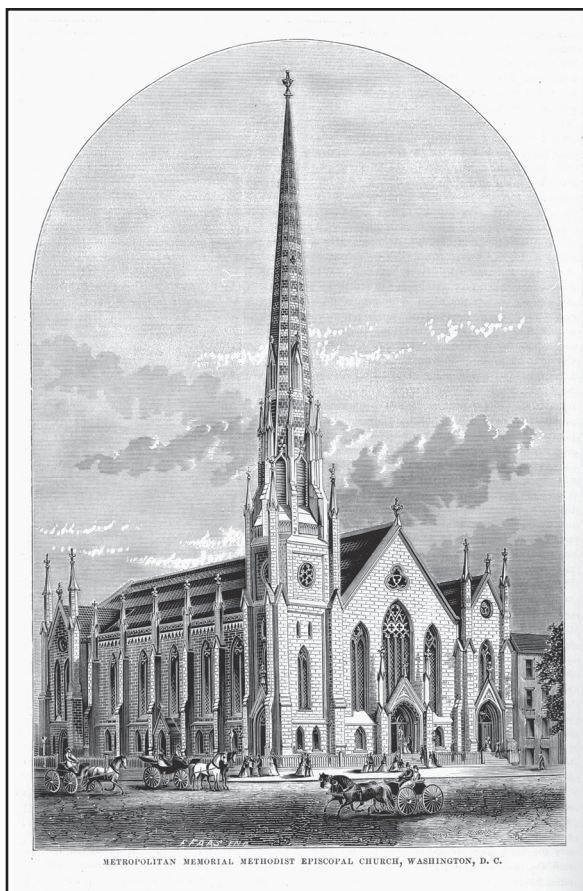


METHODIST HISTORY

April 2012

Volume L
Number 3



METROPOLITAN MEMORIAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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Cover: Illustration of historic Washington, DC church was taken from The Cyclopaedia of Methodism edited by Bishop Matthew Simpson. See article by Kenneth E. Rowe on architectural styles of Methodist churches in the United States' capital.

METHODIST HISTORY (ISSN 0026-1238) is published quarterly for \$25.00 per year to addresses in the U.S. by the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church (GCAH), 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940. Printed in the U.S.A. Back issues are available.

Second-class postage paid at Madison, NJ. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to METH-
ODIST HISTORY, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940 or email mmerkel@gcah.org.

METHODIST HISTORY

Robert J. Williams, Editor

VOLUME L

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Methodist History is included in
Religious and Theological Abstracts,
Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life
ATLA Religion Database

Manuscripts submitted for publication and all other correspondence should be addressed to
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church will meet April 24 to May 4 of this year. This gathering will mark the 200th Anniversary of the convening of the first quadrennial, delegated General Conference. For 200 years Methodism has determined that its governing conference will meet only once every four years and will include a proportional number from each annual conference. By 1789, the church was governed by a sequence of up to 11 annual conferences with any connectional-wide issue needing approval in all. Then the church decided that all the preachers would gather every four years, beginning in 1792. But a disproportionate number of preachers came from the Baltimore and Philadelphia Conferences. The proposal that would correct the imbalance of representation, which was adopted in 1808, was that the General Conference would be a quadrennial and delegated gathering. Thus, on May 1, 1812, ninety members along with Bishops Asbury and M'Kendree, gathered in New York City. With many changes over the years in the makeup of those delegations, the fundamental pattern has persisted. This pattern has since been embraced by the United Brethren in Christ; the Evangelical Association; the Evangelical United Brethren Church; the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, beginning in 1846; and by the historic African American churches that separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

The Church has built into its governing system a fundamental pattern of ongoing reform and change to the form of obedience in church government and polity. In 1864, the Delaware and Washington Conferences were formed thus enabling African Americans to be seated in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church beginning in 1868, laity were later seated, and finally women were seated in the General Conferences.

This General Conference will consider a proposal to drastically alter the governing structures of the general agencies including the General Commission on Archives and History. I support the continuation of the governing structure for our commission. At this Conference a recommendation will be received to recognize the first Heritage Landmarks outside the United States: the College of West Africa in Liberia; the Old Mutare Site in Zimbabwe; Mary Johnston Hospital in Manila—along with the Native American congregation in Newtown, Oklahoma, and Simpson House in Philadelphia.

Robert J. Williams