THE NEGRO MEMBERSHIP OF THE
(FORMER) METHODIST CHURCH IN THE
(NEW) UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

By Willis J. King

One of the most significant actions of the recent Uniting Confer-
ence of The United Methodist Church was the elimination of the
Central Jurisdiction from the new church. The Central Jurisdiction
was the name given to one of the regional groups at the time of the
unification of the three American Methodist churches in 1939, and
was unique in the fact that while the other five Jurisdictions were
set up on a geographical basis, the Central Jurisdiction was set up
on a racial basis. It was by definition composed of the “Negro An-
nual Conferences, the Negro Mission Conferences and Missions
in the United States of America.”

This obvious racial distinction was never popular among the vast majority of Methodist Negroes
and it greatly disturbed many other people in the church, both at
home and overseas. It has been a continuing bone of contention in
the church since the 1939 union.

Developments in the past decade, greatly facilitated by the move-
ment for merger with The Evangelical United Brethren Church,
have led to the inevitable elimination of the racially constituted
Central Jurisdiction. In the Plan of Union it was determined that
all annual conferences of the new United Methodist Church were
to be related to the appropriate geographical jurisdiction.

The passing of the Central Jurisdiction has brought mixed emo-
tions to the Negro membership of the church, particularly to those
whose annual conference memberships were listed in that group.
While on one hand they rejoice in the fact that the church, which
we all love, has made one long leap toward the elimination of racial
barriers in its structural organization, there are on the other hand
understandable emotional strains involved in giving up cherished
relations in an organization they have grown to love and which
has provided an opportunity for leadership in the Church of Jesus
Christ. But the majority of the Negro membership, we believe,
realizes there is value in the contribution that such action will
make for genuine brotherhood in the Kingdom of God. We are
just now at the beginning of a series of church and institutional
mergers, all moving in the direction of the answer to our Lord's
petition, “that they all may be one.” The Central Jurisdiction, in its
exit from the scene, is making its contribution to that movement.

To properly appraise the Central Jurisdiction in The Methodist
Church, one cannot begin with the structural arrangement set up
in 1939 to accommodate the more than 300,000 Negro Methodists
of the church, but must see it as a symbol of the past and present

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1 Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Church, 1939, 28.
2 The United Methodist Church, The Plan of Union, as adopted by The General Conferences, November 1966
and The Annual Conferences, 1967, of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church, 9.
3 Minutes of the Annual Conferences of The Methodist Church, Fall, 1940, 290.
history of the Negro in the Methodist movement during the nearly two centuries of its existence in America. More important still, it is a practical demonstration of the efforts of a close-knit ecclesiastical organization, under the most difficult social and political conditions, to include in its membership the most diverse racial groups. The Central Jurisdiction, as measured against the ideal of genuine Christian brotherhood, left much to be desired, but it is a good example of our founder's (John Wesley) idea of the need for "going on to perfection," and it should be recognized as a genuine effort in that direction.

The Methodist movement, from its beginning, made a special appeal to people in the lowest brackets of society. When its leaders, John and Charles Wesley and their associates, were excluded from the pulpits in London and other cities in England, they took to the open fields and preached to the colliers and peasants in Kingswood and New Castle, and other mining communities in England. Their message was to the lowly and neglected classes. It was this same type in America to whom they made their greatest appeal.

In no group could their message have evoked a more enthusiastic response than from the African slaves, who were on the lowest rungs of the social ladder. These people joined the movement in large numbers and were cordially welcomed at first by the leaders of the movement. In Francis Asbury's *Journal* the editor has added an interesting notation in this connection:

There were Negroes in the New York Society from the beginning. Barbara Heck's servant, Betty, was present at Embury's first sermon and a charter member. Others were subscribers to the building fund. Peter, slave of a tobacconist, James Aymar, was converted by Captain Webb in the Rigging Loft and was for many years the sexton of Wesley Chapel. Peter was one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and laid the cornerstone of its first meetinghouse at Leonard and Church streets in 1800.

The missionaries sent by Wesley to America spoke appreciatively of the presence of the slaves in their meetings. In a letter to Wesley dated April 24, 1770, Richard Boardman wrote: "The number of the blacks that attend the preaching affects me much." One of the most beautiful testimonies to the regard in which the African slaves were held was made by Francis Asbury, the father of the Methodist movement in America. In his *Journal* of November 17, 1771, he wrote:

... to see the poor Negroes so affected is pleasing, to see their sable countenances in our solemn assemblies, and to hear them sing with cheerful melody their dear Redeemer's praise, affected me much, and made me ready to say, "Of a truth I perceive God is no respecter of persons."  

At the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784, 36 of the 51 churches which reported included Negro members. According to Wade Crawford Barclay, the Negro membership in the church in 1800.

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Clark, *op. cit.*, I, 9-10.
1786 numbered 11,280; in 1810-11, 34,724; in 1825-26, 47,433; in 1844-45, 150,120. It is evident, therefore, that from the beginning of its history Negroes were a part of the Methodist movement.

INTERRACIAL RELATIONS IN EARLY METHODISM

Despite the fact that Negroes were given what amounted to a "token" welcome into the movement, it soon became evident that they would be subject to caste distinctions and indignities. This was probably inevitable, due to their status as slaves. This was also due to the social attitudes which prevailed in all the Colonies relative to class and social status. In some of the Colonies sitting in the churches was based on wealth and social prestige. The fact that Negroes, whether slaves or free, were in the lowest social bracket meant that even when permitted to come into the churches for worship, they were given scant consideration as to seating. "They either sat on benches in the rear, or in an 'African corner.'"

The Methodists, because of their own relatively low social status, could not draw the same degree of caste distinction as did the older and more exclusive churches of the New England and Atlantic seaboard. Nevertheless, they too soon began to make distinctions where Negroes were concerned. Barclay quotes from letters found in the Journal of one of Wesley's missionaries, Joseph Pilmore, in which he spoke of forming "a separate class for Negroes," and "after preaching I met the Negroes apart." This trend was also evident early in Asbury's experience in America. In his Journal of December 8, 1772, Asbury writes, "In the evening the Negroes were collected, and I spoke to them in exhortation."

While the membership of the John Street Church was interracial from the first, in the lists of membership published in 1787, whites and Negroes were listed separately. The St. George's Church in Philadelphia also had separate listings. In addition to the separate seating arrangements, discrimination was shown in other ways. Barclay quotes from a letter by Joseph Pilmore dated August 9, 1772, relative to a service where the church was not large enough to accommodate all who desired to attend:

As the ground was wet, they persuaded me to try to preach within, and appointed men to stand at the doors to keep all the Negroes out until the white persons were in, but the house would not hold them.

In the Southern section of the church the problem was accentuated by the fear of revolt on the part of the slaves. It was, therefore, deemed advisable in some areas to disallow religious services to the slaves; or where it was permitted, to provide a separate section for the Negro worshippers. There still exist, in some of the older churches of the South, balconies where the slaves were seated during religious services.

7 Wade Crawford Barclay, Early American Methodism 1769-1844, in 2 volumes. (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension, 1950), II, 54.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 53.
10 Clark, op. cit., I, 57.
11 Barclay, op. cit., II, 55.
In the light of these conditions it is not surprising that there should have developed a feeling of unrest and a desire to have more freedom of expression, especially among the free Negroes in the Northern section of the church. This feeling was primarily responsible for the rise of independent Negro Methodist denominations, and a great deal of credit deservedly belongs to men like Richard Allen who led their people in setting up, first, independent local congregations, and finally independent churches.

In our appreciation of these men, however, we should not forget the leaders of the lowly Negro group who remained with the "Mother Church" and rendered yeoman service. One thinks especially of two such men—Harry Hosier, better known as "Black Harry," and John Stewart.

"Black Harry" accompanied both Asbury and Thomas Coke on a number of their preaching tours and preached acceptably to both white and Negro audiences. It is said that the first mention of Methodism in a New York paper related to Harry Hosier.

John Stewart was converted at a camp meeting on the Marietta Circuit, near Marietta, Ohio, sometime between 1814-16. Shortly after his conversion he was licensed as an exhorter. Barclay says of him, "He was a man of no learning, but a melodious singer." He felt the call to preach and set off immediately to an Indian reservation on Upper Sandusky, where he began a mission to the Wyandot Indians. So effective was his work that in 1819 the mission was formally approved by the church authorities. Stewart was licensed as a local preacher and other local preachers volunteered to assist him. Stewart continued to labor among these people until his death of consumption, December 17, 1823.

Barclay adds in a footnote the following:

For six years Stewart had labored zealously for the Wyandot, gaining their complete confidence and making an enduring contribution to their welfare. Following his death, at the age of thirty-seven, his body was buried in the garden on his farm. Before their final departure from their reservation, the Wyandot "gathered his bones and buried them on the south side of the Wyandot Mission Church...over his grave...[stands a tombstone bearing his name and] the inscription, 'Earth for Christ'."

John Stewart’s mission to the Wyandot Indians is usually said to have been the inspiration for the organization of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

There were other Negro leaders in every section of the church who were helping to carry the Word of God to their benighted fellowmen whose names never reached the public print, but nevertheless are written in the Book of Life.

FROM DIVISION TO UNIFICATION

One of the very interesting developments which followed the division of the church in 1844 was the marked interest shown by

\[^{12}Ibid., I, 204.\]
\[^{13}Ibid., 205.\]
\[^{14}Ibid.\]
many leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in the evangelization of the slaves. This is especially surprising when it is remembered that the immediate occasion for the division of the church in 1844 was the question of the ownership of slaves by one of the bishops from the Southern section of the church. Be that as it may, it was the Southern Church which showed the greatest zeal for the evangelization of the slaves from 1844 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861.

This movement was led by the Reverend William Capers (later a bishop in the church) from South Carolina. Willis J. Weatherford says, "He developed a type of organization for serving the slaves which swept the entire South." In 1847, the church in the South reported 124,961 Negro members; in 1848, 127,249; in 1853, 146,949; in 1860, 171,857. Bishop John M. Moore gives a larger Negro membership for the Southern Church (207,000) at the outbreak of the war, but he does not document his figures. In any event, the figures on this score are impressive and prove that the church leaders showed a real evangelistic interest in the slaves.

The situation, however, changed with the coming of the Civil War. The change in the status of the Negro following the Civil War and the inability of the former masters to accept the new status of their former slaves, plus the activity of the independent Negro denominations in recruiting them into their churches, resulted in a rapid decline in the membership of the Southern Church during the War years. By 1866 the Negro membership had shrunk to 78,742.

At the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1866, a resolution was adopted which made possible the setting up of its Negro ministry and membership as an independent church. In 1870 this action, which had the mutual sanction of the Negro membership of that church, was approved. From that time until 1939, the two groups maintained close fraternal relations as distinctively separate denominations. During this period the Southern Church made annual contributions to the new church (named at that time the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church but later changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) from its benevolence budget; and it took major responsibility for the support of Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, maintained for the training of Negro students. This was the situation in 1939 when the unification of the three Methodist denominations was effected. One of the provisions of the Plan of Union was the continuance of this cooperation.

We now turn to the situation in the Methodist Episcopal Church,
the northern branch of American Methodism. What happened to the Negro membership after the division in 1844? While Negroes were admitted to membership in Methodist churches, in both the northern and southern sections of the church prior to the separation in 1844, the fact that the great majority of the Negroes were in the South seemed to challenge the South in a greater way to evangelize the slaves. As we have seen, the Negro membership of the church in the South had increased in an appreciable degree by 1860.

The division of the church did not have the same effect in the North, at least not immediately. Despite their espousal of the freedom of the slaves, local attitudes against the admission of Negroes into the churches changed slowly. In a number of cases Negroes were encouraged to set up their own local congregations and even to join the independent Negro denominations. There was the added fact that the Negro population in the most northern cities was both small and economically insecure and many joined the independent denominations on the basis of the racial appeal. By 1850, the last year of keeping separate lists of white and Negro members in the annual conferences of the church, the total enrollment of Negroes in the Methodist Episcopal Church was 26,309, which, as we have noted, was in great contrast to the Negro membership of the Southern Church in the same period.

The Civil War years, however, brought a greatly increased interest in the development of work among Negroes by the Northern Church. The passionate loyalty with which the Methodists had supported the Federal Government in the prosecution of the War, and their basic evangelistic and educational interest in the uplift of the underprivileged, made them the logical leaders following the war in "the fight to really make these people free." The General Conference of 1864 authorized the organization of one or more Negro mission conferences. Under this provision two Negro mission conferences were organized immediately following the General Conference: Delaware, on July 28, 1864, and Washington, on October 27, 1864.

The Mississippi Conference, composed of both white and Negro ministers, was organized in New Orleans, December 25, 1865, with four districts—one for Mississippi, two for Louisiana, and one for Texas. In the Episcopal Address at the General Conference of 1868, the bishops reported that nine conferences had been organized in territory not previously included in annual conferences. These had a membership in 1871 as follows: traveling preachers, 630 (260 whites, 370 Negroes); lay members, 135,000 (47,000 whites, 88,000 Negroes). In 1868 the General Conference changed the status of the conferences. Previously authorized as mission conferences, they were made full-fledged annual conferences with all the rights and privileges usual to annual conferences. Negroes elected by two of

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24 Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1868, 363.
25 Ibid., 362.
26 Barclay, op. cit., III, 309.
these mission conferences sat for the first time as delegates in the 1868 General Conference. That same body also authorized the bishops to organize new annual conferences in the South.

With the close of the 1872-76 quadrennium, twenty annual conferences, white, Negro, or mixed, had been organized on the border and in the South. Three of them (Delaware, Washington and Lexington) were all Negro; one (Kentucky) was white; six (Holtson, St. Louis, Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia and Missouri) were predominantly white; six (South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and North Carolina) were predominantly Negro; three (Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee) were about equally divided between white and Negro members; and one (West Texas) was bi-racial.

**PROBLEMS DEALING WITH RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ANNUAL CONFERENCES AND EPISCOPAL LEADERSHIP OF NEGRO MEMBERS**

As early as 1869, the division of annual conferences on racial lines was advocated. This agitation was begun in Georgia when a resolution was introduced by nine Negro preachers asking that the Negro churches be formed into separate Negro districts under Negro presiding elders. A step in that direction was made by the setting up of one exclusively Negro district. A memorial to the General Conference of 1872 requested the formation of a separate annual conference for the Negro membership.28

No action was taken on this proposal at the General Conference of 1872, due to the fact that the Negro delegates were not unanimously in favor of setting up annual conferences on a racial basis. But the agitation for such action continued, led in some conferences by whites and in others by Negroes. At the General Conference of 1876, it was voted that where a majority of both whites and Negroes requested division, the presiding bishop was authorized to organize the new conferences. By 1895, mixed annual conferences, composed of both white and Negro ministers, no longer existed in the Methodist Episcopal Church. As Barclay observes, “By 1895, the developing process of segregation, first given official sanction by the General Conference of 1864, was complete.” 29

Another issue which emerged rather early in the administration of work among Negroes was that of episcopal leadership for this particular group. Some critics, mainly outside the church, asserted that the church would never elect a Negro to the bishopric. A partial answer to this was given when the General Conference of 1856 made provision for the election of a Liberian as the missionary bishop of that country. This provision was put into effect with the election of Francis Burns of Liberia in 1858; the policy was continued in the election of his successor, J. W. Roberts, in 1866. But since both of these men were citizens of Liberia, and their service

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28 General Conference Journal, 1872, 90, 92-3.
29 Barclay, op. cit., III, 321.
was limited to that particular field, this action did not and could not satisfy the demands in the home field.

In 1904 an American Negro, Isaiah B. Scott, was elected a missionary bishop for service in Liberia. He had the same limitation as to the scope of his area of service as did his predecessors in the office of missionary bishop. Upon his retirement in 1916, Bishop Scott was succeeded by Alexander P. Camphor. It was not, however, until 1920 that two Negro bishops with equal rank, official responsibility, and salary, were elected. The fact that it was necessary at that late date to elect them on a separate ballot is evidence that the church had not overcome the barrier of color.30

THE FREEDMEN'S SOCIETY AND ITS SUCCESSORS

One of the most constructive steps taken by the Methodist Episcopal Church following the Civil War was the setting up of schools for the training of leaders among the freedmen, both for special leadership in the work of the church and for the responsibilities involved in their newly attained citizenship in a democratic nation. The program for this type of work was first begun as a cooperative venture among several of the major denominational groups, but there soon developed a tendency on the part of the several church bodies to set up their own denominational schools. In line with this trend, a group of Methodist leaders met in Cincinnati, August 7-8, 1866, to determine a program for the Methodist Episcopal Church. The meeting resulted in the organization of the Freedmen's Aid Society with the objective "to labor for the relief and education of the freedmen, especially in cooperation with the missionary and church extension societies of the Methodist Episcopal Church."31

The Freedmen's Aid Society began its operations in the South in the fall of 1866. In the very first year schools were set up in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, West Virginia, Virginia, and Florida. Three thousand pupils were enrolled the first year under the tutelage of 40 teachers. The Society, while authorized by the General Conference in 1868, was not given the status of a General Conference organization. By 1872 the Society was given full official approval, and annual conference apportionments were sent down to the local churches for its support. In 1880 the General Conference directed the Society to aid the schools for whites in the South, and in 1888 the name of the Society was changed to the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society, to express more fully the work of the church among both races in the South.32 "By 1895 educational institutions under the patronage of the Society numbered 44, including for Negroes a theological school, 10 colleges and universities, and 11 academies, and for whites three collegiate institutions and 19 academies."33

Early in its history the Freedmen's Aid Society had set a policy of inclusiveness for all of its schools, regardless of color, but the

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30 The two elected were Robert E. Jones and Matthew W. Clair. General Conference Journal, 1920, 364-68.
31 Barclay, op. cit., III, 322.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 324.
steady pressure for segregation, in both the churches and schools in the South, resulted finally in a complete separation of the two racial groups in the schools operated by the Society. In 1924 the name of the Society was changed to the Board of Education for Negroes. Still later it was set up as one of the divisions of the Board of Education, with the name Division of Negro Institutions. Following union in 1939, it continued its work under the title, Negro Higher Education in the Division of Educational Institutions. By whatever name it has been called, however, this Society has for more than a century rendered a far-reaching service to the cause of Negro education in the church and the nation.

NEGRO MEMBERSHIP AN ISSUE IN METHODIST UNION

The vigorous educational and evangelistic program carried forward by the Methodist Episcopal Church among the Negroes, especially in the South, from the close of the Civil War until 1939, when the Plan of Union was adopted, had both its advantages and disadvantages to those interested in Methodist unification. To those who believed in the possibility of the evangelization of people of all racial and national origins, and their inclusion in the same church, the plan of the Northern Church, while not ideal, had proven that the idea could be made to work. For those with the other point of view, namely, that the two racial groups should remain in separate denominations, on the basis of race, the Negro membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church was a definite obstacle to Methodist unification. The fact that the Negro membership in the church numbered more than 300,000 did not make the problem any easier.

One of the major issues in the negotiations on Methodist unification from 1916, when the active discussions on the subject began, until 1939, when the Plan of Union was adopted, was the status of the Negro membership in the reorganized church. To appreciate the total problem, we must see the issue from the standpoint of all the groups concerned: the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; the white membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and the Negro membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

From the standpoint of the Southern Church, with its history and social background since the division in 1844, and its definitive action in 1870, in which it set up its Negro membership into an independent denomination, the logical status of the Negro in any plan for the reorganized church seemed to be the establishment of the Negro group into a separate denomination, either alone or with other Negro church groups, with no organic relation to the white membership of the church. Leaders of the Southern Church supported that position for many years during the period of negotiations.

In the case of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whatever might have been the individual preferences and even practices of many of its members and local congregations, the church officially had a long tradition in welcoming (theoretically at least) all groups into its fellowship. There were still fresh memories among the
older members of the church of the vigorous educational and evangelistic programs which had been carried forward among the freedmen since the Civil War, and there were thousands of Methodists who were committed to that program. Then there was the legal fact that the Negro membership was as definitely a part of the church as was any other group and could not be eliminated from its membership except by their own choice.

Finally, the Negro membership (although a minority group both numerically and in standing in the church) was conscious of its rights and prerogatives in the church and was not disposed to relinquish those claims. More important to them, however, than rights was the instinctive conviction, evident from their earliest connection with "the people called Methodists," that this fellowship represented a communion that was seriously seeking to build a brotherhood among all men. They believed that their membership in such a fellowship would help in the achievement of world brotherhood.

It was these varying views over the period of nearly a quarter of a century of negotiations which had to be resolved before a Plan of Union satisfactory to a majority of Methodists could be agreed upon. This meant compromises on all sides. For the Methodist Episcopal Church, South it meant giving up the insistence on a separate and independent church. For the Methodist Episcopal Church it meant giving up the concept of a strongly centralized General Conference and (theoretically at least) open membership for all races in favor of a regionally-structured church. To the Negro membership it meant accepting an arrangement by which the annual conferences of the Negro group would be set up as a regional group, or Jurisdiction, on a racial basis rather than geographical as was true for the white membership.

Many of us can remember the bitter debates that went on in the Negro conferences and among Negro leaders prior to the adoption of the Plan of Union. The Plan failed to carry in the majority of Negro annual conferences, although it was approved by a majority of the white conferences.

What was the basic objection to the Central Jurisdiction? The fact that it was a separate racial structure and that it wrote into the Constitution of a Christian denomination a definite segregated arrangement. On the other hand, it did offer manifest advantages, "such as proportionate representation on all of the Boards of the church, membership in its highest councils, with members of its group being eligible to hold the highest posts in the church, without discrimination as to salaries and other prerequisites." More important than these material benefits was the fact that the Central Jurisdiction made possible the beginning of the full-fledged brotherhood which is now evolving, not only in Methodism but among Christians of every denominational persuasion, both Protestant and Catholic.

That is what M. S. Davage, speaker at the Uniting Conference in
1939, had in mind when he said, “We want to be in a Church which embraces all mankind, and is big enough for God.”

The Central Jurisdiction was the beginning of an experiment among Methodists, North and South, white and Negro, which sought to embrace all mankind, and to be big enough for God. It was because the Negro membership of the church had faith in the goodwill of their fellow-Methodists and in the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Jesus Christ that they became a part of this experiment in Christian fellowship.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEW STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENT

The question logically arises as to the possible effect of the new structural arrangement of the United Methodist Church on the total program of the church and particularly on the attitudes of its membership, both to the majority and minority groups. To those who are inclined to be cynical and call themselves realists, there are still grave questions as to the wisdom of the change in the structure. To optimists and men of faith who believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to give leadership in adventures in the area of human brotherhood, there are definite values in the new structure and hope for its potentialities in promoting Christian brotherhood:

1. It recognizes the fact of “change” in the political, social and spiritual climate of our world in the last two decades. It was Prime Minister MacMillan of Great Britain who coined the phrase, “the winds of change,” in his warning address some years ago to the minority group of white leaders who still rule the Commonwealth of Rhodesia. And how marked is that change! More than 30 new nations in Asia and Africa have achieved political independence since the close of World War II. While most of them are having terrific political, economic, and social problems, the old order is gone forever.

2. It means that the Christian church—all Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic—must sense this need for change and must be able and willing to accommodate its structure and institutional life to the needs of the new day.

No church organization has given more evidence of its determination to restudy and reform its own huge structure than has the Roman Catholic Church, which was begun under the leadership of Pope John XXIII and has been continued under his successor, Pope Paul VI. The United Methodist Church, one of the largest Protestant churches in the nation, has by its action in eliminating the Central Jurisdiction shown its willingness to make this venture of faith.

3. This action places a responsibility on both the white and Negro members of the church to seek to deal constructively with the new developments in the racial situation.

Many agencies, including national and state governments and private institutions, are seeking to make contribution to the allevia-

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34 Uniting Conference Journal, 1939, 699.
tion of needs in this area. Whatever else the Christian church does, it must promote the spirit of goodwill and Christian fellowship. The church must create the spiritual climate for better race relations. One of the slogans used in the unification movement of a generation ago was “the Methodists Are One People,” a beautiful phrase for a worthwhile sentiment. In attempting to build genuine Christian fellowship between our two racial groups, this phrase is a nice place to begin: “The Methodists Are One People.” They must consciously see themselves in this relationship all over the nation and around the world.

But more important than our denominational ties is the fact of our oneness in Jesus Christ. In the words of the Great Apostle, “He [Jesus Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility—that he might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.” (Eph. 2:14-16)

But it is not enough even that we cease to be distrustful of one another; it is much more important that we realize that we as United Methodists, as Christians white and black as well as all other Christians, whatever their racial or national origins, have the responsibility of making this nation and our world genuinely Christian. Sometime or other we should be able to sing sincerely and with assurance:

In Christ, there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth . . .

Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,
Whate’er your race may be,
Who serves my Father as a Son
Is surely kin to me.