THE DELAWARE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH
1864-1965

By William C. Jason, Jr.

This paper is not strictly a history of the Delaware Annual Conference. It is rather an appreciative article on the Conference by one who had firsthand knowledge of many of its leaders, and its work during more than one-half of its 101 years as an organized body. Much of the factual information in this paper comes from the Conference Journals and from miscellaneous data preserved by my father during his years as an itinerant preacher and as president of Delaware State College.

The Delaware Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1864 under a directive of the General Conference of that year which designated the name, the boundaries, and the qualifications for membership. The resolution allowed the "bishop to organize into one or more annual conferences such colored local elders as have traveled two or more years under a presiding elder, and shall be recommended by a quarterly conference, and by at least ten elders who are members of an annual conference." (Jour. 1864, p. 263) On July 28, Bishop Edmund S. Janes met the twenty-seven colored preachers who had been traveling within the bounds of the Philadelphia and New Jersey Annual Conferences in little, unattractive John Wesley Chapel (now Tindleý Temple) in South Philadelphia. The following day, the Bishop having found ten preachers eligible, declared them to be the Delaware Annual Conference.¹

The Delaware Conference was small and its geographical area was limited. It should be understood that the main reason for the organization of the Conference and its continuation for a century was race. Let us consider the situation which led up to the formation of the Delaware Conference.

The Methodist movement as founded and directed by John Wesley was, from one point of view, an attempt to recall the church to its duty of taking its message and its ministry to people whoever and wherever they were. It has been well said that John Wesley discovered the poor.

¹ In the order of the number of years served, the charter members of the Delaware Conference were:

Isaac Hinson
James Davis
Harrison Smith
Isaiah Broughton
John G. Manluff
Samuel Dale
Wilmore S. Elsey
Jehu H. Pierce
Nathan Young
Joshua Brinkley
When Methodism came to America the land was not churchless. The Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational, Quaker, and Roman Catholic churches were here at work among the people. Their ministry, however, was almost exclusively to white people, though there were Negroes in America, both slave and free, at the time. Some supporters of slavery regarded the Negro as a soulless, unteachable brute whom God had decreed to be perpetually enslaved.

Between 1766 and 1784, the British Methodist preachers who came to America sought to save souls regardless of color. It may have been by accident that Philip Embury preached to a little Negro girl in New York. But it was by design that Captain Thomas Webb, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, and Thomas Rankin sought Negroes as worthy of salvation and enrolled them as members in the Methodist societies. The Negroes understood the gospel story of Jesus when they heard it, and they believed it. Furthermore, they understood and believed in the equality which the Methodist evangelists preached.

It should be remembered that aside from Captain Webb, Judge Philip Barratt, and a few other well-to-do people, Methodism at the outset appealed mainly to the poor in America. Therefore contributions for the support of the Methodist movement came mainly from the poor. From what he knew about Negroes in the societies in early American Methodism, my own father believed that some of them gave money for the building of Methodist churches in that period.

The Methodist preaching of salvation and freedom for all was in keeping with the desire of the people for political independence, and it was in harmony with Quakerism's opposition to slavery. Pennsylvania abolished slavery in 1780, and New Jersey did away with it by 1830 under a statute passed in 1804. Thereafter "cities of refuge" sprang up in southern New Jersey for runaway slaves who were sufficiently defiant, once they had crossed the Delaware River, to remain and not make the long trek to Canada. The Methodist opposition to slavery encouraged many poor whites to help runaway slaves in their bid for freedom. Scores of fugitive slave advertisements noted that the runaway was a Methodist, had gone off with Methodists, or had been taught by Methodists. Some of the advertisements said that the fugitives were Methodist preachers.

It is worthy of note that when Freeborn Garrettson, born and reared at the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, became a Methodist preacher, he freed his slaves. He preached against slavery, though it is claimed that his preaching was such that it tickled the ear of the slaveholder while kindling the hope of freedom in the breast of the slave.

2 Of the 698,000 slaves in the United States in 1790, some 405,000 were in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. It is estimated that there were about one-tenth as many free Negroes as slaves in the land at that time.
Francis Asbury, the one British Methodist preacher who remained in America during the Revolution, made use of Black Harry Hosier as a preacher. Whether Asbury looked on Hosier as primarily a dispenser of the word or as his man Friday, I do not know. But Thomas Coke, Freeborn Garrettson, Jesse Lee, and Asbury himself all said that Hosier did much good for Methodism as a strong preacher to both blacks and whites. In November, 1784, Coke, after his first meeting with Asbury, went forth from Barratt's Chapel with “Black Harry” as his guide, bodyguard, and contact man. Thus prior to the Christmas Conference, Hosier accompanied Coke on a preaching tour during which they visited some thirty Methodist societies in Delaware and Maryland. Those societies had both white and Negro members on their rolls.

Coke's opposition to slavery probably influenced the Christmas Conference to take a stand against the institution. In 1785, his vehement preaching on the subject roused opposition to him and brought on one or two near fist fights. While Francis Asbury was opposed to slavery, he was less severe than Coke in publicly condemning it. American Methodists gave little heed to John Wesley's great tract entitled “Thoughts on Slavery,” an indication of how a civil order which tolerated slavery could tone down the moral convictions of church members who were a part of that order.

Strained relations between the colored and white Methodists in Philadelphia brought about the complete withdrawal of Bethel Church in 1816 to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Because they felt oppressed by caste prejudice and were deprived of church privileges, Negroes in New York City organized the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1820. For similar reasons Zoar withdrew as a society from St. George's Church in Philadelphia in 1794, Ezion from Asbury in Wilmington in 1805, and Whatcoat from Wesley in Dover in 1852. Thus Negroes were protesting discrimination in the church. That many of their race joined in the protest to the point of total severance is evidenced by the fact that the ratio of Negro to white membership in Methodism declined. In 1805, there was one Negro to two whites; in 1828 it was one to three and one-half; and by 1836 it was one to five. The Negroes withdrew because the Methodist Episcopal Church departed from its original stand against slavery and because the church was unwilling to grant Negro preachers the noble status of the itineracy.

The Negroes who withdrew completely from the Methodist Episcopal Church said in effect, “We quit.” Those who remained in the church as separate Negro societies said in so many words, “Our faith and our prayers together will be sufficient to bring Methodism back to its former righteous way.”

The Philadelphia Conference was the overlord of the entire
area within which the Delaware Conference functioned when it was organized. The condition of Negro church members considered state by state was not uniform. By 1830 slavery was gone from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In Delaware slavery was half gone. By that statement I mean that above the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, the Pennsylvania-New Jersey influence supplied an anti-slavery sentiment, and the economy became commercial and industrial to a degree that made slavery unprofitable. South of the canal the situation was different; below Laurel, plantation slavery held sway.

The Negro Methodist societies in the southern part of Delaware were policed and in effect held captive. It is claimed that one white slaveholder in that region wanted his Negroes to have the benefits of religion, even though he carefully supervised their worship services. Assembling his slaves for preaching, he would take his seat by the door. If the preacher's sermon began to touch on freedom or equality, the stern master would shout, "Buck, sing!" When the other slaves joined in the singing, the preacher's sermon was ended.

The infamous Patty Cannon kidnapping activities took place on the Delaware-Maryland border. The kidnappers operated as far north as Philadelphia, taking many free Negroes and reselling them into slavery. At the same time Quakers and many sincere Methodists were operating the underground railroad by which they made it possible for slaves to escape to freedom in the North. Abolition sentiment began to rise in the North, but at first the Philadelphia Conference and the General Conference were strongly opposed to it.

In centering our attention on the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery in 1844, we sometimes forget that preachers like Orange Scott, Luther Lee, Cyrus Prindle, and Lucius C. Matlack withdrew from the church because it tolerated slavery. Matlack was especially sympathetic with and helpful to the Negro Methodists in the area covered by the Delaware Conference. During the 1860's

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3 Bishop Levi Scott in an address March 20, 1876, made reference to the action of the Philadelphia Conference in 1838 which kept an otherwise acceptable preacher from becoming a member because he favored abolition. James M. Buckley, History of Methodism, Vol. II, p. 5, says this action was taken against Lucius C. Matlack. After working with the Wesleyan Methodist Movement, which was organized in 1843, serving as a chaplain in the United States Army and as a cavalry officer and working with the Freedmen in Louisiana, Matlack on invitation joined the Philadelphia Conference in 1868.

4 In 1836 the General Conference meeting in Cincinnati disapproved "in the most unqualified sense, the conduct of two members of the General Conference who are reported to have lectured in this city recently, upon and in favor of modern Abolitionism." The members were George Storrs and Samuel Norris. See Journal of the General Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1836.

4 In 1852 and 1855 the Colored Local Preachers and Laymen held conventions at Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church to consider a memorial to the General Con-
and 1870's he would willingly drop whatever he was doing to attend
the Conference sessions. He and Wesley J. Parker of the Delaware
Conference became fast friends, and their biracial fellowship was
widely recognized. When Matlack died, convention was disregarded,
and Parker was invited to deliver an address at the funeral of the
man who was his friend and indeed the friend of the whole Delaware
Conference.

Before 1850, white presiding elders began to enlist Negro local
preachers to "supply" small Negro Methodist societies scattered
throughout northern Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and
points farther north. Then at the urging of some of the Negro local
preachers, those of their number who lived within the bounds of
the New Jersey and Philadelphia conferences, informally organized
themselves into a group or conference in 1852. The number of
Negroes in the free states who remained loyal to the Methodist
Episcopal Church during this period was small. Many went into the
African Methodist Episcopal and the African Methodist Episcopal
Zion churches because those bodies offered them dignity, the
itineracy, and opportunities for promotion.

In the southern part of the Peninsula, preaching by a Negro was
forbidden except in the presence of at least one white man. But in
spite of this severe limitation, a number of Negroes gloriied in making
the attempt to preach. Having purchased their own freedom, the
preachers as a rule carried credentials which were in order. But
they were denied the right to enter the itineracy of the Methodist
Episcopal Church.

In 1864, as indicated above, ten of those local preachers became
the first members of the officially organized Delaware Annual Con-
ference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Three steps taken by
those ten men as an organized Annual Conference demonstrated
their maturity, their seriousness of purpose, and their dedication
as ministers. First, they honored independent, roving Deacon Frost
Pullett, by electing him to elder's orders and placing his name on
the Conference roll, even though he was already 76 years of age.
Pullett, all black, was born in 1787, and he knew both of his parents.
Also, he had a son, born in 1817, who was sitting in the church at
the time and was about to be elected a member of the Conference.
Pullett purchased his freedom from slavery in 1840. At 53 he became
an independent evangelist, traveling through the Peninsula and
Delaware and in Philadelphia, preaching with power to all who

ference through the Philadelphia and
New Jersey Annual Conferences that
would give them status. These sessions
were informal. Beginning in 1857, con-
ferences of these brethren were called
regularly by Bishop Levi Scott at the re-
quest of the Philadelphia Annual Con-
ference. They were organized into the
Colored Local Preachers of the Philadel-
phia Annual Conference. See Matthew
Simpson, Cyclopedia of Methodism, p.
923.
would listen, even though he was arrested at least once, and had to flee many times from ruffians.

The second significant action of the Conference was the recognition on the part of the preachers of the need for self-improvement. They knew that Methodism called for book learning; they must know how to read. As early as 1857, the local preachers' session adopted a resolution "that the Conference earnestly recommends that those preachers who may be appointed by the bishop, or employed by the presiding elders, procure a copy of the holy scriptures, hymn-book, Discipline, Fletcher's APPEAL, and Wesley's SERMONS, and prepare themselves to pass on examination on these several books at the next session of the Conference; and it is further recommended that they provide themselves with Hart's ENGLISH GRAMMAR, and study it as they have opportunity."

In the third place, while they were organized as the Delaware Mission Conference, they felt that they had a mission to the illiterate, poverty-stricken, about-to-be-abandoned Negroes in the lower Peninsula. It should be remembered that the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 applied only to the slaves in states which were in rebellion against the union. In the territory of the Delaware Conference, the Emancipation Proclamation was applicable only in the southern tip of the Peninsula which was a part of Virginia. Maryland and Delaware had fought to preserve the union, but not to free their slaves. The 87,000 slaves in Maryland received their freedom when the State's 1864 Constitution became effective. Delaware rejected the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution and did not ratify them until 1901. Therefore, it took courage for ten of the twenty-one men to serve as Delaware Conference preachers in the lower Peninsula in 1864.

Apparently H. Colclazer, presiding elder of the Snow Hill District, was not present at the Colored Local Preachers' Conference in 1857. The white presiding elder responsible for the southern Peninsula was not officially connected with the Delaware Conference when it was organized in 1864. This meant that the first duty of the members of the Delaware Conference who were appointed to that region was to find the Negroes who were still loyal to the Methodist Episcopal Church after all compulsion was removed. In many instances the Negroes who wished to be enrolled as members of the church had to be given a family name. The simplest procedure was for them to assume the names of their former masters, and many of them did, as indicated by local church and conference rolls to the present time.

The Negroes who had been slaves were thrilled by the reality of freedom. Once the repressions of slavery were removed, some became irresponsible and indulged in whisky and loose living. They reveled in hunting and fishing. The glories of a full peninsula
moon in a cloudless sky were not to be spoiled for them by sermons which threatened damnation.

Under the circumstances the Negro preachers knew that if they were to help the people, they must put their trust in education. They must persuade the children to want to attend school, persuade the parents to raise money, and persuade the Delaware and Maryland legislatures to provide educational opportunities for Negroes. The church organized some schools, but Negro teachers were scarce. For a number of years the Delaware Conference had preachers who became teachers, and it was continually making preachers out of teachers, an indication that the spiritual and intellectual needs of the people were closely related.

Before the establishment of schools, it was necessary to find preachers somewhere. The first preachers had been slaves. But as time passed, the needs of the people demanded preachers who had more training. The second source of supply for preachers was men who as soldiers in the Civil War had somehow picked up some knowledge and had answered the call to preach. The third source of ministerial supply was Philadelphians—men who attended the Institute of Colored Youth, now Cheyney State Teachers' College, in Pennsylvania. Thereafter the supply of preachers began to come from the Centenary Biblical Institute, now Morgan State College, established in Baltimore in 1866; from the Delaware Conference Academy, now Princess Ann, which was launched in Maryland in 1884 with the assistance of the white Methodist; from Lincoln University which was founded by the Presbyterians in 1854; and from Drew Theological Seminary. Young Negroes who desired to be somebody were likely to emulate the Negro preacher, the one person in the community who had dignity and status.

The establishment of the Land Grant College in Delaware was in no way related to Methodism. However, once the school was begun in 1891, members of the Delaware Conference petitioned for a Negro president. As a result, W. C. Jason, Sr., a member of the Conference, was made president of the school in 1896. Jason was a graduate of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, Allegheny College, and Drew Theological Seminary. During Jason's 27 years as president, a score of men from Delaware State College entered the Conference.

President Jason had genuine concern for the education of Negroes. About 1920 when it was said that there were 5,000,000 Negro youth in America and not enough teachers, good and poor, to teach them, Jason was moved to write a poem entitled, "Five Million":

Five million eager Negro youth
Seeking the vital truth;
For truth must save or wrong enslave
When manhood follows youth.
Five million Negro hearts to dare,
Dangers and toil to share.
Ten million hands to loose the bands
Which else must them ensnare.

Five million tongues their need to speak,
Ten million feet to seek
The paths we know the race must go,
Or be forever weak.

Who will the truth of God proclaim?
Who fan the student’s flame?
For some must preach and others teach,
Or all must suffer shame.

Who will the Negro doctors be?
Who will make the lawyer’s plea?
And who will feed the men who lead
A race to liberty?

Each lad, each lass, must do their bit
Some useful place to fit.
And try their best to meet the test;
For only cowards quit.

About 1900 the Delaware Conference set up a course of study for men who entered the conference and for those who desired to become local preachers.

Local preachers rendered a great service to the people in the Delaware Conference. The local preacher was from the people and he lived among the people. He knew them and their weaknesses. If he had a will to go straight and a teachable mind, he proved himself on the way up. He was used as a supply, and in that way he demonstrated whether he merited admission into the Conference as a traveling preacher. One hundred seventy-eight of the 1,978 local preachers were admitted to the ranks of the itineracy during the history of the Conference.

In its 101 years, the Delaware Conference had 72 presiding elders and district superintendents. They were able men who served the Conference and the people well. Their reports were patterned on the Old Testament point of view—when times were good, they praised the Lord; when times were bad they addressed themselves to the sins of the people. These men who were set over the circuit riders were the kings of the quarterly conferences. They came with news for those who could not read. They were the eyes and ears of the bishops; they were the contact men with the other districts. They were the first to discover the devastating results of an emotionally operated camp meeting that took on more of the features of a circus than of a revival. They soon perceived that such camp meetings were the enemy of a stable church which depended on dedication and stewardship.

The presiding elders of the Delaware Conference were the buffers
of hardship. When a presiding elder started out down the Peninsula on Monday morning, he did not know in what condition he would find his preachers and their larders. There were no telephones to report sickness or hardship. Frequently the Sunday collections were not sufficient to buy the preacher’s groceries for the week. Among themselves the presiding elders set up what they called “the presiding elders’ fund.” Each elder drew on it according to the needs of his preachers. When two presiding elders met, the one who asked first was entitled to take and use whatever amount the other elder was carrying. Many times when a preacher went to bed on Sunday night knowing that he had received little or nothing for his day’s work—long miles on foot to preach three or more sermons—he awoke on Monday morning to find on his back porch one or more baskets filled with vegetables, fruit, chicken, rabbit, muskrat, pork, and the like. It was an expression of the spirit, “Such as I have, give I thee.”

It was only after the organization of the Delaware Conference that the Negro Methodists down the Peninsula were privileged to hear the full gospel. Negro preachers believed that in preaching the love of Jesus they had a message, and that in being loyal to Methodism they had a church. But during the days of the captive Methodist society, they could not preach the whole gospel. After the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831, all preachers were required to include the commandments, “Thou shalt not kill” and “Servants, obey your masters” in the sermons they delivered to slaves. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” had no place in such messages; it would interfere with the duties of the Negro mistress and hurt the slave breeders’ market. Nor were there exhortations to stewardship in the gospel preached to the slave—he would have had to turn thief before he could make a sacrificial offering.

With such a load upon them, the Negro preachers, rich in spirit, limited in education, and at times the targets for ruffians, felt the community coldness registered by the white neighbors—Methodists included. Even so, they steadily opposed the ignorance, the poverty and the irresponsibility of the thousands of people turned loose from the plantation system. Many of the preachers died young, but in spite of hardship and discouragement, 325 of them remained faithful members of the Delaware Conference until death removed their names from the active roll.

With the teaching of stewardship, the lay people began to support missions. It was announced that the name of each person who made a contribution to missions would be printed in the Conference journal. This practice, followed for many years, was finally stopped when headquarters challenged it on the ground that the cost of printing the names came from the funds given for missions. But the lists of names in the Conference journals are valuable for
history; they give us the most reliable, and in many instances the only available, records of the hundreds of laymen who were active in the churches of the Delaware Conference.

In the 1890's, Harry Augustus Monroe, a soldier, scholar, writer, and preacher, was transferred back to the Delaware Conference after having served several years as pastor of a Negro congregation in a northern Annual Conference. Since an enabling act of the General Conference had extended the domain of the Delaware Conference to include Negro congregations in New Jersey, New York, and farther north, Monroe sought to devise a plan which would encourage the white Methodists to give financial aid to struggling Delaware Conference churches in the new territory. To understand one phase of Monroe's plan, it is necessary to remember that the Delaware Conference felt that it had to champion vigorously the rights of Negroes in Maryland and Delaware where they were denied employment, equality before the law, and adequate educational opportunities, and where they were harassed by downright meanness and occasional lynchings. Since the new conference territory was in what had been free states as opposed to slave states, and since New York City Methodism and the Missionary Society had done much for the Negro St. Mark's Church in the metropolis, Monroe believed that a non-militant approach on the part of the Delaware Conference in the free states would win financial support from the white Methodists for the Negro churches. But by 1910 it became clear that the white presiding elders in the northern conferences would not help to finance a Negro church within their districts if the pastor was to be a member of the overlapping Delaware Conference and amenable to a presiding elder in that Conference. In effect the position of the white presiding elders was, "If our people finance a Negro church within the bounds of our conference, we must also govern it." As a result, some fifteen Delaware Conference mission churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts were ultimately transferred to the white conferences.

It is fair to say that every national crisis—the Civil War, the Spanish American War, the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War—made an impact on the Delaware Conference. Negro migration to the North during and after the First World War was reflected in the shift of church membership in the Conference. During the Great Depression there was a loss of members and of church property. Tindley Temple in Philadelphia became a refuge for the homeless; the church gave free food to the destitute. Truck farming, oystering and fishing, basic for the livelihood of many Negroes as well as whites in Maryland and Delaware, were hard hit by the Depression. It became difficult for the churches to pay their pastors and the Conference claims. Few new churches
and parsonages were built. The churches in the southern Peninsula were weakened by the migration. The Peninsula had little use even for a Negro with good training unless he would preach or teach. As late as 1937 a district superintendent reported, "There are but a few industrial plants in the district, and they will be found in Salisbury where only a few colored people are employed in the most menial capacities in seasonal occupations."

No Delaware or Maryland community has been made worse by the presence of a Delaware Conference church in its midst. Scandal has been conspicuously absent from the families in these churches. The church has emphasized and the people have believed in the worth of the individual. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the church ceremonies of marriage and burial have been important in the lives of the people.

One of the points of contact between Negroes and whites has been the employment of women members of the Delaware Conference churches as domestics in the homes of people in the white churches. This has been more of a two-way communication than the fellowship of white and Negro Methodist preachers, even when the preachers have known each other in the same communities for years. Contributions for rallies and mortgage burnings from these households are acknowledged by the Delaware Conference preachers and laymen.

In the 1930's it was said in some circles that Negroes wished to avoid the society of other Negroes. This tended to keep them silent on the issue of equality that transcends race. It was also said that Negroes had contributed little of moment to anything. We in the Delaware Conference were displeased with these sayings, knowing them to be basically false. That the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which we had our being and to which we had proved our loyalty, showed no greater understanding and felt no strong impulse to do battle against these views, was to us disturbing. Some of the less charitable among us felt that it was a deliberate affront in that, when white Methodism saluted or spoke well of Negro Methodists, they cited others and not loyal preachers of the Delaware Conference. In trade union activities in the 1930's, deliberate efforts were made to challenge and change these wrong attitudes toward the Negro. That the Methodist Episcopal Church during the same period did not take a strong stand against them but rather compromised and agreed to the creation of the Central Jurisdiction in united Methodism, was a great disappointment. When the plan for Methodist union came before the Delaware Conference in 1937, the will to repudiate it was so strong that it required parliamentary maneuvers for a proponent of the plan to gain the floor. After a debate of one-half hour the vote was 18 ministers for and 116 against, while the
vote among the laymen was 102 against and only one for the plan of union.

At the time, the number one man of the Delaware Conference in physical and mental vigor was David Henry Hargis. Nobody could take him for white. He was on his way to completing 18 years of superintending districts in Delaware, Maryland, and southern New Jersey. He knew preachers and how to exact their loyalty. He was our representative through the formalities and frustrations. He challenged the preachers to carry on with these words: “You’ve got a preaching place, haven’t you? You don’t know all you ought to know. You are not as good as you should be. So, study, teach, preach, and pray.” The Conference turned inward, or it became more isolated, if you prefer; it turned to religious education rather than to the general program of the church.

With the coming of Bishop Alexander P. Shaw as the resident episcopal leader, little preachers, little churches, and laymen came for the first time to know the fellowship of a Methodist bishop. A broad-gauged man, Bishop Shaw came with a program, a will, and friendliness. He was followed by Bishop Love whose name inspired the quality. As a result the Delaware Conference gradually adjusted and made an effort to grasp and implement the entire program of The Methodist Church. Property values and the pension plan fell in line behind religious education.

The relationship of the social gospel to social service, to the point of being prophetic, is found in a report made to the Conference in 1940. The points in the report merit quotation:

1. The church must be in the forefront in all problems that affect human personality.
2. The time is past for dealing with our critical condition in pious generalities, but it is high time for concreting them in definite action.
3. We first desire to call your attention to the fundamental importance of the home. If there is a breakdown here, it will be hard pulling for the church and the school.
4. We call upon our churches, especially in the great centers of population to have agencies within the local church to be on the alert for opportunities to make contacts with those who can employ our people.
5. . . . By 1970 there will be more than 15,000,000 people sixty-five years of age or older in this country; hence the emphasis being laid upon pension is quite opportune.
6. We recommend that our churches in the great centers of population have social clinics; agencies that will help the troubled minds of people come as a result of vexing domestic problems.
7. . . . it leads us to say that humanity has two alternatives. It’s Jesus’ way of life or chaos.

What do statistics tell us about the preachers of the Delaware Conference in its 101 years of history? There were in all, as indicated above, 1,980 local preachers, many of whom became full members of the Conference. During its history the Conference had 619 traveling preachers. Three hundred twenty-five members entered
the church triumphant; 109 were still members when the Conference was dissolved in 1965. Of the remaining 185, some 60 withdrew; 69, including the 19 who were in churches merged with other Conferences last year, transferred; eight were expelled; thirty-nine were dropped; and the record does not show what happened to nine others. One member of the Conference, Noah W. Moore, Jr., was elected bishop; his father faithfully served the Delaware Conference for 20 years.

The number of church members in the Delaware Conference when it was organized in 1864 was less than 5,000. A century later there were 45,000 members, an 800 per cent increase. At first glance this looks impressive, but a second look is solemnizing; as far back as 1911, there were 65,000 Negroes in the southern end of the Peninsula. The field of labor now is the industrialized Delaware Valley, beginning with the City of Wilmington and extending to Chester, Philadelphia, Camden and Trenton among the unchurched thousands who have migrated not only from the Peninsula, but also from a broad area of the South.

In 1864, there were 34 churches in the Delaware Conference valued at $38,000. In 1964, the Conference had 265 churches worth $13,080,037, an impressive gain. But the gain is not all to the good. A large number of these church buildings are in the northern urbanized area of the Conference. They were built 30 or more years ago by affluent Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Methodists, and in a few instances by Jews, to suit their needs in those days. When those congregations moved to suburbia, their old church buildings were to them white elephants. Their architecture leaves much to be desired for modern day churches that must operate seven days a week. Moreover, in this age of color television, stained glass windows do not impress my grandson as they did me. Pictures of all white apostles are not very meaningful to a colored child on relief who is being fed on government surplus food.

The members of the Delaware Conference have always acknowledged with gratitude and respect its leaders of other days and their labors. In 1913, Frederick Jackson Handy, a district superintendent at the time, paid tribute to W. J. Parker, John Emory Webb, I. H. White, W. H. Coffey, A. R. Shockley, and H. A. Monroe who served the Peninsula in the name of the Delaware Conference, saying that they—

led the way—during those pioneer days and sowed the seed—the harvest of which we are now reaping. The past then rising before us as a reality with its achievements, its sacrifices, its joys, commands our reverential respect. The present with its increased opportunities and responsibilities, claims the best of brain and heart, and a spirit; and the future whose shadowed outline is mirrored ahead, beckons us forward.

'We forget the steps already trod
And onward urge our way.'
In my opinion, Charles A. Tindley is the outstanding example of the Delaware Conference in action. Born in 1856 at Berlin, Maryland, he was left motherless and was bound out as a slave. Somehow he came to know the Lord in his youth. At 17 he learned to read. Working as a hod carrier by day, he took correspondence courses at night, and was admitted into the Delaware Conference in 1885 when 29. He served as an itinerant for 12 years in Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland. In 1897 he was appointed presiding elder of the Wilmington District. During those years he "prayed" Frederick A. Cullen into hearing the call to preach and entering the Delaware Conference. Cullen was later transferred to New York City where he built a humble mission into the great Salem Church. Cullen was the father of the brilliant, lamented poet, Countee Cullen.

In 1900, Tindley became pastor of Bainbridge Street Church, the successor of little John Wesley Church in South Philadelphia where the Delaware Conference was organized. In the next 33 years, Tindley guided that congregation through Calvary and East Calvary to become Tindley Temple with a membership larger than that of the entire Conference in 1864. Between 1901 and 1916 Tindley published, "Songs of Paradise," writing the words for 33 of the songs and the music for 13 of them. Tindley was almost elected a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church. At his death, Tindley Temple had 10,000 members, counting 3,000 probationers and 2,000 inactive. The Sunday school had 2,000 pupils and 72 teachers. In his last year he raised $24,000 for Conference benevolences. The church buildings were valued at $500,000, with an indebtedness of only $24,000. These statistics are all the more impressive in that they are for a year when the country was in the depths of the Great Depression. Of Tindley it was written, "His towering physique, his commanding voice, his matchless eloquence, his cogent reasoning, his inimitable style and unbounded faith all combined to render him the most popular preacher of his time." Tindley Temple was the appropriate place for the Delaware Conference to surrender its charter in 1965.

In terms of money raised, size of membership, and scholarship on the part of its preachers, the Delaware Conference was not great. But for stirring up those for whom no one cared; in teaching Christ as the door to salvation, decency, and dignity; in living on little; in improving themselves from generation to generation; in affording opportunities to the willing and able; and in remaining loyal to the main stream of Methodism through good and evil days, the Delaware Conference was great. Its record is void of shame. Wrong in principle, the creation of the Conference was right in practice, for in addition to baptizing the children and burying the dead of a confused and troubled people, it ever pointed them individually and collectively to the more excellent way of faith wedded to good works.
The compactness of a Negro Conference, like the compactness of the Central Jurisdiction, has its satisfactions. Men of like interests, attainments, and skills speak therein a common language, the language of "what it means to be black." To be a part of such a unit is reassuring, especially when a number of appointments and other places are guaranteed. I need not tell you of the temptations that lurked in the security felt by men in the Conference, though it rested upon acknowledged evil. Poison often does taste sweet. Classification based on race carries inherent limitations which become intensified as we move from the General Church down to the local church. Loving The Methodist Church as we do, it is our duty to the church and to God to overcome this evil.

This is a new day. It has its confusions, but it is my conviction that our Delaware Conference anchor lines will hold, that our belief in Methodism has been strengthened, especially as a result of the action of the 1964 General Conference. Our church must approach oneness if it is to be the church of the Master. I can think of no better group with which the actual process of oneness should begin than with a Conference whose ancestors were linked with Methodism before the Revolution. In June, 1964, the Delaware Conference, under the permissive legislation of the General Conference, transferred to the New York and Newark conferences nineteen churches with their pastor. Yesterday, April 28, 1965, in preparation for the transfer of the remaining 239 charges and pastors to the New Jersey, Peninsula, and Philadelphia conferences, Bishop John Wesley Lord declared the Delaware Annual Conference liquidated. Thus in this region, race as expressed in Methodist Conference organizations disappears, and our Methodism moves on toward the more excellent way of oneness in Christ's church.

Perhaps it is not inappropriate to close this paper with some words which Henry van Dyke said he received from his father. "This will be to you a most profitable year. Only don't forget to study Christology in the heart as in the head. Only one thing has kept me from shipwreck—loyalty to Christ."

"I have not known a day without a cloud, nor have I known a night without a star, for always LOVE is near, and PRAYER is heard, and FAITH and HOPE abide."