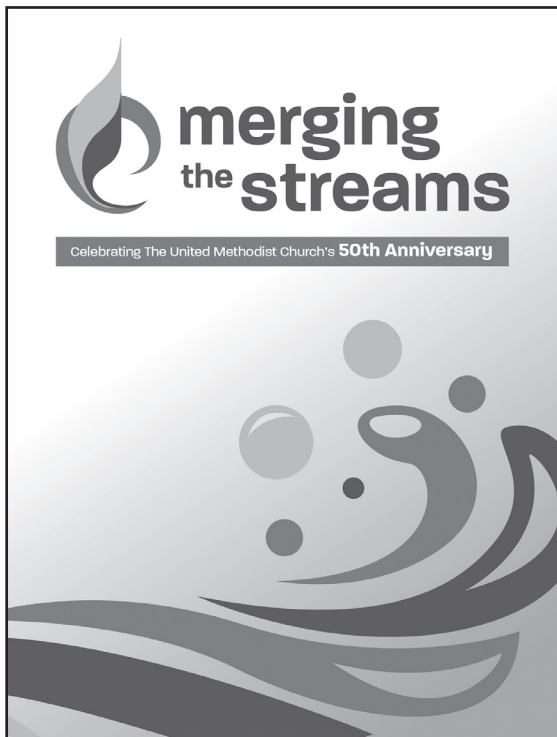


METHODIST HISTORY

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LOGO FOR THE "MERGING THE STREAMS" HISTORICAL CONVOCATION
CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UMC



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Cover: The cover image is the logo for the “Merging the Streams” Historical Convocation celebrating the 50th anniversary of the UMC. Held July 9–12, 2018 at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, the theme of the event was “Pietism, Transatlantic Revivalism, and the EUB Legacy in United Methodism.”

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METHODIST HISTORY

Alfred T. Day III, Editor
Luther Oconer, Guest Editor

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Editor: METHODIST HISTORY, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940. Prospective authors are
advised to write for guidelines or visit www.gcqh.org.

CONTRIBUTORS

J. STEVEN O'MALLEY is the John T. Seamands Professor of Methodist Holiness History at Asbury Theological Seminary. An ordained minister in The United Methodist Church, he has earned recognition for his research and publications in post-Reformation and modern Church history, with special emphasis upon Pietism, German-American evangelicalism, and the Holiness movement. He is the author of numerous works and is noted for *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins* (1973).

RUSSELL E. RICHEY is Research Fellow of the Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition at Duke Divinity School, Dean Emeritus of Candler School of Theology and William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus, Emory University. He served from 2000–2006 as Candler's dean. He previously held academic and administrative posts at Duke Divinity School, 1986–2000, and Drew University, 1969–1986. One of the two editors of the *Methodist Review*, he writes on denominationalism, civil religion, and American Methodism; most recently *Formation for Ministry in American Methodism* (2014) and *Methodism in the American Forest* (2015).

SCOTT T. KISKER is an elder in the Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Professor of Church History and Associate Dean for Masters Programs at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. He earned a B.A. from Swarthmore College, an M.Div. from Duke Divinity School, and a Ph.D. from Drew University. His books include *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community* (with Kevin Watson, 2017); *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Community* (with Elaine Heath, 2010); *Mainline or Methodist?: Rediscovering Our Evangelistic Mission* (2008); and *Foundation for Revival: Anthony Horneck, The Religious Societies, and the Construction of an Anglican Pietism* (2007).

JENNIFER WOODRUFF TAIT is the Managing Editor of *Christian History* magazine and the Editor-in-Chief of *Theological Librarianship*. She is the author of *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (2011), which won awards from both the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church. She is a graduate of two Methodist-related institutions, Duke University (Ph.D.) and Asbury Theological Seminary (M.Div.), as well as holding an M.S. in library science from the University of Illinois. Formerly a United Methodist clergyperson, she is now a supply priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Lexington.

WENDY DEICHMANN is Professor of History and Theology at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, and a clergy member of the Upper New York Conference of The United Methodist Church. She has also taught at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio and Colgate Rochester Crozer Theological Seminary in New York. She earned her Ph.D. in Theological and Religious Studies at Drew University and is a John Wesley Fellow. She is co-editor, with Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, of *Gender and the Social Gospel* (2003), and has published numerous chapters and articles on the history of Christianity in the United States, including several on the history of American Methodism.

PATRICIA THOMPSON is a retired elder in the New England Conference currently serving as a quarter-time pastor for administration and local church historian for the Wolcott United Methodist Church in Vermont. She is also the Historian for the New England Conference and Editor of *Historian's Digest*, the quarterly newsletter of the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church. She is the author of *The History of Maine Methodism Through the Women's Sphere* (1984) and *Courageous Past, Bold Future: The Journey Toward Full Clergy Rights for Women in the United Methodist Church* (2006); as well as several local church histories.

IAN B. STRAKER is a clergy member of the New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. He earned a B.A. in Afro-American Studies at Yale University and an M.Div. from the Yale Divinity School. He pastored churches in New York before beginning doctoral studies in American Religious History in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. He is currently completing a full length biography of the early Methodist Circuit Rider, Freeborn Garrettson.

TED CAMPBELL was educated at Lon Morris College, the University of North Texas, Oxford University, and Southern Methodist University. He has served as pastor of United Methodist congregations, and has taught at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Duke Divinity School, and Wesley Theological Seminary. He served as president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary from 2001 through 2005, and now serves as Professor of Church History at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. His published works include *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity* (1991), *The Religion of the Heart* (1991), *Christian Confessions* (1996), *Methodist Doctrine* (1999), *Christian Mysteries* (2005), *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy* co-edited with Kenneth G. C. Newport (2007), *The Gospel in Christian Traditions* (2009), and *Wesleyan Beliefs* (2010). In 2015 his edition of the letters of John Wesley between 1756 and 1765 was published, as was *The Sky is Falling, The Church Is Dying, and Other False Alarms*. His most recent book is *Encoding Methodism: Telling and Retelling Narratives of Wesleyan Origins* (2017).

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

On April 23, 1968, Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Bishop Reuben H. Mueller and Methodist Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas, declaring, "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church." With a combined membership of eleven million members, the newly-formed United Methodist Church (UMC) became the largest Protestant denomination in North America. The event was a bright spot in what was otherwise a tumultuous year in American history; nineteen days prior, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, and six weeks later Senator Robert Kennedy would meet a similar fate in Los Angeles. Racial tensions ran high, and the country was embroiled in an unpopular war in Vietnam. Despite the enthusiasm that accompanied the Dallas gathering, the union left former EUB and Methodist congregations and conferences grappling with the monumental task of consolidating their mission, personnel, and resources. The EUBs, in particular, expressed anxiety over being swallowed up by the Methodists, who were fourteen times bigger than them.

Fast-forward fifty years later, the fears expressed by EUBs in 1968 have turned out to be not unfounded. Institutions that have been a source of pride for them have long since disappeared. Many former EUB churches barely reflect their rich Evangelical or United Brethren (UB) past. Nevertheless, people's interest on the once fledging EUB tradition has not been entirely muted. This interest was demonstrated recently at the "Merging the Streams" Historical Convocation, when over a hundred historians, archivists, pastors, and lay leaders gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the UMC. Held on July 9–12, 2018, at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, the theme of the event was "Pietism, Transatlantic Revivalism, and the EUB Legacy in United Methodism." The four-day gathering celebrated the legacy of the EUB tradition and the ways by which it shaped United Methodist identity. Important motifs were explored to discern this legacy, namely, the merging streams of Pietism, revivalism, ecumenism, and egalitarianism that have been deeply embedded in the DNA of the EUB tradition. Consequently, in addition to the heart-religion aspects of EUB history, the Merging the Streams Convocation also recognized the ways by which the EUB tradition enlarged the spheres of women and promoted racial inclusion and healing; two highly engaging plenaries were dedicated to these two themes.

It is, therefore, with great pleasure that we present this special double issue of *Methodist History* featuring eight (out of the eleven) keynote addresses presented during the convocation which enable us not only to gaze into

the past but also look forward into the future. The first article, by J. Steven O'Malley, "Merging the Streams: Pietism and Transatlantic Revival in the Colonial Era and the Birth of the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ," focuses on the Pietist and German revivalist roots of the EUB and how the confluence of the "breadth" and "depth" theological dimensions of Pietism gave rise to it.

From O'Malley's EUB prehistory, we then shift to early UB history in the United States through Russell Richey's "Repairing Episcopacy by Tracking that of Bishop Christian Newcomer." In this article, Richey probes the episcopal leadership of the pioneering UB bishop as a model worth emulating by our leaders today. Another UB bishop was the focus of a paper by Scott Kisker, "Unpopular Religion: Bishop Milton Wright and the United Brethren Schism of 1889," which looks into the life and ministry of Bishop Wright and the issues and circumstances that led him to lead a splinter UB denomination in 1889. It is worth mentioning that some aspects of Kisker's account around the split bear some uncanny resemblance to the current impasse in the UMC surrounding same-sex marriage and ordination of LGBTQ clergy. After looking into a controversial era in UB history, we shift our attention to another moralizing tendency within the EUB tradition in Jennifer Woodruff Tait's "The Other Temperance Churches: The Evangelical United Brethren Tradition and Alcohol," which explores the contributions of the Evangelicals and UBs to the temperance movement.

After focusing on the revival roots of the EUB as well as its implications, we then turn our attention to studies highlighting egalitarian impulses and some reflections on the merger of 1968. We first begin with EUB women in ministry. Wendy Deichmann's "'If God Calls, Dare We Falter?': The Strategic Founding and Independence of the Woman's Missionary Association of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, 1869–1877," provides a window for discerning the struggles and triumphs of UB women to contribute significantly to the mission of the church. Deichmann's article is followed by "Maintaining the Tradition: The Ordination of Women in the Evangelical United Brethren Church—What Really Happened?" by Patricia Thompson who sheds light on women's ordination in the EUB Church after its formation in 1946 and prior to the merger of 1968.

From EUB women, we shift our attention to racial inclusion via Ian Straker's "Non-Merging Streams: The Continuing Problem of Race in American Methodism." While Straker's article does not directly deal with EUB history, he provides a stark reminder that despite the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction, made possible by the merger of 1968, we still have a long way to go in healing the racial divide in the UMC. Lastly, Ted Campbell's "The United Methodist Church Union Fifty Years Later: The Abiding Problems of a Modernist Vision of Union" traces our current predicament in the UMC as arising from the Modernist vision of union inherent in the merger of 1968. Campbell also advocates the formation of connectional conferences designed to carry on the traditions of the UMC in new situations and new contexts instead of the currently proposed options oriented entirely

around sexuality issues.

We are grateful to all our presenters, including those whose papers are not featured in this issue. Also, we acknowledge the sponsoring organizations that made *Merging the Streams* possible. These are the Historical Society of the UMC, the North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History, the General Commission on Archives and History, the West Ohio Commission on Archives and History, and the Center for Evangelical United Brethren Heritage at United Theological Seminary. I am also deeply indebted to Rev. Alfred T. Day for the opportunity to serve as guest editor and represent the Center for Evangelical United Brethren Heritage at United Theological Seminary in this special issue.

Luther Jeremiah Oconer
Associate Professor of United Methodist Studies
Director of the Center for Evangelical United Brethren Heritage
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio