

METHODIST HISTORY

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HUGH BOURNE



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Cover: Hugh Bourne, 1772-1852, founder of the Primitive Methodist Church. See article in this issue by John N. Brittain, "Hugh Bourne and the Magic Methodists." Image copied from Memoirs of the life and labours of the late venerable Hugh Bourne, by John Walford, 2 vols, London, 1855-1856.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

On April 23, 2008 the General Conference of The United Methodist Church will convene in Ft. Worth, Texas. This will be 40 years to the day that the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church formed The United Methodist Church. It is a time of anniversaries as it includes the 40th anniversary of the creation of the General Commission on Religion and Race, the General Commission Archives and History, the General Board of Pensions, the 100th anniversary of the Social Creed, and the Methodist Brotherhood which gave rise to United Methodist Men. Anniversaries ending in 0 or 5 seem to have great significance. They do give us a chance to affirm the continuity of our heritage. This journal and those who write for it and read it are critical to the ongoing work which affirms our continuity of heritage. The entire church should be grateful to those who help us "remember who we are."

The General Commission on Archives and History was created in 1968 as part of that great merger establishing it as "the official historical agency of The United Methodist Church." Par. 1399 indicated that the new commission was "the successor of the Association of Methodist Historical Society...and the Historical Society of The Evangelical United Brethren Church." C. Faith Richardson has written of the beginnings of the work of historical societies in *A Methodist Chronicle* (1999). These actions have led to the creation of a denominational central archives, now housed in a building on the campus of Drew University, and The Historical Society of The United Methodist Church in 1989. The Commission and the Society are heirs of a great legacy of caring for the stories of faith and now charged with being good custodians of the stories of faith in these days.

The 2004 General Conference moved the date of Heritage Sunday to either Aldersgate Day or the Sunday preceding Aldersgate Day. This year, Heritage Sunday is May 18 and the theme is Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the adoption of the first Social Creed. A fine resource is an essay entitled, "The Social Creed and Methodism through Eighty Years," by Donald K. Gorrell which appeared in *Methodist History* 26 (July 1988), 213-228 and in *Perspectives on American Methodist, Interpretive Essays* edited by Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt. The essay is available at www.gcah.org with our other Heritage Sunday resources. We celebrate that the grace of God acting in the lives of persons can lead to holiness of heart and life, acts of piety and of mercy, personal and social holiness.

ROBERT J. WILLIAMS