

# Tentative Plans for the Methodist Bicentennial Celebration in 1966

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**A**S you will recall, the General Conferences of 1960 and 1964 confirmed plans for the Bicentennial of American Methodism and instructed the Methodist Association of Historical Societies to develop a convocation and other programs in 1966. The year was chosen because the exact dates of origins are in conflict. The Methodist movement burst out in several places about the same time.

There is no doubt about the primacy of several sites on the Atlantic seaboard, and especially Lovely Lane Meeting House, which survives on a plaque in a Baltimore street. The convocation has been scheduled for Baltimore, April 21-24, 1966. Bishops Paul N. Garber, John Wesley Lord, and Donald H. Tippett have agreed to serve on the General Committee along with such laymen as Charles C. Parlin of New York and Mayor Theodore McKeldin of Baltimore. Pastors of historic churches like Dr. Frederick E. Maser of Old St. George's, Philadelphia, are also on the General Committee. As consultant members of the General Committee we have representatives of all the boards and agencies of the Church. When we have the first meeting of this General Committee at Baltimore, December 21, many of them will be with us. Their enthusiasm for the project has been a source of real encouragement.

Our task, of course, is to make this a significant observance for all of Methodism. It dare not be confined to the people of New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, where Methodism had its origins. The whole church must become involved, and we shall be glad for any suggestions you have for this involvement.

We are thinking of photographic contests sponsored by our Methodist publications, a hymn contest, sermon contest, and possibly even a mobile display that might be mounted on a truck and taken from place to place across the country. The display would include with historical materials from the East such treasures as Cartwright's saddlebags at McKendree College and Roberts' traveling trunk at DePauw.

The Baltimore meetings will be held in a large hall, with program features so that those in attendance will go home with a new pride and new zeal for Methodism. We are hoping to have a preachers' choir sing some of the hymns of Methodism, and we are daring

to believe that even the President of the United States may be willing to address us. A drama on some phase of the history of Methodism will be presented, perhaps on Peter Cartwright whose story we already have in a musical setting.

We are expecting to have, as part of the program, a series of papers on the great contributions of Methodism—the Doctrine of Assurance, the Teachings on Wholeness and Holiness, the Passion for Reform, the Consuming Interest in Education. There will be papers on the leading Methodist personalities on the American scene. Also, we plan for papers on the spread of Methodism: Capturing the Eastern Seaboard, Methodism in the South, How the West Was Won for Methodism, the World Mission of Methodism, the Meaning of Ecumenical Methodism. We hope there may be time for an old-fashioned “call of the Conference” when people may be called to speak from the floor on “The Neglected Emphasis of Methodism.”

The peril that any observance may be limited to the Atlantic Seaboard is matched, or surpassed, by the peril that it may be backward-looking, when every anniversary ought to major on the forward look. We believe that, properly planned and observed, this bicentennial could have much to do with the quadrennial program, “One Witness in One World.” We hope, for example, that there may be a great emphasis on preaching, especially preaching in new communities, in neglected communities (particularly the inner city), in drive-in theaters, parks and resorts, playgrounds and fairgrounds. The early Methodists did not confine themselves to beautiful buildings. We hope that there may be an impetus to proclaim and interpret the gospel in the pioneer country of faith.

In a book that some of us read a few days ago in Jamaica was this verse from Charles Wesley:

We all shall command  
The love of our Friend  
Forever beginning what  
Never shall end.

And never-ending Methodism, true to its past and alert to the future, will go on in strength.