley Church probably reflects the basis of the preaching of the time: “The faith once delivered found in the Bible can only be kept pure by constant study of the word.

Keep the Sabbath holy. Spend the entire day in church with your children.

The church forbids drunkenness and any countenance of the liquor traffic.” Evidently this message reached receptive ears for Wesley Church grew!

There is usually a glimpse, too, of problems which continue on to the present. One such glimpse resulted from the publishing and sale of the Conference minutes:

“Dear Preachers:

Let us use our best endeavors to sell every copy of the Minutes this year. You will remember that every year, the size of the Minutes has been increasing, and as a matter of course, the price of printing has also increased; and yet our Minutes are sold for the same that they were twelve years ago, when they were only about one-fourth as they are at present. Our profit on them is very small, and if we fail to sell them, we shall bring ourselves in debt. Brethern will please return all unsold Minutes by next session of Conference.”

Money is ever a problem! Only the dates change!

In 1879, too, women became involved officially in the church life. A group of ladies were given permission to clean up, straighten out, and paint the auditorium, and to see that the auditorium be kept in proper condition. It is from such acorns that oak trees grow.

For the next five years, 1879-1883, the number of church adherents hovered in the 450 range. But then growth does come in fits and spurts as well as in a straight line.

In 1882, the Trustee Minutes do show that: “Dover, Friday evening, January 13, 1882, Trustees met pursuant to previous notice for the purpose by request of the Official Board, of making some arrangement to have better order in the church during service. E. M. Stevenson, J. Y. Stewart, William Dyer, and J. S. Moor present on motion resolved that the Pastor Brother J. W. Caldwell be requested to read the rules and regulations of the church adopted by the Trustees and that Brother Kellerman and J. J. Stevenson be appointed for the gallery and J. Y. Stewart and Z. L. Butter for the body of the church to see that the rules be enforced. The rules to be read on next Sunday morning which was adopted. On motion adjourned.

J. S. Moor, Secty”

Just what was a mess one will never really know but no doubt the congregation was living up to its reputation of “Shouting Methodists”. Somehow one can almost hear the “Amens” tumbling over each other when the preacher made his point.

Judge Powell in his unpublished history of Wesley Church, written approximately 1940-1945, states the following: “Wesley had one of its greatest revivals sixty years ago. Religion became the general topic of conversation in the home, in places of business, and on the street. Throngs filled the church nightly. Through the exhortations; impassioned appeals of the preacher, the pleadings of those at the altar, the soul stirring revival hymns sung by great congregations, saints and sinners, and the shouts of the redeemed men and women came and kneeling at Wesley’s mourners bench found Christ and peace.” Lednum says of this scene, “The Wesleyans had not yet put on brocade slippers and gold spectacles.” These scenes did produce adherents for Wesley Church, however. In 1883, the congregation adults totalled 427, but in 1884, it was up to 587 adults. Sunday scholars were 450 in number. This congregation of over 1,000 represented a good share of the total population of the community. The population of Dover was approximately 3,000 at this time.

At this time, 1883-84, discussions were undergoing to try to resolve the question of “one big church” as opposed to “two churches” in order “to meet the wants of Methodism in that beautiful and rapidly growing little city.” This question was resolved in 1884 and plans were made to extend the church building. In 1885, the church was improved at a cost of \$6,000, all paid for or provided for.

The need for better order during the worship services themselves was again a problem and the trustees decided that two of their members would sit in the rear of the church to obtain better order. Each twosome had a period of four weeks to service.

In the late 1880's, while Wesley Church prospered, it seems to have been at the expense of rural churches. Absentee ownership of property was a problem of prosperity of a few. The Wilmington Conference Minutes shows, "Some localities in the Dover District remind me of Ireland in that the property is held by absentees; some of our churches which were once strong and prosperous are now weak because the owners of the land have moved to town, and the tenants either are not able or willing to support churches. From this one source, Dover church had been greatly strengthened."

Albeit, Wesley Church continued its growth. At this point a second location was chosen, Governors Avenue and Mary Street and a chapel was built in 1887. By 1892, this chapel was used for Sunday School work. At this point, a second Methodist Episcopal group wanted the building for a church. The building was sold to this group provided that the building would be moved to a new location. It was. At this time Wesley Church had 599 adults and 552 children, a total of 1,151. Dover population in 1890 is estimated at 3,100 at this time.

By 1896-1897 it was again time to consider the enlargement of the building to accommodate the growing needs. A description appears in Judge Powell's unpublished book which bears repeating:

"Wesley Church has a noble auditorium. The lofty ceiling supported by oaken beams, the long deep aisles with a view from the entrance of the gilded pipes of a splendid organ in the recess back of the pulpit. The stained glass windows on either side of the auditorium, rich and beautiful in their dark mellow coloring, picturing scenes of the life of Christ and casting a dim religious light give a cathedral-like effect to the auditorium. (It remained this way until about 1950 when the "gilded pipes" were covered.) A beautiful sanctuary it is indeed, was and is!

Ordinary problems are always reappearing. As former President Truman so often remarked, "Read history to know what can happen and what will happen and what to do about it." Heating a church is one such problem. Steam heat was put in the church in 1897. This was no doubt a welcome improvement. No sooner was this accomplished than the trustees had to appoint one of their members to keep a watchful eye on the temperature control. What is warm for one is cold for another!

Another problem which continues on into the present. The following is from the Trustees Minutes in 1903:

... committee appointed at the last meeting to visit the parents of certain young men relative to disorder in and around the church made report that testimony obtained would not justify any prosecution and on the motion of ... the committee was instructed to call on the boys charged with misbehavior that any further depredation on the property as misbehavior would be prosecuted." Vandalism has been around before now.

Some problems were resolved however. In 1905, the women finally after thirty years or more of trying were allowed to serve church suppers. One might conclude that this may have been a mixed blessing!

Church organs do not last forever. The one in use in 1907 had been installed in 1870-71 when the first expansion of the building of 1850 took place. While some thought was given about a replacement, it was not until Andrew

Carnegie, through his foundation, offered \$1,500 as a start did the idea get momentum through a series of subscriptions. In a letter thanking Andrew Carnegie after the organ was installed, it was noted it would still be giving good service fifty years from then for it was such a good instrument. The trustee did estimate correctly the time, for it was rebuilt a little over fifty years later.

In 1908 began a period critical to the survival of Wesley Church. From a thriving, hustling church community to almost helpless pitifully-small congregation occurred was caused by discord within the group. The following is an example of pitifully-small. Today there are still some older Wesley people around who were children at the time. Two of these people estimated that there were twelve to fifteen people in the congregation at church at periods in 1909. It is problematical that outside influence could cause such a catastrophe. Outside interference normally causes to band together to fight, but this time the problem was within the church body itself.

Judge Powell in his unpublished work outlines the matter from the Wesley point of view.

"The years 1908 and 1909 record an unhappy story of discord and disruption in the history of Wesley Church.

A. W. Lightbourne, at the session of the Wilmington Conference in March 1907, was admitted as a member of the Wilmington Conference and appointed to and served Wesley Church at Dover during the Conference Year of 1907.

At the session of the Wilmington Conference in March 1908, S. M. Morgan, Presiding Elder, presented formal charges against A. W. Lightbourne.

The charges were referred to a "Select Number", a committee of ministers appointed to hear the evidence and report their findings to the Conference.

The Committee heard the evidence and reported their finding to the Conference.

Bishop Goodsell read the report of the "Select Number" to the conference, "Which was to the effect that the charges were indefinitely postponed".

Mr. Lightbourne's "character was then passed". He was again appointed to Wesley Church for the Conference Year 1908.

The report of the finding of the "Select Number" of 1908 appears in full on page 27 of the Conference Minutes of 1909 as follows—"The committee reported their finding—That the charges were not sustained".

The Committee further reported—"That the evidence at the trial clearly proves that the certificate of A. W. Lightbourne's membership in the Fairfield Congregational Association on which he was admitted to membership in the Wilmington Conference was fraudulent and fictitious, but that the evidence did not connect A. W. Lightbourne therewith".

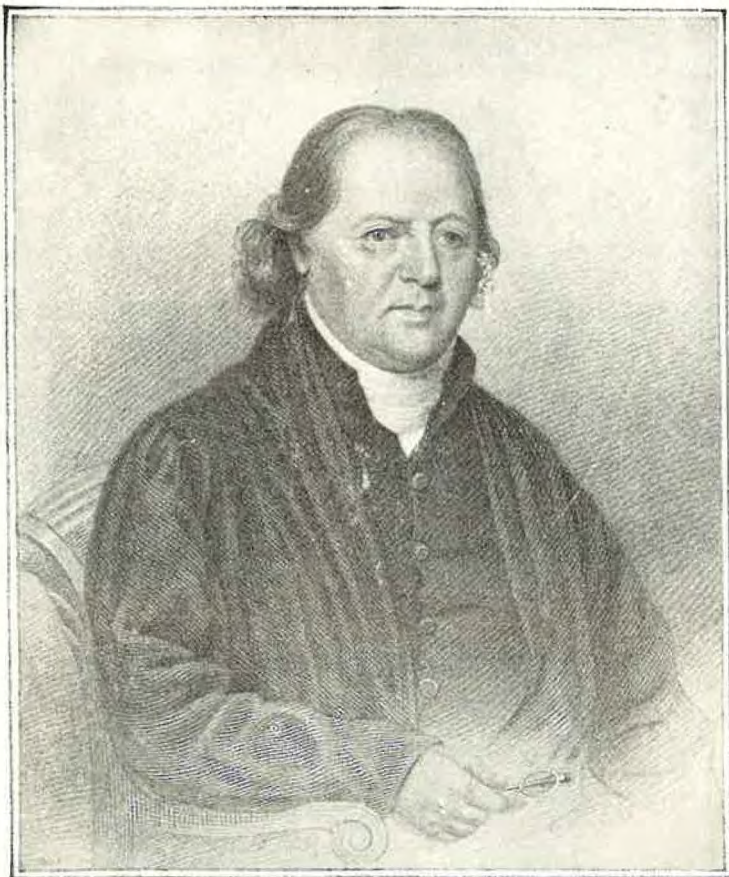
After the session of the Conference in March 1908, there were rumors and a great deal of talk that further and immediate proceedings would be instituted to oust Mr. Lightbourne from the Wilmington Conference. "The feeling in Wesley Church in Dover ran high".

The Board of Trustees of Wesley Church met and adopted the following resolution—"We resolve to use every proper means to retain Dr. Lightbourne as the pastor of this church for the remainder of this Conference year."

The threatened proceedings were abandoned.

Dr. Lightbourne served Wesley Church as its pastor during the entire Conference Year of 1908.

At the session of the Wilmington Conference in March 1909, R. T. Coursey presented the following resolution to the Conference—"Whereas, we have



FREEBORN GARRETSON



Christmas at Wesley





RICHARD BASSETT



GEORGE W. TEBO, DOVER, DELAWARE



"GRAND ORGAN, WESLEY CHURCH, DOVER, DELAWARE."

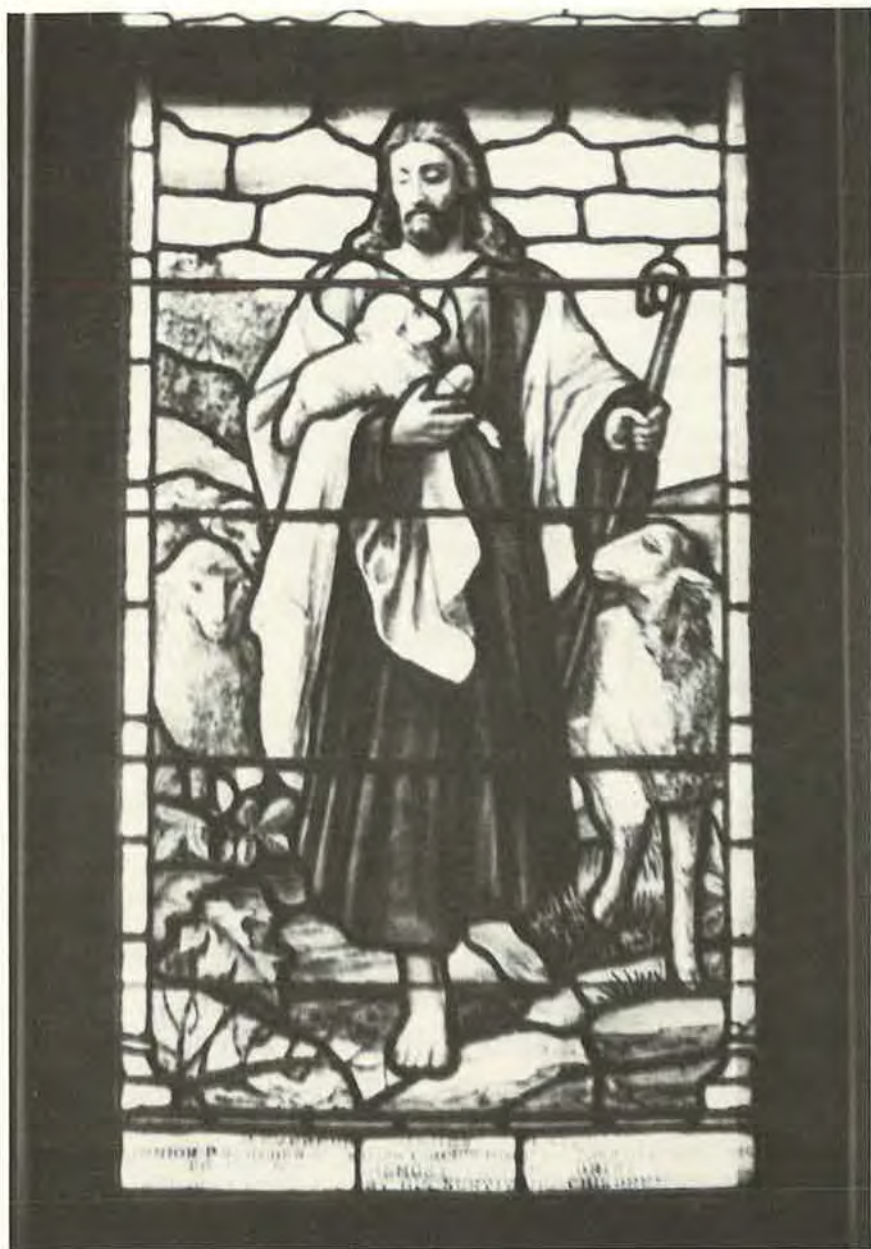




**GRACE FELLOWSHIP HALL**



INSIDE CHURCH BUILDING—1982



STAINED GLASS WINDOW—SANCTUARY, 1982

reason to believe that the credential alleged to be from the Congregational Church upon which A. W. Lightbourne was admitted into this conference was fraudulent which, if true, would invalidate his membership within the Conference and in the Church, therefore—

RESOLVED, that this whole matter be referred to a select number for judicial determination.

The select number heard the evidence and made the following report—  
“Your select number unanimously find that the credential was fraudulent and therefore his standing in the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church is therefore null and void”.

On March 22, 1909, the Conference appointed Rev. E. L. Hoffecker to Wesley Church, Dover.

A meeting of the Official Board of Wesley Church was held the same evening. “A motion was agreed to declining to accept the Rev. E. L. Hoffecker as Pastor”.

Mr. Lightbourne and his family during the week of Mr. Hoffecker's appointment moved to Wilmington.

Mr. Hoffecker came to Dover the same week and found both Church building and parsonage locked.

On Sunday, March 28th, the church door being locked, Mr. Hoffecker preached in the Dover Opera House that morning and evening.

April 8, 1909 proceedings were instituted before the Chancellor of Delaware by George W. Tebo, a member of the congregation and two Trustees—Wm. S. Haman and William Saulsbury—loyal to Wesley Church, against the other Trustees, adherents of Mr. Lightbourne, looking to the reopening of the church and parsonage.

In July 1909, pending the litigation, an amicable settlement was effected by which the Defendants responsible for closing the church agreed to its reopening and for granting by the Chancellor the decree prayed for in the Bill of Complaint.

On July 9, 1909, seven members of the Board of Trustees, adherents of Mr. Lightbourne, Defendants in the Chancery proceedings, resigned from the Board of Trustees of Wesley Church.

The church was reopened on the second Sunday in July, 1909 and Mr. Hoffecker and his family soon thereafter moved into the parsonage.

On July 27, 1909, Wesley Church, retaining Wm. S. Haman and William Saulsbury on the Board, elected a new Board of Trustees.

Dr. Lightbourne, at the request of friends in Dover, began holding services in April 1909 in Dover Opera House. In May he moved back to Dover with his family.

An independent religious movement was started in Dover by his friends with Dr. Lightbourne as its minister.

This movement caused a serious loss from the congregation of many valued friends and members of Wesley Church.

This independent movement, adopting the name “The Peoples Church”, built a church on Bradford Street in Dover.”

The whole matter has a happy ending in a way. There developed two strong churches in place of the one. Perhaps this solution was the Lord's solution.

From 1870 and 1920, Wesley Church continued to serve God and mankind. By 1920, Wesley Church had put on “brocade slippers and gold spectacles”. Decorum in the church was the rule and “Shouting Methodists” did come to order. Good or bad development? ?

## *Membership, Programs, and Finances* 1920—1950

During the years from 1920 to 1950 Wesley Church showed a gradual though somewhat erratic growth in membership, financial support, and program development. In 1919-20, membership was reported in the Conference Minutes as 352 and climbed to a high of 560 in 1925-26. The next year enrollment dropped, which may have been due to removal of inactive members from the rolls. A low of 368 was reported for 1931-32. Then enrollment increased to a high of 597 in 1939-40, and again dropped to 352 in 1940-41. Then an increase was noted in 1946-47, with 742 members recorded. In May of 1946, the church bulletin reported 123 new members received during the previous year.

The pastor's salary increased slowly during the period from 1920 to 1950. Beginning with a cash salary of \$1,800 in 1919-20, it reached \$2,500 in 1924-25 and, with the exception of one year during the depression, remained at that figure for almost 20 years. The salary was increased to \$3,000 in 1944-45 and to \$3,300 in 1948-49.

During the years before 1920, according to the Conference Minutes, contributions for missions were low and came mainly from the Sunday School offerings. Earlier, in 1916, the General Conference had initiated a celebration of one hundred years of missionary effort. The celebration, known as the Methodist Centenary, provided for the raising of \$115,000,000 during a five-year period to meet needs in home and foreign mission fields, World War I reconstruction work, and other benevolences. Stewardship, tithing, and evangelism were emphasized at this time. Wesley Church's financial contributions increased from \$864 in 1917-18 to \$2,161 in 1919-20, with a peak of \$2,915 in 1922-23. After the Centenary, the World Service and other benevolent contributions at Wesley remained at a much higher level than before, but the effects of the depression in the 1930's were evident. In 1945, a special program called "Crusade for Christ" was initiated to raise funds for a post-war program for relief and reconstruction and to aid two seminaries. Wesley's share was \$2,055 and was raised beyond the regular budget.

The financial budget of Wesley Church remained fairly constant from the early 1920's to the mid 1940's, at which time it increased substantially. The budget for the conference year, 1926-27, totalled about \$6,800, of which \$1,200 was for repairs to the building. This compares to a budget of about \$6,000 for the year 1943-44, with general repairs of \$250 included. Thus, it appears that the regular operating expenses, including salaries, general maintenance, and church programs remained fairly constant for a 20-year period. In addition to the regular budget of 1927-28, Wesley provided \$1,200 for World Service, according to the Conference Minutes. In 1943, in addition to the regular budget, funds were provided for missions and church improvement, amounting to about \$4,750. In 1946-47, Wesley's budget showed a substantial increase to about \$16,000, of which \$1,275 was for the music program and \$3,600 was for rebuilding the pipe organ. In addition, a salary of \$2,400 was provided for a Director of Youth.

During the period 1920-1949, the overall program of the church showed continued growth and increasing effectiveness. However, the church suffered a traumatic experience in the sudden death of the pastor, Marion W. Marine, February 18, 1944, but the vacancy was quickly filled. On February 21, 1944,

the Pastoral Relations Committee contacted C. Stanley Lowell, who had been given a medical discharge as a Navy Chaplain for a leg injury. He was offered and accepted the position of minister of Wesley for the remainder of the conference year. He continued to serve until May, 1947 and was the type of minister who "stirred things up."

During this time, the church saw the need for a person to provide leadership in the educational program, particularly for youth, and employed Lewis Wells.

Wells, while stationed at the Dover Air Force Base, had become actively involved in Wesley Church, particularly in drama and youth affairs. Upon discharge, he was employed as Director of Christian Education, beginning in March 1944. Under his leadership there were many activities for youth, including athletics and other recreation; a monthly paper, "The Wesley Flame"; dramatic works; class work; and evening meetings.

Prior to 1939, the youth organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church was known as the Epworth League and was intended to offer youth the opportunity to plan and carry out their own programs, usually on Sunday evenings. The name, Epworth League, was dropped after the merger with the Methodist Protestant group in 1939. Thereafter, the name, Methodist Youth Fellowship, was used, referred to as MYF. The number of youth involved in MYF increased markedly between 1946 and 1950. In 1948, Mr. Wells resigned as Education Director and Miss Mary G. White accepted the position. However, she resigned in 1949 due to illness.

Around 1940, the Sunday School had become more departmentalized, the attendance was up, and the need was felt for expansion of physical facilities. A Sunday School bus service was begun in 1944. In 1945, the youth groups began to meet in the Century Club on the Green. In 1948, arrangements were made to hold youth and college classes at Wesley College. After the merger with Grace Church, the latter's building was used as a center for youth. However, in January 1949, the Board of Education stated that the physical facilities were inadequate and the church school should be entirely in one building to be efficient. In 1947, Mrs. Henry Ridgely was contacted concerning the possibility of purchasing her lot at the rear of the church for building purposes, but no commitment was obtained. In 1949, a committee was appointed to explore the matter further.

On May 23, 1948, the Official Board approved a sharing plan with other churches for the broadcast of 11 o'clock Sunday services by WDOV on a rotation basis.

During this period of time, the Men's Bible Class was an active organization. One of its fund raising projects was a chicken and waffle dinner, which involved many men. The active women's class, known as the Friendship Bible Class, was originally formed for young women. Both classes had monthly business and social meetings, in addition to the Sunday studies.

Other activities included revival meetings, sometimes with assistance from other ministries and evangelistic visitations involving many laymen. Sunday evening services and Wednesday evening prayer services were held for many years. In 1945, Sunday evening services were largely discontinued and the time was devoted to youth programs.

## *Physical Changes,* 1920—1950

A variety of changes and improvements were made to Wesley Church during the years from 1920 to 1950. During this period, on each side of the corridor from the State Street entrance to the main room, there was an 18' x 15' classroom, usually occupied by an adult class. These rooms were separated by folding partitions from the main room, which was two steps lower. This main room, 55' x 36'8", was used for various meetings and, in the earlier years, for Sunday School classes from 4th grade to adults. Later the youth used the Sanctuary and other buildings. There were three rows of support pillars the length of the room. Some of these can be seen in the present parlor; the rest are enclosed in partitions. Chairs were used for seating.

Back of the main room was a long, narrow room which was used as a classroom for all children through the 3rd grade. For many years the floor had three levels and these young children sat on tiered benches for the full hour. The elevations had been removed before the addition was built. This room also had a folding partition that opened onto a low platform at the front of the main room.

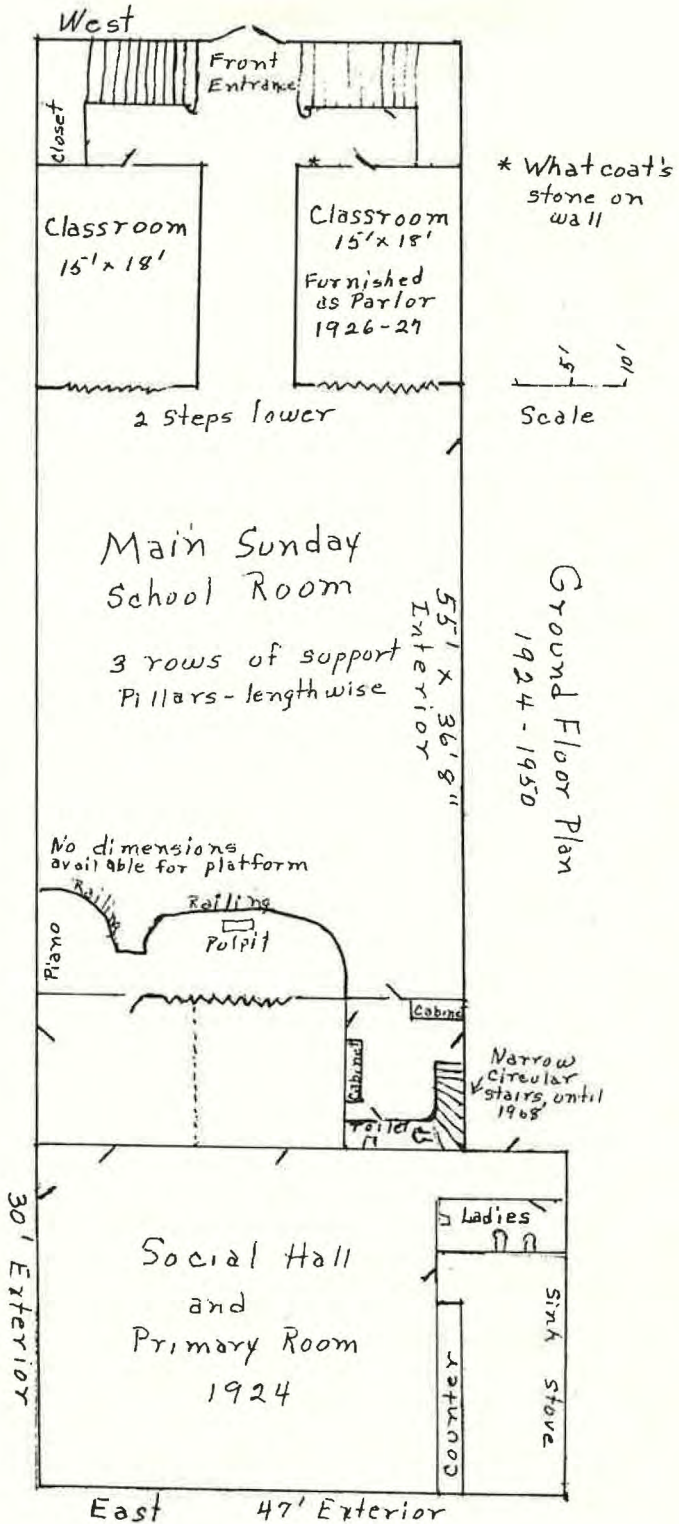
In 1924, a one-story structure, approximately 30' x 47', was added at the eastern end of the church building. The one large room was used as a classroom for children through the 3rd grade, and as a social hall and general meeting room. A kitchen was included on the north end. Previous to this time, the few meals that were served at the church were prepared by the women at home or in the parsonage kitchen next door. Some of the membership had been very much opposed to serving any meals in the church building. This addition was constructed by George H. Thomas, a member of Wesley Church, at a cost of approximately \$5,500.

Around 1925, repairs were made to the church, consisting of a boiler, gutters, and redecoration of the building. In 1926, the Young Women's Missionary Society was authorized to "establish a church parlor in the north classroom". In 1930, tie rods were installed in the walls of the Sanctuary, after a study indicated such a need.

In 1938, a decision was made to build a new parsonage. In spite of some opposition by those who felt the ground and building should be retained by the church and the building used for Sunday School and church activities, on the basis that the money was needed for the new building, the brick parsonage adjacent to the church was sold to Ernest V. and Esther W. Keith on June 7, 1938 for the sum of \$8,650. On June 14, 1938 a deed was executed conveying from the Hazel Realty Company to Wesley Church a lot, 66' x 177', on Hazel Road for the sum of \$1,250. The amount of \$8,918.04 was paid the general contractor, George H. Thomas, for construction of house, complete with screens, and garage with total expenses reported to be \$10,296.56.

In 1941, the heating system for the church had to be replaced at a cost of \$2,400. Various other improvements to the church included: redecoration of the Sanctuary with repairs to the stained glass windows; by installation of celotex ceiling; by painting walls and ceiling; by refinishing pews; by sanding and refinishing the floor; by replacing carpets; and, by rebuilding and repairing the pipe organ. In addition, the church steeple was repaired thus enabling the bell to once again sound the call to worship.





## *Women's Organizations* 1920—1950

The unification of the church in 1939 changed the organization of women's work in the former Methodist Episcopal Churches. In Wesley Church, there were five women's organizations, in addition to the Sunday School classes. One of the organizations was the Ladies' Aid Society, which to a large extent, furnished and maintained the parsonage and supported the local church work. Another organization was the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, whose purpose was to give financial support and education concerning foreign missions. The Conference Minutes reported a contribution by this organization of \$94 in 1919-20, which was increased to a high of \$287 in 1924-25. The amount was decreased to \$118 during 1932-33, but again was increased to \$224 in 1939-40.

The Women's Home Missionary Society was composed of two groups, one of which was originally organized as a Young Women's Society. Their purpose was to support mission work in what was considered the Home Field. Their combined contributions also fluctuated, from \$114 in 1919-20, to \$281 in 1920-21, with a high of \$385 in 1929-30, and an average of \$251 a year over the 21-year period. Another group of young women was known as the Wesleyan Juniors, who supported projects of their own choosing within or outside the local church.

In September, 1940, a new organization of women was formed, known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service, which combined the functions of the Missionary Societies and the Ladies' Aid. Mrs. James H. McNeal was elected the first President; Mrs. Herbert Smith was the first Vice-President, responsible for programs; and, Mrs. Harry C. McSherry was the first Treasurer. In November, the President's monthly letter to the members stated that 108 women were Charter Members. The membership was divided into nine circles, through which much of the work of the society was carried out and which provided a closer fellowship. Later a policy was adopted, changing circle membership every two years.

Among the officers of the new society were the following Secretaries: Spiritual Life, Missionary Education, Student Work, Youth, Children, and Supply Work. Mission studies were offered, first in special classes and later, to reach more people, in circle meetings. Student secretaries contacted students and referred them to local churches in their college town. During the years, 1945-49, when many young people were away from home, a News Letter, telling about local church activities and personal items, was sent quarterly to students and servicemen. As many as 90 letters were sent per quarter. The Student Secretary also arranged for Student Recognition Day, when the young people were home for the holidays.

The Women's organizations prior to 1940 provided for financing their activities from dues and fund raising activities. However, the Woman's Society for Christian Service, after 1940, emphasized individual pledges according to ability. Membership was based on giving service, prayer, and financial pledge. Faced with the experience of establishing a budget, the women took the combined contributions of the missionary societies of the year prior to 1940 as the amount of their pledge to missions and allowed the same amount for local activities. The resulting budget of \$900 for 1941 appeared large, but total receipts amounted to \$1,082.59. As mission pledges

increased from year to year, Wesley was usually at the top of the list for contributions in the Dover District, even though some churches had a higher membership in the women's society than Wesley. In addition to the regular budget, extra contributions were made, particularly to the building fund. In 1957-58, the budget reached a high of \$4,450, which included a contribution of \$1,000 for the building fund.

Other means were used to raise money than pledging. One was the Calendar Dinner, which was an outstanding annual event for many years. In arranging the dinner, tables for 18 persons, representing each month of the year, were decorated by the circles or other groups. Themes for the dinner might be a holiday, the birthday of some well known person, or an event that had occurred during the month. The decorations were so lovely and unique that many people made contributions to come in and view the tables during the day. A full turkey dinner was served and there was usually singing or some form of entertainment. In recent years, emphasis has been given to pledging, although additional funds have been raised from bazaars.

## *Music*

### 1920—1950

Music was always an important part of the church service at Wesley. The choir director during the 1920's and early 1930's was Mrs. Russell E. Wilson, who was followed by Mrs. Ralph C. Day. Miss Myrtle Lloyd was a paid soloist with the choir, as well as Mrs. Day, who became a professional singer. Much of the time the choir was held together through the efforts of Judge Walter A. Powell. In the early 1940's, Mrs. John Parker became the choir director and continued in that position until December, 1948. Because the choir had become deficient in male voices, several men with good voices but with no music training for part singing were enlisted and spent many hours with Mrs. Parker and the organist learning their parts. In December, 1944, the choir presented excerpts from *The Messiah* by Handel. This presentation became an annual event for several years, with standing-room-only. Mrs. Robert D. Streepy became director in January, 1949. The use of choir robes began in the early 1940's.

For some years there was an active Junior Choir under the direction of Mrs. James H. Wheatley, followed by other directors. During the 1940's, there was a very good Youth Choir under the leadership of Mrs. William J. Storey.

The organist, during this period, was Miss Edna E. Cariss, who in her later years became Mrs. Roland T. Anderson. When she resigned in June 1947, because of ill health, she had served 45 years. At this time few organists were available as Wesley Church had not allowed anyone the use of the organ for lessons or practice. Following Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. George D. Tebo served as organist until E. A. Barrell, Jr., an English teacher at Dover High School and a skilled musician, took the position in September, 1947. Mr. Barrell gave a recital on the organ shortly after it had been rebuilt. Mrs. Anderson was honored on this occasion for her many years of faithful service.

## *Merger*

The years of 1939 and 1940 brought many changes in organization to Methodist Churches as three branches (the Methodist Episcopal, the Methodist Episcopal-South, and the Methodist Protestant), were reunited into The Methodist Church.

The Methodist Protestant Church had grown out of a desire on the part of many Methodists for lay representation in the governing bodies of the church. When such representation was not obtained with the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a group of reformers split off to form the Methodist Protestant Church, in November, 1830. The first General Conference in 1834 reported a membership of 26, 587. This group was divided in the 1850's over the issue of slavery but was reunited in 1877. The church had no bishops but elected a President of the General Conference.

A separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church took place in 1844 due to differences regarding slavery. In 1845, fifteen conferences in the South organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1846, at the time of their first General Conference, their membership was 327,000.

In 1937, the full membership of the Methodist Churches was as follows: Methodist Episcopal, 4,684,444; Methodist Episcopal, South, 2,847,351; and Methodist Protestant, 197,996. The total of the three groups was 7,729,791.

In 1939, conference lines were redrawn on the Delmarva Peninsula, with all churches located in Virginia becoming a part of a new Virginia Conference. The new Peninsula Conference of the Methodist Church covered all of Delaware and that part of Maryland on the Eastern Shore. The Conference Minutes reported 144 active ministers from the Wilmington Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 45 from the Maryland Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, and 13 from the Baltimore and Virginia Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South were transferred into the Peninsula Conference.

In Dover, Methodism was represented by Wesley Church, St. Paul's Church, and Grace Church. Prior to 1940, Wesley and St. Paul's had been Methodist Episcopal, while Grace had been Methodist Protestant. In 1940-41, St. Paul's, located on West Division Street, had an active membership of 36 and Grace, located on South Governors Avenue near Lockerman Street, had an active membership of 36. In 1943, the Official Board of Wesley Church extended an invitation to Grace Church to join Wesley. In 1948, plans for merger were completed and members from Grace Church were received in Wesley on May 30, 1948.

## *Pastorate of Dr. John A. Trader* 1949—1962

Dr. John A. Trader was appointed to Wesley Church, Dover, at the Peninsula Annual Conference in May, 1949, having previously served nine years at Trinity Church in Salisbury, Maryland. Thus began the longest pastorate in the 200-year history of Wesley Methodist Church.

The Pastoral Relations Committee visited the church in Salisbury, Maryland, and presented the needs of Wesley Church for a large hall to serve the social activities of the church and for the renovation of the lower floor of the main structure for classrooms for the expansion of the church school.

Dr. Trader arrived in Dover on May 28, 1949, with his wife and son, Merrill, to live in the parsonage at 140 Hazel Road, and to serve the people of Wesley Church. During the year, plans were made to inaugurate a building program which would include a Fellowship Hall, Chapel, kitchen, church offices, ladies' parlor, and extra classrooms for the church school. This was a real challenge to Dr. Trader and the members of Wesley Church. The Building Committee appointed by the official board engaged the services of George Savage, church architect, to draw plans to present to the official board as soon as possible.

The sale of Grace Methodist Church and Parsonage, formerly Methodist Protestant, on South Governors Avenue by the Conference to the Acme Stores Company, and a merger of their members with the Wesley congregation was consummated on December 2, 1949, by Dr. Thomas Mulligan, the Dover District Superintendent. The funds from the sale of the property were applied to the Building Fund Campaign which amounted to a net of \$36,000.

The Quarterly Conference recommend the following at the membership meeting of February 14, 1950: the purchase of the Ridgely property at the rear of the church at a cost of \$25,000; the erection of a one-or-two-story structure; the authorization of a committee to use funds from the sale of Grace Chapel and the Building Fund Campaign and borrow funds for the completion of the building.

A study was made of a possible relocation with an entirely new building or an additional building on the present property by the purchase of the lot at the rear of the church. A fact-finding committee visited numerous churches to observe their facilities before the committee recommended that estimates be secured for the construction of an addition to Wesley Church on the present site to provide for educational (church school of 600) and social needs of our church. The Construction Committee authorized the architect, George Savage, to draw up final plans by June 2, 1950, in order to place estimates out for bids to the construction companies in the area.

A description of the plans for the construction of the new building and renovation to the lower floor follows. The Fellowship Hall was to be constructed of brick in Colonial design to conform with the City planning along the Plaza, with a seating capacity of 300, large colonial windows, a high ceiling supported by laminated arches, a solid maple floor for roller skating, four classrooms (two at each end) with indirect lighting, two classrooms at front of the hall and a large stage, a kitchen at right of long hallway to include all conveniences—(the hallway would divide the old building from entrance door on State Street to the Fellowship Hall at the rear) along this corridor were classrooms), ladies' and men's rooms, a church parlor, offices and storages,

and a small chapel at the front entrance. The Building Committee was asked to investigate the installation of an elevator at the rear of the sanctuary at a cost of \$3,000. The basement area under the Fellowship Hall would include rooms for the Junior Department, the Kindergarten Department, and the Nursery. The Intermediate and Youth Departments would meet in the Fellowship Hall, the Men's Bible Class in the Chapel and the Ladies' Bible Class in the Parlor. The Wesley Class of Young Adults' classroom was to be situated at the left entrance of the church.

The bids were opened and the James Wood Construction Company of Dover was the lowest bidder (bid \$231,000). Construction of the hall was to begin in July, 1950.

At the Quarterly Conference meeting, the District Superintendent suggested that Wesley Church invite the Peninsula Annual Conference to hold its sessions at Wesley Church in May, 1951. Plans were made to complete the building program and to finish renovations to the sanctuary in time for the Conference in 1951. Corner stone laying for the Fellowship Hall took place one cold, rainy Sunday morning in October, 1950. Dr. Thomas Mulligan, Dover District Superintendent, assisted the Pastor with the trowel in placing the Cornerstone in position with its contents; a Bible, a copy of the Delaware State Newspaper, the Sunday Bulletin and a copy of the deed.

The church budget established for the year 1951 was \$20,278. After the construction of the Fellowship Hall and the renovation to the lower floor, worship services and many other meetings met in the hall. The work of renovating the sanctuary was then begun and included the divided altar, with the reading desk at one side (pulpit from Wesley Church) and the preaching desk (pulpit from St. Paul's Church) on the other side, the large altar at rear with hand woven dossal cloth, and the divided choir stalls. The pipe organ was moved to the left side of the altar, and the non-speaking pipes were removed. A long altar rail to accommodate more people was built for communion services. The walls were painted white. Long lantern lights. Several gifts were given to the sanctuary, which included the Cross and brass candlesticks by Dr. and Mr. John Shilling, the baptismal font by Mr. and Mrs. Norris Eddington, and various members of the congregation donated hymnals.

A suggestion was made to the official board that Wesley Church secure a Director of Christian Education, which resulted in the hiring of Ann Blake, a graduate of Scarritt College, starting September 1, 1951, at a salary of \$2,000 and \$400 for transportation expenses. Her duties as Director of Junior and Youth Choirs included visiting parents of church school pupils, supervising the roller skating program on Friday nights, and promoting of the Educational program in the church school.

Roller skating on Friday evenings in the Fellowship Hall was initiated in the fall of 1951. After a discussion of permitting dancing by our young people in the Fellowship Hall in the fall, a motion was passed, granting permission to our church groups when "properly supervised".

A membership dinner was planned for October 16, 1951, to present the new Building Fund Campaign. Dr. Essel P. Thomas, a former pastor of Wesley Church, was the speaker of the evening. Ten thousand dollars in pledges to the Building Fund was received.

At the Quarterly Conference of March 13, 1952, a letter from Edgar Barrell, organist, stated the pipe organ was in need of considerable repairs. The bid of \$6,000 for the necessary repairs was accepted by the board to be paid for by special gifts from the members and friends, by a loan from the Wilmington

Pipe Organ Company at 3%, or by a loan at the Farmers Bank.

Sixty new members were added to the membership roll and the church met its budget of \$30,000. Many Air Base personnel began coming to the church. Lists were made of their names so that they could be contacted at a later date.

The total budget for the year 1953 and was \$22,591 as presented by the Finance Committee to the official board. Ann Blake informed the Committee on Christian Education that she would be leaving the first of Septemeber to be married.

It was suggested by the Pastor that preparations be made to begin two morning services, one at 9:30 a. m. and one at 11:00 a. m. in the fall, although no action was taken at this time.

The Board also made plans to secure a worker through the Conference or General Board of Missions to contact the Air Base personnel by visiting and trying to get them related to the church program.

A celebration of the 175th Anniversary of the founding of Wesley Church was held on November 15, 1953, with Dr. Fred Holloway, the President of Drew University, as the speaker. At the banquet on November 17, Lewis Wells, Director of Drama at Wesley College, presented a pageant depicting the events of the years. A memorial program had been prepared and memorial plates were offered for sale. Seventy-five persons joined the church as part of the celebration.

The Committee to secure a Director of Christian Education received word from Mrs. Elva Nelson, a student at Scarritt College and a resident of Dover, that she would like to apply for the position. Her duties were listed as some office work, responsibility for church school program under the Commission on Education, the Intermediate and Senior MYF programs, some visiting, the roller skating on Friday evenings, and a drama at Easter and Christmas. Her salary was \$50 a week with allowance for transportation. She began her duties in the fall of 1953.

At a special official board meeting on November 22, 1953, it was learned that money was available from the Conference Board of Missions and the Bishops Fund to provide a person to work with the Methodist among military personnel at the Dover Air Force Base. Many of the Air Force personnel were living in the Dover area and attending Wesley Church.

Beginning in the fall of 1953, the membership of Wesley Church was entertained at the parsonage in groups of about one hundred for eight Sunday evenings. With a membership of over 850, this proved to be an excellent time for real fellowship and meeting the new members.

By 1954, the budget had reached \$26,307, and a report of the attendance for both services showed an increase of more than 100 over the previous year.

On October 9, 1954, the Reverend A. B. Snapp was appointed to serve St. Paul's Church and the military personnel at the Dover Air Force Base. As a former chaplain in the military, he was suited to the responsibilities of the position. He would live in the St. Paul's parsonage on Division Street.

The church raised for all purposes during the year \$32,409, current indebtedness \$63,600, with regular payments of \$5,000 on the Building Fund.

Two morning worship services were continued in the fall and there was a need for two sessions of the church school.

Harry Dixon was hired as Janitor, and he was commended for his fine services in that the entire building was cleaned during the summer months.

The Music Committee secured William Streett to lead the chancel and Youth Choirs. Mrs. Streett would lead the Junior Choirs.

The decision to make a change in the Building Fund was made at the



beginning of 1955. An increase in the current budget was made to meet the bank payments. The total budget for 1955-56 amounted to \$32,000 which included Building Fund payments of \$6,000 adopted at the Quarterly Conference on October 6, 1955.

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Tarburton presented chimes to the church in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Frank McKee. A Methodist men's group was organized in the fall. Dr. Trader began preaching at St. Paul's Church in the evening service and giving care for the needs of their members.

The official board was asked to consider the services of an Associate Minister who would live in St. Paul's parsonage and preach there. He would give time to visitation among the military personnel living in the Dover area and to the needs of the Educational program at Wesley Church and would assist the Senior Minister.

The Annual Conference of the Peninsula was invited to Wesley Church. The opening session date was May 24, 1956.

Dr. O. A. Bartley, former President of Wesley College, was the District Superintendent of Dover District. Two hundred and fifty new hymnals were purchased and given as memorials by members of Wesley Church. During the past year, \$7,100 was paid on the bank loan reducing the indebtedness.

The renovation of the Chancel in Wesley Church this year was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Holt. A paneling to match the altar which extended across the entire front of the church enclosing the organ pipes was built. The walls were painted a soft blue to match the shades in the beautiful stained glass memorial windows. This added to the completion of the Chancel area and to the beauty of the sanctuary.

An Associate Pastor to give assistance to St. Paul's and Wesley Church and to work with the military personnel would be appointed at the Annual Conference. The Reverend Edward Wilkins, a graduate of Drew Seminary, was appointed by Bishop Oxnam. Upon completion of his work at Drew Seminary, Reverend Wilkins, his wife Joe and their son David would move to Dover and live in St. Paul's Parsonage.

The budget for 1956 was \$32,965. The Pastor's salary was \$5,400 with the utilities at \$600. The Director of Christian's Education's salary was \$3,000 for the year.

At the Annual Conference, the members would be asked to make a decision about Wesley College. The needs of the college were many, including new buildings and an indebtedness of \$200,000. The churches of the Conference might be faced with assisting this deficit of closing the college. Dr. J. Paul Slaybaugh, President of Wesley College, reported to our official board an improved status of the college for the past five years. They met all operating expenses. It is possible to secure students if the Conference is willing to give some support to the college and a plan to replace buildings and equipment for a student body of 300-400 students. A study committee was proposed to dispose of the property and use assets for scholarships to other schools.

Elva Nelson, Christian Education Assistant, resigned effective June 30, 1956, an in appreciation for her services, she was granted two weeks' salary as vacation pay. The employment of a part-time secretary was to begin September 1st. At a meeting of the official board on October 4, 1956, the Reverend Edward Wilkins was introduced as the Associate Minister. He began his duties with the Daily Vacation Bible School during the summer, continuing until 1960.

The annual budget for the year April 1957-March 1958 gave the Pastor's salary at \$6,000; the Associate Minister's salary at \$4,000; utilities for the St.

Paul's parsonage at \$200; and utilities for the Wesley parsonage at \$600. The financial budget for the year totaled \$34,478. At this time, Dr. Trader advised using the services of an outside group of solicitors to conduct a campaign in 1958 to eliminate the indebtedness and provide adequate maintenance for all our facilities. Also, tithing was emphasized for the members of the official board and the entire membership inasmuch as the balance of the loan on the Building Fund was \$46,000 on February 28, 1957, with payments of over \$1,550 on the principle and interest quarterly. As a result an Every-Member Canvass was undertaken in March 1958.

At the last Quarterly Conference on April 29, a dinner was given to honor Dr. O. A. Bartley, Dover District Superintendent, and his family as members of Wesley Church. The dinner was served by ladies of St. Paul's Church.

In 1958 the sum of \$5,600 was received from the James Satterfield Estate with a part of this fund being used to purchase a small organ for the Chapel in his memory.

The Forward Look campaign began on February 17 resulting in forty members joining the church on Palm Sunday.

There was a discussion to have air conditioning installed in the Sanctuary for around \$5,000, but no action was taken.

The 180th banquet on Wednesday, November 12, 1958, was held with Dr. Hurst Anderson, President of American University, as the speaker. On Sunday, November 16. Dr. Henry G. Budd was the guest preacher. An historical pageant under the direction of Lewis Wells, Head of the English Department at Wesley College, was presented in the evening. The students of Wesley College were given a reception on September 21.

The financial budget for the year 1959 was \$51,138, in comparison with a budget of \$44,588 adopted the previous year. The Pastor's salary was \$6,800, the Associate Pastor's salary was \$1,150 (from Wesley), the utilities for each parsonage was \$600. Many alterations to the property were made during this year to increase space for growth of the church school. The expenditures from all the organizations totaled \$55,342.95. There were now over 1,000 members of the church, with 1,093 membership of the church school. Indebtedness on the Building Fund was at \$30,000.

Four commissions were organized to conform with the discipline of the Methodist Church as follows: Education, Missions, Stewardship and Finance, and Membership and Evangelism.

A suggestion was made to buy the Stewart property located next door to Wesley Church, if ever it were for sale. A group of young people was received as new members on June 14. The sale of The St. Paul's Church and parsonage was proposed with a merger of the members of the congregation with Wesley Church.

The Music Committee reported the need of some necessary repairs to the organ at an estimated cost of \$9,000. Dr. J. Paul Slaybaugh, as chairman of the committee to raise funds for these repairs, collected \$2,150 towards the fund.

The budget for the year 1960-61 was \$52,788. The indebtedness was \$50,000; \$22,000 for the repairs to the property and the additional funds needed for the organ repairs. A plan to move Reverend E. R. Wilkins at the Annual Conference in May placed a part of his salary at \$1,500, which had been supplied by the Conference. This now had to be considered by our Finance Committee on the next year's budget. The expenditures for the year totaled \$43,055.

The Pastoral Relations Committee reported a candidate for the position of

Associate Minister, the Reverend C. Jackson Robinson, who was completing his studies at Crozier Seminary. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Conference and a native of North Carolina. The salary agreed was \$4,000 with \$200 for expenses.

The membership of St. Paul's Church voted to close the church at the end of April, with the closing service on April 24. The members were transferred to Wesley and were received on May 1st. The Chapel at Wesley Church was named for St. Paul's Church with a bronze plaque over the door of the Chapel.

Fifty members were received on December 4, 1960. The Christmas season included a program by the Wesley College Choir on December 11, the Birthday Party for Jesus on December 18 for the church school, Christmas Eve communion services, and two services on Christmas morning.

The Reverend Mr. Robinson began his ministry at Wesley Church in 1961 by visiting families of the church school. With his wife Evelyn and their three daughters, Becky, Debbie, and Jackie, he moved into the St. Paul's parsonage for a short time. When it was later sold, a home at 17 Konchak Avenue in Sherwood of Dover was purchased.

The Finance Commission presented a budget of \$62,504, an increase of 20% over last year because of an increase on the interest on the loan from \$25,000 to \$43,000. Plans were made to eliminate the debt over a four-year period of time.

Dr. Trader announced his retirement which would terminate his services at Wesley in May, 1962. The Pastor's salary was \$6,800; the Associate Pastor's salary was \$4,000; utilities were \$600 each, with expenses at \$500 and travel at \$500. There was now a total membership of 1,050. A clear title to the former St. Paul's property, presented by Merrill C. Trader, gave the Conference the right to sell the property at auction on October 21.

Miriam Teaff offered an electrical star to be hung at an appropriate place in the Sanctuary. The star was given in memory of her parents, Dr. and Mrs. George E. Wood. Dr. Wood was a former minister of our Conference. It was hung in the balcony of the Sanctuary as a symbol of light—Christ, the Light of the World.

The pledges of \$38,500 were received with the potential amount of \$59,000 on the budget. This was an increase of \$9,000 over last year's budget. It was tentatively set at \$71,653 due to the payments on the mortgage, the bank loan, and the higher interest.

A number of ministers were considered for the pulpit at Wesley Church by the District Superintendent, Dr. Roy L. Tawes, for the vacancy at Wesley Church in May, 1962. Dr. John A. Trader retired at the Conference after 45 years as a minister of the Methodist Church. He had achieved all the goals he had planned for Wesley Church during his 13 years of service. The following is a letter that he received from the official board of Wesley Church on May 11, 1962: "In this time Dr. Trader had felt moments of accomplishment and sometimes moments of discouragement. He has guided the board through controversial subjects, guided us through a building program, and through the securing of additional properties. He has left his mark, a good mark, on this church, on this congregation, and on this community. He is a man whom we all love and respect. We have never known him to take a backward step when there was a question of good for the church, the congregation, or the community. We want to express our great thanks to Dr. Trader."

A word of commendation is due Miss M. Yolande Thomas as Secretary of the official board during Dr. Trader's ministry. Her detailed and accurate minutes of the board meetings during those years have aided in the prepara-

tion of this manuscript as recorded at Wesley Church, Dover, Delaware (1949-1962). Also a word of commendation to William H. Sterling, General Treasurer of Wesley Church, and as the Treasurer of the Building Fund during the years of Dr. Trader's ministry. A deep appreciation is expressed to him by the members of the official board and the membership of Wesley Church.

## *Women's Society of Christian Service* 1949—1962

The women of Wesley Church filled a very prominent place, through the W.S.C.S., in the plans for the Building Program. Between the years 1949 and 1954, the society pledged \$5,000 to the Building Fund to be paid in four years. Through the many projects of the women of the W.S.C.S., the money was raised during the second year. They also served Wesley Church by providing care in the nursery, welcoming the parishioners at church services, and being active in the United Church Women's Work. They also found time to be active in the local and district programs. It was during this period that the W.S.C.S. at Wesley Church was reorganized into ten circles.

The years 1954 to 1956 were initiated by the president of the W.S.C.S. giving a tea for all the women of the church. During this time, the Wesleyan Juniors, an organization of young women in the church, became a circle and were more involved in the society as officers and circle leaders. The average attendance at the monthly general meeting was 85 and the pledge to the Dover District was increased to \$1,000 for the Mission's Budget.

In the period 1956 to 1958 a large group of young women received W.S.C.S. leadership through the formation of a training circle, and total membership of the organization reached 232. The total disbursement for the year was \$3,836.60 with many services being performed by the women in the church and community. The year 1958 was also marked by a visit to the United Nations in New York by the women of the society.

The period between 1958 and 1959 saw the president of the W.S.C.S., Mrs. Dougell Wildey, resigning in order to become Director of the choirs of Wesley Church with the vice-president completing the term of office.

In 1959 many new ideas of special interest were brought to the society: the purchase of silver articles for entertaining, the idea for the Methodist Men to purchase a dishwasher, a pledge of \$1,200 to the Dover District, a fashion show at the Calendar Dinner as well as a talent program for all members. These were only some of the accomplishments of the W.S.C.S. between 1959 and 1961.

During the years 1960-1962 the membership of the W.S.C.S. reached 264 with a total yearly disbursement of over \$4,400. The money was raised by the voluntary personal pledges of the members and other projects during the year as in the past. A farewell reception was given by the W.S.C.S. and the official board to honor Dr. Trader and his family upon his retirement. The theme "This is Your Life" was most appropriate for one who had given so much to Wesley Church during his 13-year pastorate, the longest in our 200-year history of Methodism in Dover.

1940—WOMAN'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE—1980

|                        |                                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mrs. James McNeal      | 1940-1942                           |
| Mrs. John Shilling     | 1942-1944                           |
| Mrs. Arthur Hearn      | 1944-1946                           |
| Mrs. James Muir        | 1946-1948                           |
| Mrs. Earl Willey       | 1948-1949                           |
| Mrs. Harry C. McSherry | 1949-1954                           |
| Mrs. Walter Holt       | 1954-1956                           |
| Mrs. William Holden    | 1956-1958                           |
| Mrs. Donzel Wildey     | 1958-1959                           |
| Mrs. James McKee       | 1959-1961                           |
| *Mrs. Richard Hetsko   | 1962-1964                           |
| Mrs. Leroy Boss        | 1964-1968                           |
| Mrs. Ralph Todd        | 1968-1970                           |
| Mrs. William Holden    | 1970-1971                           |
| Mrs. Clifford Hurd     | 1971-1972 (Acting President & V.P.) |
| Mrs. Clifford Hurd     | 1972-1974**                         |
| Mrs. Richard Stoops    | 1974-1976                           |
| Mrs. George Theis      | 1976-1977                           |
| Mrs. Alma Shelton      | 1977-1978 (Acting President & V.P.) |
| Mrs. Everett Matthews  | 1978-1980                           |

\*Term of office began in January

\*\*New name—United Methodist Women

# ***HISTORY OF WESLEY CHURCH, DOVER, 1962—1970***

## **During Pastorate Of William Hemphill**

The Hemphill family's arrival in Dover in June 1962 occurred within in few months of the arrival of General Foods and the start of construction of the giant Jello plant. Obviously, the second event had the really significant impact upon our capital city, beginning a new era of change that was to affect both Wesley Church and the new pastor as well. Just as the reactivation of the Air Base several years before launched Wesley on a period of great expansion, so a new surge of growth began in 1962 that increased the size of the congregation by some 35%. But industry, like the military, tends to move people around the country, causing transition to be a major factor in the life of the church. Although more than 1,000 new members were received in 8 years, the total membership increased only from 1,100 to 1,457 because of this mobility. The joy of welcoming large groups of new persons into the fellowship was continually offset by the sadness of farewell to those who had become actively involved and were being transferred.

One cannot look back on the years of a person's pastorate without also recalling the associate pastors who served in the same period and whose life and ministry are also so intertwined with the history of the congregation. These are: C. Jackson Robinson, Hubert Jicha, William Smith, Frederick Seyfert, Douglas Milbury (part-time) Wayland Johnson (part-time). During this period the continuing presence and encouragement of Dr. John Trader, Pastor Emeritus, was also part of the congregation's life.

Although it has often been said that "a church without a debt" is not a growing church, Wesley did reach this stage briefly. On New Year's Eve of 1965 a joyous Watch Night celebration was held, in which the mortgage on the Fellowship Hall—Church School Building was burned. Although 1965 was begun debt-free, a Building Fund was immediately started for the next addition, for which planning had already begun.

In October of 1962 the Official Board, headed by George Carroll, had appointed a Survey Committee to study present and predicted community growth and the impact it would have on the church in terms of facilities. Under the leadership of Walter Robertson, that committee made an intensive study and presented its recommendations to the Board in June of 1963. These included the recommendation that the church should remain on its present site and improve and enlarge its facilities here in spite of a very limited amount of space. This recommendation coincided with the recommendation made by Dr. Robert Wilson and Albert Adams of the Department of Research and Survey of the General Church's Board of Missions that Wesley should not move from its downtown location.

Early in 1964 the architectural firm of Buchar Associates of York, Pennsylvania was selected to develop preliminary plans for a long-range two-stage expansion. The first stage was to be a new educational building constructed on the parking lot for an estimated cost of \$250,000. The second phase considered was the replacement of the existing sanctuary with a ground-floor sanctuary and a full-basement for additional meetings rooms. A three-year building fund campaign was conducted in the fall of 1965 for this first phase, which

raised \$112,000 in pledges, and the architect was instructed to proceed with detailed planning which was to be ready for bidding by January 1968.

But in the providence of God, Wesley Church was to take another direction into the future. In early July 1967 the City of Dover advertised the sale of the former City Post Office Building, a property consisting of nearly one acre of land joining the church property on the east. In a well-attended congregational meeting held the evening before sealed bids were to be submitted to the city, an enthusiastic crowd gave strong directions to the Trustees to use their best judgement on price, but to submit a bid high enough to secure this property for the church. At the time, no one knew who the other interested parties were. The pastor and the five trustees will probably never forget that night when they went into a room determined not to leave it until a unanimous decision was reached on a bid price to be submitted. Previously they had secured appraisals on the property by banks and other knowledgeable persons which ranged from \$150,000 to \$175,000, although admittedly the building itself would cost a million dollars to replace. But the trustees felt that someone else was interested and did not want to lose the property for the church. Finally, after much prayer and discussion, a decision was reached that our bid should be \$305,000. Later Bill Sterling voiced what the others felt that he "couldn't sleep that night for thinking about how the community would laugh at our trustees" for offering such a high bid. But when the sealed envelopes were opened the next day at noon, Wesley's bid was only \$15,000 higher than the second highest from Wilmington Trust Company at \$290,000. That experience of God's leading in response to prayer became an exciting event for the whole congregation, as it was shared with gratitude to Him.

Settlement was made for the former Post Office Building on August 17, 1967. The architectural firm was paid and terminated, since plans for a new educational building would not be needed, and the same firm was rehired to redesign the old post office for our church needs. An excellent building committee chaired by Louis Edgell and consisting of J. Thomas Anderson, Robert Moore, Mrs. Emerson Sapp, Miss M. Yolande Thomas, Lester Novinger, George B. Carroll, Charles Paradee, Sr., John Strickland, Walter L. Robertson, R. Thomas Pruett, along with the senior minister, worked with the architect to find additional space for our choirs and to remodel some of the rooms in the existing building as well. Bids on all of this work were received in December of 1967 and the contract awarded to John Wilkins Co. of Milford, who began the work in January. All of this came to a glorious climax on Sunday, September 29, 1968, when the Consecration Service of the New Wesley Church Educational Center included a parade with flags, Bible, banners, etc. from the front entrance of the church on State Street to the steps of the new Wesley Educational Center. The service, which began in the sanctuary, was completed in joyous celebration followed by an open house for the whole community.

As the 1960's will always be remembered in America as the time of struggle for racial justice and civil rights, so the history of Wesley Church was affected by the current racial tensions and changes going on in our society. Even more, one must say that Wesley, through its leadership, gave some positive direction to these changes as it exerted its Christian influence. An outstanding experience of this nature happened in the spring of 1964, when our church hosted a weekend youth meeting for the Annual Conference which included over 200 teenagers and their adult advisors, more than one-third of whom were black. To provide housing for two nights in the homes of our white members and to serve them meals was a new experience for many, but it was done graciously



and became a very positive witness of Christian love that helped in the merger of the Peninsula and Delaware Conferences, which was formalized in May of 1964. (Formerly the Peninsula Conference was all white, and the Delaware Conference all black.)

It was during the 60's that a few black persons began attending our services, so that for the first time since well before the Civil War, the congregation was racially mixed. It was also about this period that the first black members were received into our membership. In 1966, the county-operated black schools were merged into the existing school districts, and all schools became racially mixed on about the same basis. It was obvious that the influence of concerned Christians was a major factor in what had become a rather smooth transition, in spite of strong emotional overtones which erupted in only a few minor incidents.

Church music became a major emphasis at Wesley Church, when Thomas C. Flynn came to the church in 1965 as part-time organist and choir director. Full of energy and new ideas, his efforts resulted in his employment on a full-time basis by July of 1966, and by 1968 he was working with 11 separate choral groups, including over 200 persons. Under his leadership, the Cubbage Memorial Handbell Ringers were organized, so named because the basic set of handbells was purchased from funds given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. J. Norman Cubbage, who had been long-standing members of Wesley Church, and Mrs. Cubbage had been a lifelong teacher of youth. Limited at first to boys only, the ringers became co-educational and divided into three teams. The first team took a tour each summer, reaching a climax in a three-week tour of England, Scotland and Wales in the summer of 1969 by Thomas Mowbray, who continued this excellent music program for graded choirs until he was drafted into military service in the fall of 1970.

Because Wesley Church and Wesley College have always been closely related, one must comment that this period of the 60's was the time of the college's great expansion and growth, under the leadership of Dr. Paul Slaybaugh and Dr. Robert Parker, both of whom, with their families, were active participants in the church. Between 1962 and 1970 five new buildings were added to the college campus, and students took an increasing part in the life of the congregation. About 1967 the church began a Sunday School class for retarded children, and this was largely staffed by students who were very effective in sharing their love on a one-to-one basis with these children. Later, our members took on increasing responsibility for this, and for a group of similarly handicapped adults.

At the center of the community geographically, Wesley's building was open to many special programs to serve people beyond our own congregation. Included in these were special weekend spiritual life retreats conducted annually by Camps Farthest Out. And the Order of St. Luke began holding its 3-day conferences there in 1968, when Dr. Alfred Price of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia was the missionary. And, out of this experience, Wesley began its own ministry of prayer and healing, with special Wednesday night healing services. The Ashram is another form of spiritual renewal ministry introduced to the Wesley congregation during the 1960's, a program shared with Camden, Wyoming, and Goldsboro United Methodist churches. On two of these occasions Dr. E. Stanley Jones was the Ashram leader, often called one of the three greatest world Christian leaders of this century. Many lives were influenced for Christ during these events, and perhaps none more profoundly than that of the pastor, Bill Hemphill, according to his own testimony.

A new form of evangelism known as "The Lay Witness Movement" became popular throughout the Conference during this decade, and it was first introduced to Wesley Church in 1968 with a great impact. Many persons gave themselves to Christ in a personal way never before experienced, and a new openness to prayer, Bible study, and sharing seemed to result in the congregation.

When our District Superintendent, Hartwell F. Chandler, had a problem of supplying pastoral leadership for the Little Creek and Leipsic churches in 1967, Wesley Church agreed to cooperate and allow them to be part of a charge with Wesley under the care of our pastors. This arrangement continued for about two years, and gave some of our laity a chance to preach, as well as our pastors.

No recital of events during one pastorate is complete without mention of the church secretaries, who kept the administration going. Norma Stoltenberg, Alberta Douglass, Nancy Haines and Faye Stayton are all a very important part of Wesley's history in this decade. During this time both the secretary and the custodian, Harry Dixon, became full-time employees of the church for the first time.

**WESLEY UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH  
DOVER, DELAWARE  
1970—1978**

**Pastorate of Robert P. Whitlock**

As I reflect on the almost eight years of ministry at Wesley Church, I see the focus as a time of emphasis on two major themes: First of all, the matter of addressing the church to a genuine experience in Jesus Christ—And then the expression of that experience in all of life.

I am not implying that this is any more original than the New Testament Church, nor am I implying that this was not the emphasis of others who had preceded me. It was my impression when I arrived that the deepest need of the church was to focus on the two major emphases. Wesley Church, while it is like any other Christian community, presents a rather unique perspective. It is a church of obvious diversity. It is a church that represents those who work in agriculture through all kinds of industry and occupations; a large segment of membership have a relationship to Wesley College; the Air Base community brings an entirely different mix to the scene; the Annual Conference has its offices in Dover which provides the congregation with a salting of more than the usual number of ministers on any given Sunday and throughout its program.

This diversity is intensified by the fact of the merger of three congregations into one in fairly recent years, bringing people who have different heritages and different perspectives into one congregation.

The move to merge the congregations was the right move. The diversity of the congregation is a unique "cutting edge" that very few churches would have. Yet it presents a challenge; the members of the church have to develop a deep and real sense of mutual openness to one another, or else there can be no real sense of community present. As I perceive Wesley Church, that was not only the issue for the almost eight years of my ministry but also would be the continual challenge to the church. If individuals coming from different experiences and backgrounds will with openness approach each other, the church will have a powerful cutting edge in terms of spiritual growth and also community impact. The mere fact that the church is a congregation of some 1700 members in a community of twenty-five to thirty thousand people gives it a powerful force in number alone. If it is conceived that these persons are experiencing a deep sense of relationship to Jesus Christ and what that means in community then the church will have that power multiplied by the presence of the Spirit.

On the other hand, if the church ever comes to the place where the diversity is seen in a negative sense (a lack of understanding and of openness) or that there is a demand on the part of any one group that all the others must experience "their faith in the same way as they are experiencing it" then it will be a very difficult thing to maintain a sense of fellowship and community, thereby diminishing the ministry of the church. It is for this reason that I would see the ministerial and lay leadership of the church being very intensely aware of this positive potential, as well as the negative potential. There is the

necessity of keeping balance if the church is to be the Church of Jesus Christ in its true greatness.

I would understand the Church as it appears in the Book of Acts, as well as Wesley Church now present in Dover, as having to also maintain the balance between an experience in Christ and an expression of that experience not only on a personal level but in community.

To this latter the church addressed itself powerfully in the eight-year ministry. Let me say at this point that there would have been no impact and there would have been no strong urge to serve and reach out if there had not been an initial experience in Christ. Therefore, I believe the church in the years 1970-1978 came alive in the sense of the presence of Jesus Christ; the membership was involved in growing, deepening spiritual experiences; a number of Bible study groups, prayer groups, sharing groups grew up during this period and provided the life-blood of the church and also brought to the worship experience the vitality of the experiences that had been taking place in these small groups.

The church, as a result of this power, moved into the community. There was an awareness in several areas: being at the center of the State Legislature and the City government, an awareness of potential and impact that had to do with the larger measure of the church's influence. There was also a deepening of relationship to Wesley College. There was a deep sense of community between Wesley Church and Wesley College as it relates to the student body, the staff, and the administrators of the College; their involvement was welcomed in the life of the Church. This was in many ways a new era—a recognition that in the college rested a great deal of potential for leadership in the Church; likewise the Church was welcomed into the college community and life not only through the ministerial staff but through lay person's involvement as well.

There were many efforts made to reach out into the community; A program for retarded children which already existed was greatly expanded to include sessions, not only on Thursday evening for recreation and community, but also the expanding of Church School classes.—A half-way house was established just south of Smyrna as a result of leadership that was provided from within Wesley Church. This half-way house oriented towards those moving from alcoholism back into the community. Over a period of years that project became more community oriented but the initial sensitivity and the recognition of need was present in the work area on Social Concerns in Wesley Church where it was given birth.—The establishing of a Clothing Closet which recycled hundreds of thousands of pieces of clothing back into the hands of needy persons was one of the joys that the church experienced in serving the community effectively. That clothing closet eventually was part of an Emergency Food and Fuel Fund which was established initially by twenty-five members of Wesley Church and the writer of this article (becoming eventually a community project with vast potential and impact, raising tens of thousands of dollars in cash and uncounted amounts of money in food that was distributed to needy families).

Community issues were constantly being addressed; the church was aware of its role to speak to the life as well as to dwell upon its deep spiritual roots. It was this kind of excitement that I felt in Wesley Church between 1970 and 1978. I doubt seriously that I will ever look back to a more, vital, growing, exciting experience than that which existed during those years. It provides an important link in the chain that strengthens all the links, that work their way back to the original Word spoken by Jesus Christ, calling the Church into being. The link that was provided during these years also enables the church

to build strong for the future. Wesley Church has a great mission and ministry; it has potential for a greater one.

As the church celebrates its 200th Anniversary, the preparations for which were made during the same period of time from 1970 to 1978, it is good to remember where we have come. It is good to know that God leads us to even greater potential and possibility.

One final sharing—Throughout my pastorate at Wesley Church I was privileged to have many strong persons working with me as the ministerial team, but the real strength of Wesley Church, or any other church, does not exist in who are the pastors; it was the objectives of my pastorate to develop within the church the deep sense of ministry on the part of all members—a deep sense of lay leadership. The church does not exist primarily because of the strength of any one individual but because of those who remain and are the church one year to the next bringing the witness to a deeper and deeper sense of reality. I would hope that the church would find itself more and more receiving the talents offered by lay persons; that is what the Church is all about.

# **WESLEY CHURCH CELEBRATES BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY IN 1978**

—by George C. Godfrey—(Pastor 1977-)

When I was assigned to Wesley Church in May 1977, the District Superintendent, William H. Revelle, Jr., said that a committee had planned a year's celebration. Under the leadership of Joseph Bellmeyer, Chairman, the members of the committee went to work on planning and writing for the Bicentennial Celebration beginning in January 1978. Committee members were: Joyce Geluz, Nancy Haines, George Wiltshire, Bryan Bailey, Everett Bryan, Caroline Budd, Yolande Thomas, Merrill Trader, James Hutchins, Grover Johnson, Paul Johnston, Catherine Pickens, Ruth Trader, and Rev. Allen Clark.

The first event of the year-long celebration was an organ recital by Robert Plimpton, director of music and fine arts at Bryn Mawr (Pa.) Presbyterian Church. Plimpton also accompanied the Philadelphia Oratorio Choir and served as head of the organ department at the Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts. His concert included works by Walther, Bach, and Buxtehude, and was very well received. I especially liked Mr. Plimpton's musical philosophy, which he stated as follows: "to draw closely together the artistic and spiritual concerns of the church today . . . to create for the church a music ministry which will bring strength, commitment, and participation to as wide a cross-section of people today as possible."

We recognize organists who have served in Wesley Church since 1902: Edna Cariss Anderson, 1902-1947; Edgar A. Barrell, Jr., 1947-1965; Thomas C. Flynn, 1965-1969; Thomas L. Mowbray, 1969-1970; and George F. Wiltshire, 1970 to the present.

On February 19, 1978 the Chapel Choir from Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey, under the direction of Robert Simpson, came to our 11 a.m. service of worship. It was Simpson who took an enthusiastic freshman class of about 110 strong and molded them into a unity with a youthful, yet highly professional, sound. It was truly the "Westminster sound" that filled our sanctuary, and the congregation responded with equal fervor. The selection that stirred our hearts was "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" as set to music by Gilbert Martin. The choir enjoyed a luncheon at Wesley College before heading back to Princeton.

Another musical event of the Bicentennial Celebration was a performance of the Brass Collegium Musicum, under the direction of Donald Banschbach. Composed of the Kent County Brass Ensemble, Kent County Trombone Choir, and the Delmarva Brass Teachers' Consort, the group provided performance experience in brass literature for high school and college students who reside in the Delmarva area.

Closely following the musical events, our own Bishop James K. Mathews, Bishop of the Washington Area of the United Methodist Church, preached a sermon on March 5, 1978. Bishop Mathews spoke of Wesley's important history and glorious past. The Chancel Choir offered special music, and Bishop and Mrs. Mathews were hosted by committee of laity and clergy at a luncheon.

The remarkable part of the program of the Bicentennial Celebration was the variety of speakers and musical events offered to the congregation. Our guest speaker on April 30 was Mrs. Cynthia Wedel, a past president of the World Council of Churches. She came from Washington, D. C. and shared extensively the need to be involved in the national and world scene as well as the local level.

At this point the writer changes to Joseph Bellmeyer.

One of the bicentennial highlights occurred on June 4, when an historical play was presented. This play, an original by Professor Lewis Wells of Wesley College and a long time member of Wesley Church, was acted out using our own people. The play began with the visit of Bishop Garrettsen to Dover to the current time. It was well received.

Then came the summer during which there were no bicentennial events.

To celebrate as close to the actual date September 12, (1778) as possible, we celebrated the 200th Anniversary on September 17, 1978. At this meeting, we had special music, a special speaker, and a display of memorabilia. Our special speaker was the Reverend Dr. William Holmes, Senior Minister, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist church, Washington, D. C., whose message was "When Backward Is Forward". The memorabilia was interesting to the members since there were even photographs so that many could see themselves in younger days.

Our next celebration was to attempt to bring all Kent County Methodists together at one location. While we didn't get everyone, we had almost 1,000 people for that service. One of the drawing events was the Choir comprising of singers from the following churches: Asbury United Methodist Church, Smyrna; Centennial United Methodist, Smyrna; Cheswold United Methodist, Cheswold; Ewell-St. Paul's, Clayton; Felton United Methodist, Felton; Hartly United Methodist, Hartly; Immanuel United Methodist, Cheswold; Magnolia United Methodist, Magnolia; Trinity United Methodist, Frederica; Whatcoat United Methodist, Camden; Whatcoat United Methodist, Dover; Wesley United Methodist, Dover; and Wyoming United Methodist, Wyoming. This effort was called The Massed Choir and the group has continued for several years since the celebration. Our special speaker was Dr. Woodie W. White, who in addition to serving as Executive Secretary on the General Commission on Religion and Race in Washington, D. C., also serves Hopkins United Methodist Church, Highland, Maryland. To get some idea of his prominence is to look at some of the work he has done in the World council of Churches as a member of a task force to examine racism and race relations in Australia and New Zealand. He has also participated in a preaching mission in South America.

Wesley Church has a large congregation and it's necessary to have two services each Sunday to accommodate its many members. It was felt that we certainly should have a service where all Wesley people could come together, so that the service was held in the Central Middle School Auditorium, Dover, Delaware. The second purpose for this particular service was to rededicate ourselves to Christ and to Methodism, particularly in Dover. To help us accomplish this rededication, Dr. Robert Parker, former President of Wesley College, was the speaker. The rededication message was as follows: "We have remembered and cherished 200 years of service. We see Wesley United Methodist Church as one expression of the love of Jesus Christ, and as a way to praise the glory of God. We proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all humankind. Renew and challenge our members to a deeper involvement with God. This is our strength and our guidance. In the name of the Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit. Amen.”

It was a banner year. Now Wesley Church is working on its 300th year and, no doubt, will be able to have an even better celebration in the year 2078.



## ADDENDA

1. Methodist Burial Grounds
2. Stained Glass Windows
3. Camp Meeting
4. Ministers Who Have Served At Wesley Church,  
Dover, Delaware
5. "When The Bell Rang Out"

### *Methodist Burial Grounds*

The old cemetery on North and Queen Streets is associated with the rich heritage of Wesley Church. It consists of three parcels of land: the first, acquired, June 1, 1782; the second, acquired June 23, 1823; and, the third, acquired May 28, 1852. The deed of 1782 contained the names of James Dunning, Thomas Stevenson, Samuel Harrington, Isaac Crouch, and John Smith, who represented the members of the society called Methodists, and provided for the purchase of one-half acre of land from Vincent Loockerman "in consideration of the sum of five shillings." The deed further provided that the land be used for "the purpose of building a preaching house or chapel thereon for the use of the Methodist Preachers and the friendly Clergy of the Church of England." The deed further required of the trustees that they "shall from time to time permit such persons as shall be appointed to the yearly conference of the people called Methodists held in America to preach and expound God's Holy Word and no other." Such persons may "continue to have and enjoy the premises for the aforesaid purposes, provided always that the person preach no other Doctrine than is contained in the Reverend John Wesley's notes upon the New Testament and four Volumes of Sermons."

The second acquisition of land to the old cemetery on North and Queen Streets was made in 1823. According to Walter Powell, "John Manlove, as agent for the congregation of Wesley Church, Dover, paid Thomas Bradford and his wife sixty dollars for the use of an additional strip of ground to the site and burial ground." The second parcel consisting of about one-half acre, was apparently willed to Wesley Church.

The third parcel of ground, consisting of about one and one-half acres, was acquired by the trustees of Wesley Church from Ezekiel Lincoln and his wife and James Heverin and his wife in 1852. With the third acquisition of land, the present size of the old Methodist cemetery is about two and one-half acres. The deed of 1782 is located in the Office of Recorder of Deeds, Kent County: Volume D, Number 4, page 82; the deed of 1852 is in the same location, Volume I, Number 2, page 193.

Among those prominent in the history of Wesley Church to be buried in the old cemetery was Bishop Richard Whatcoat, who died in the home of Judge Richard Bassett in Dover, 1806. The trustees of Wesley Church requested Reverend P. W. Chandler, Presiding Elder of the Dover Circuit, to grant permission to bury the remains of Bishop Whatcoat under the altar of Wesley

Chapel. In 1855 a monument was erected to the Bishop's memory. After the erection of the monument, the tombstone over the Bishop's grave was removed and imbedded in the wall of the vestibule of Wesley Church on State Street.

Other ministers buried in the old graveyard included the following: Reverend Ezekiel Cooper, who died in 1862; Reverend William Fletcher Talbott, who died in 1903; and Reverend John Wiltbank.

Other prominent members of Wesley Church in the old graveyard included: Cornelius P. Comegys, Governor of Delaware from 1837 to 1841, who died in 1851; Gove Saulsbury, Governor of Delaware from 1863 to 1871, who died in 1881; and Nathaniel B. Smithers, elected to the United States Congress in 1863, who died in 1896.

The Lakeside Cemetery is the more recent of the two cemeteries and was purchased by the Wesley Church from Thomas Bradford on October 2, 1869, at a cost of \$1,281.50. The parcel of land contains five and one-quarter acres and is located on the east side of State Street, south of Silver Lake. The deed is recorded in the Office of Recorder of Deeds, Kent County, Book H, Volume 5, page 244.

Concerning the Lakeside Cemetery, the Board of Trustees adopted on June 7, 1875, the following resolution:

"This cemetery shall be known as the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Cemetery . . . belonging to the Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in Dover, to be used for burial purposes only, to be controlled by the Trustees of said Church."

The resolution further provided that the ground was to be laid out into lots and the purchasers were to receive a certificate of sale, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Board of Trustees, with the seal of the church attached. The Secretary was to keep a record of all lots sold, stating the name of the purchaser, the date of sale, the price paid, the section and the number of the lot marked on the plot. The Secretary was to keep a record of all interments, stating the names and ages of the persons and the dates of interment.

The price of the lots in 1875 was two dollars per grave, 4 feet by 8 feet. No lot was to be sold with dimensions smaller than 8 feet by 16 feet, containing space for four graves.

An additional parcel of land was added to the Lakeside Cemetery, November 3, 1891, with the purchase by Wesley Church of six acres of ground south of and adjoining the original purchase. This addition was purchased from William G. Hazel and Caleb X. Pannewill at a price of \$1,300. The deed is recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Kent County, Book I, Volume 7, page 160.

Additional information concerning the Lakeside Cemetery are mentioned in chronological order as follows. In 1893, the Trustees built a home on the north side of Monroe Street for the use of the sexton. In 1915, the price of graveyard lots, 8 feet by 16 feet, was set at \$50. In 1922, the price was raised to \$75, of which \$25 was for current expenses and \$50 was for endowment. In 1940, the treasurer's report indicated that cemetery funds consisted of \$71,000 for endowment and \$21,000 for current expenses.

## *Stained Glass Windows*

The stained glass windows at Wesley Church are works of art, enhancing the appearance of the building structure and providing pictures symbolizing the Christian faith, as noted in the Scriptures and as discovered in early Christian history.

Christian symbolism originated centuries ago as a secret language, where early Christians, being persecuted, had to worship in secret. Symbolism continued through the ages as churches and cathedrals were built. Symbolic designs were created in windows, paintings, mosaics, and carvings as reminders of religious doctrines and scriptural verses for Christians, most of whom could not read.

Stained glass windows contain various Christian symbols. In a number of windows the Madonna lily appears, symbolic of Easter and immortality. The lily signifies the virginity of Mary, the Annunciation, purity, and innocence. The cross and crown symbolize the death and victory over death of our Lord, and the reward of the faithful in everlasting life.

There are a total of 19 stained glass windows in Wesley Church. Five of the total are in the front of the church, facing State Street. The remaining 14 windows are in the Sanctuary, seven on the north side and seven on the south side. The windows apparently were installed in 1897, when the Sanctuary was rebuilt.

Eight of the nineteen windows have been created "memorial" windows by official church action between 1897 and 1910. On the south side of the Sanctuary, the three memorial windows honor the memories of: Charles Wharton, born 1813 and died 1883; Reverend James Bateman, Jr., circuit preacher, 1806, and preacher in charge, 1826; Mrs. Caroline H. Stevenson, born 1836, choir leader 1862-1888, died 1888. On the north side of the Sanctuary, the five memorial windows honor the memories of: James M. Kerbin, born 1813 and died 1900; Edwin Morris Stevenson, born 1834 and died 1894, a trustee for 28 years; Mary Elizabeth Jump Cannon, born 1839 and died 1893; William Thomas Kellum, born 1837 and died 1891; Wilson Lee Cannon, born 1817 and died 1905, a trustee for 30 years.

The magnificent circular window, rising above the church balcony, faces State Street. From inside the church sanctuary, the afternoon sun provides a dazzling, brilliant stream of light from the window into the church. Within this circular window the cross and crown are in the center of a quatrefoil, of which the four petals are suggestive of the fleur-de-lis.

On the south side of the Sanctuary are to be found three memorial windows. One depicts the lyre, symbol for music; another depicts Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the third depicts an open Bible, signifying "the Word of God."

On the north side of the Sanctuary, in one of the memorial windows, is found the symbol of anchor and crown. The anchor is one of the earliest symbols and was found in the catacombs of Rome. The disguised cross symbolizes hope in Jesus Christ.

Another memorial window on the north side of the Sanctuary depicts Jesus and the woman at the well. Other memorial windows on the north side of the Sanctuary present Christ as the resurrection and the life, and the cross and crown symbolizing the death and victory over death.

Finally, another beautiful memorial window, located on the north side of the Sanctuary, is visible only from the chancel area and front pews. It was designed from Holman Hunt's painting, entitled, "The Light of the World," of

which there are two originals, one in Keble College, Oxford, England, and the other in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The scriptural reference for Hunt's masterpiece says: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me." Hunt's picture is spoken of by John Ruskin as "one of the very noblest works of sacred art ever produced." This painting has been described as "a mystery of color and a blending of light and shade that move the soul to devotion and worship." The picture portrays the moment when human destiny hangs in the balance, when Divine Love patiently waits upon human reluctance. Hunt portrays the door of the human heart barred with nails and rusty hinges. Jesus is shown approaching in the nighttime, garbed as a prophet, priest, and king. The white robe denotes His prophetic office, the breastplate His priesthood, and the crown of gold intertwined with thorns proclaims His royalty. Jesus carries a lantern in His hand, representing the light of conscience and revealing sin. From the radiance of the fire, the illumination of Jesus' face proclaims the hope of salvation. His expression is as appealing as the tenderness of God. Thus, "He stands at the door of each and every man's heart, asking admittance."

## Camp Meeting

The camp meeting was an important part of the life of early Methodists on the Peninsula. People from a large surrounding area would gather in a grove for religious services and socialize for a period of one or two weeks. One of those groves was located on the east side of the road just north of Camden on the way to Dover (a short distance south of the present Rodney Village Shopping Center. One street in the development now there is Asbury Avenue, reminiscent of the former use of the land.)

An article in *The Peninsula Methodist* of August 31, 1895, relates that after a particularly successful meeting in this "beautiful grove" in 1857, the Rev. Charles I. Thompson, a native of Cambridge, Md., but then stationed in Philadelphia, suggested purchasing that land and organizing an association of churches to hold an annual camp meeting there. An organization was completed in August 1858 and "\$2,522 were paid on account of the enterprise". According to Dr. Ezekial Dawson, the quarterly conferences of the charges elected the following trustees: "Isaac Jump, M. D. and Samuel D. McGonigal, for Dover; Edward Lord, Ezekial Dawson, W. D. and Charles W. Wharton, for Camden; Richboll Allibone, for Willow Grove; and Clement L. Clark for the Philadelphia churches." The Camden Union Camp Ground for M. E. Churches of Delaware and Philadelphia was incorporated by "act of the Dover Legislature" in 1859. Churches in Philadelphia and Wilmington were represented in the management and had "large company tents" on the grounds.

After the Civil War, the Philadelphia churches ceased to be represented and in 1879 the charter was renewed, providing for a board of 9 trustees and 18 managers, of which the pastors of *Dover*, Camden, Wyoming, and Magnolia were members ex-officio. In 1905, the land was deeded to the Camden Union Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dr. Dawson wrote: "This was one of the earliest of camp-meeting parks set apart and dedicated as church property for perpetual use for holding camp-meetings; Ocean Grove and other places subsequently following this example."

An 1895 article states, "On this ground many of the greatest and most distinguished preachers in this connection have preached the blessed gospel". In the years of the present writer's childhood, the camp meeting was still a big event, most of the churches in the local area closed (usually the pastor's only vacation period), and the people had an opportunity to hear some of the best preachers and musicians. The Sunday School records of Wesley Church, available over a period of years, show the school closed for two Sundays each summer because of Camp Meeting. However, in 1896 a report from "A Member" to the Peninsula Methodist concerning Wesley Church stated, "Services have been held in our church every Sunday during the summer, and fair sized audiences have been present." The pastor, Dr. Avery, had been granted three weeks vacation and had joined his family in Rehoboth. "Our week day services still continue, and are well attended. During warm weather union class meetings have been held on Wednesday evenings and the regular prayer service Friday evenings."

# *Ministers Who Have Served Wesley Church, Dover*

Organized in 1778

Francis Asbury, Caleb B. Pedicord, Freeborn Garrettson, Louis Alfree,  
Micajah Debruled—1779

Caleb B. Pedicord—1780

William Gill, John Coleman, Lee Roy Cole, John Tunnell—1781

William Glendenning, George Kimble—1783

Nelson Reed, Adam Cloud—1784

Samuel Dudley, Joseph Wyatt—1785

Ira Ellis, George Moir—1786

Jacob Brush, Aaron Hutchinson—1787

George Moore, Benton Riggan—1788

Jacob Brush—1789

Christopher Spry, Fredus Alderidge—1790

Thomas Foster, Evan Rogers—1791

Walter Fountain, George Pickering—1792

John Milburn, William Page—1793

John Milburn—1794

William Hunter, J. Jewell, William Jessop—1795

Thomas Jackson, Joseph Whitby—1798

Daniel Crouch, Nathan Swain—1799

Archibald Foster, Luther Taylor—1800

William Bishop, Leorner Blackman—1801

T. Smith, T. Dodson, William Earle—1802

William Hunter, Jessie Justice, T. Walter—1803

Ephraim Chambers, Edward Larkins—1804

Richard Lyons, John Ruth—1805

Henry Boehm, James Bateman—1806

Joseph Aydelott, Abraham Dawson—1807

Henry White, George Sheets—1808

Thomas Walker, John Kimberdin—1809

John Sharpley, Stephen Martindale—1810

Arva Melvin, William Leonard—1811

Asa Smith, Manning Force—1812  
William Bishop, Samuel P. Levis—1813  
James Ridgeway, William Lummis—1814  
James Ridgeway, William Ryder—1815  
James Moore, Daniel Fidler—1816  
Charles Reed, James Polhemus—1817  
Charles Reed, Thomas Miller—1818  
Thomas Miller, John Collins—1819  
William Ryder, Joseph Osborne—1820  
Alward White, William Torbert—1821  
William Torbert, Jesse Thompson—1822  
John Smith, Edward Stevenson—1823  
Solomon Higgins, Philip Dixon—1824  
Solomon Higgins, John Ludenham—1825  
James Bateman, Walter B. Jones—1826  
James Bateman, Levi Scott—1827  
Daniel Lambdin, William Ryder—1828  
William Bishop, Samuel McElwee—1829-1830  
Solomon Sharp, S. D. Jones—1831  
Solomon Sharp, T. Hickey—1832  
William Barnes, J. F. Crouch—1833  
William Barnes, M. Jerman—1834  
J. Buckley—1835  
J. H. McFarland—1836  
Eliphalet Reed—1837  
Eliphalet Reed, J. Mason—1838  
L. Storks, B. F. Price—1839  
Joshua Humphreys, Henry S. Atmore—1840  
Joshua Humphreys, M. D. Kurtz—1841  
Ignatius Cooper, W. L. Gray—1842  
I. T. Cooper, J. D. Long—1843  
E. R. Williams, E. Cooper—1844-1845  
H. Sutton, J. R. Anderson—1846  
H. Sutton, S. G. Hare—1847  
James Allen, E. G. Asay—1848  
G. D. Carrow, William Merrill—1849

E. D. Carrow, C. I. Thompson—1850  
J. T. Hazzard, C. I. Thompson—1851  
J. T. Hazzard, T. B. Miller—1852  
H. E. Gilroy, R. W. Todd—1853  
H. E. Gilroy, H. T. Jones—1854  
C. Karsner—1855-1856  
W. C. Robinson—1857-1858  
Charles Cook—1859  
Charles Cook, E. F. Cooper—1860  
J. D. Curtis—1861-1862  
T. J. Thompson—1863-1864  
Henry Colclazer—1865-1867  
J. H. Lightbourne—1868-1870  
James B. Merritt—1871-1872  
G. D. Watson—1873-1874  
J. H. Caldwell—1875-1877  
W. P. Davis—1878-1880  
J. H. Caldwell—1881-1883  
Vaughn Collins—1883  
T. E. Martindale—1884-1886  
D. McFaul—1887  
I. N. Foreman—1888  
T. E. Terry—1889-1891  
William L. S. Murray—1892-1895  
E. E. Avery—1896  
Alfred Smith—1897-1901  
L. E. Barrett—1902-1906  
Albert W. Lightburn—1907-1908  
Edwin L. Hoffecker—1909  
William L. White—1910-1913  
Walter E. Gunby—1914-1917  
James W. Colona—1916-1922  
Leonard White—1923-1925  
E. W. Jones—1926-1927  
Milton S. Andrews—1929-1932  
Essel P. Thomas—1933-1935



Earl M. Shockley—1936-1940

Marion W. Marine—1941-1943

C. Stanley Lowell—1944-1948

John A. Trader—1949-1962

Associates: Edward R. Wilkins and Jackson Robinson

William Hemphill, Jr.—1962-1969

Associates: Hubert Jicha, William Smith, Frederick Seyfert

Robert P. Whitlock—1970-1976

Associates: Frederick Seyfert, Robert W. Starrett, Hartwell F. Chandler,  
Dale R. Pruett, Carolyn R. Swift

George C. Godfrey—1977-

Associates: Dale R. Pruett, Carolyn R. Swift, Hartwell F. Chandler, Frank  
Tulak (1981)

## *When The Bell Rang Out*

"The day workmen removed the old bell from the belfrey of Wesley Church was the end of an era. Now, of course, we are all aware of the fact that no one had heard Wesley's bell toll for several years. But it was not always that way.

"In early 1850, talk of a new church building began to be heard. Later that year, construction began at the South State Street location using brick salvaged from an old building nearby. Brick in those days was sometimes brought to the Dover area as ballast via sailing ships from England. The cornerstone was laid in September and the building was finally dedicated on February 9th of the following year.

"Someone got the idea that the new church should have a bell. After considerable discussion the Trustees authorized a new bell to be cast at the A. McNeely & Son Foundry in West Troy, New York. The bell bears the year 1851. It was a long haul to bring a bell from the foundry up on the Hudson River to Dover. But one day it arrived and was hoisted to the peak of the new church. A belfry was built around the bell and a heavy rope fastened to the wheel.

"The following Sabbath the janitor rang the new bell. How it did ring out! One could hear it everywhere. And when it called people to the worship services, farmer and town folk hitched up the buggy and headed to the new Methodist Church.

"Wesley's bell became a symbol in Old Dover. It rang for other important occasions as well as worship. It tolled in memory of Bishop Whatecoat when he was interred in the new grave in the old Wesley Cemetery, and (his church, together with the Philadelphia Annual Conference, erected a large monument to his sacred memory. It rang when Dover boys were enlisted in the Union Blue. It rang loud when the sound of musketry ceased. Again it tolled for the boys of the Spanish-American and World Wars I & II. It rang out for victory and glory to God. And as it pealed across the meadow and town watching over the heirs of God and liberty, it seemed to say, 'God lives! All is well. Worship Him!'

"The old bell, which for 120 years rang out from the belfrey of Wesley Church, is stilled now. It was taken down to make way for the new steeple and placed on the grass beside the sanctuary. The Methodist Men will soon clean up the old bell and house it permanently nearby. A part of Dover history is being preserved to remind the community of the witness of faith that has rung from bell tower and pulpit at Wesley for over a century. It also is a reminder to each of us that Wesley is to continue to be heard in the midst of life in this state's capital city."

(This was contributed by Mrs. William (Ann) Holden from her scrapbook.)



Wesley Church 1982 Sketched by Gerron Hite