

SUPERINTENDING A HOME (FOREIGN) MISSION

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Since 1785, when two missionaries were sent to Canada by the American Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodism has had both foreign and home missions.¹ The new territory in nineteenth century America, for example, was supervised by an annual conference next to the newly opened area. Bishops would appoint ministers as missionaries to these new areas with supervision by a presiding elder (present-day district superintendent) of the host annual conference and nearest district. As required by church law, the bishops had authority to appoint presiding elders to districts or missions. Those presiding elders appointed to missions were not limited by church law to the four-year maximum term. Mission superintendents, as they were called, could serve as long as a bishop allowed.² Because some missions were small, the superintendent also was appointed to a local church. All this applied to the Arizona Mission.

Methodism played an intimate role on the Arizona Territory frontier during the late nineteenth century. The following is the testimony of how the Methodist Episcopal Church attempted to work during one decade in that Territory. One of the men given the responsibility of being superintendent of the Church was the Rev. Dr. George Adams. He was recognized by his co-workers for his ability to do much with little.

"A preacher of more than ordinary ability and an indefatigable worker," Adams was born on Dec. 9, 1836, presumably in Illinois. Very little is known of his childhood.³ In 1858, he and Lucinda Rose, a native of McGranville, New York, were married in Illinois. Their union was not blessed with children.⁴

Adams was received on trial by the Illinois Conference (ME) and ordained deacon in 1859. Two years later, he was admitted into full connection and ordained elder. His appointments for the next several years included Marion, DeWitt, Maroa, Hillbrough, and Champaign.⁵

¹Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in United States* (Baltimore, Md.: Magill and Clime, 1810), 94-95.

²*Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1876) Paragraph 161. See also Emory S. Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), II: 422-423.

³George Adams obituary; "Roll of the Honored Dead," Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1922), 203,206.

⁴Lucinda Adams obituary, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1912), 67; George Adams obituary, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1922), 203.

⁵*Fall Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Illinois Conference (ME) (1859-1866), passim.

In 1867, he was transferred to the Colorado Conference (ME) serving first at Central City (1867-1870). Here, he supervised the building of "one of the finest and largest churches in that region."⁶ In 1870, he was appointed senior minister of the Greeley-Cheyenne-Laramie Circuit. At the conference sessions of 1871 and 1872, he served as conference secretary. In 1872, Bishop Randolph Foster appointed him presiding elder of the Northern District of Colorado Conference.⁷ Because of the debt at Central City, Adams requested and received appointment back to that church as its financial agent. For two years, Adams and his wife traveled the eastern United States giving illustrated lectures on Central City's financial need.⁸

During Adams' tour, Bishop Matthew Simpson spoke with him about the superintendency of the Arizona Mission. Adams refused the position temporarily because he wanted to rescue the Central City situation. In the early summer of 1879, Adams successfully completed the Central City project. He then accepted Bishop Simpson's appointment. Adams and his wife made the 5,000 mile trip to Arizona via the railroad through San Francisco to Yuma, Arizona Territory. Then they traveled by stagecoach to his headquarters at Prescott. This appointment also included the ministerial position at the Prescott church which he held for two years.⁹

The story of planting Methodism in Arizona began in 1859. That year, the California Conference sent two ministers, Horace Bishop and David Tuthill, to Tubac and Tucson. Their efforts were not productive.¹⁰ In 1860, the work was put under missionary society and the ME bishop's control and was treated as a "foreign" mission.¹¹ As defined, this meant all money raised would go to the Arizona work and not be funneled through the California Conference. It also meant that all ministers appointed there would go as missionaries from their home conferences. No further work is mentioned until 1870, when John L. Dyer, presiding elder of the Santa Fe District of the Colorado Conference, preached at Fort Defiance in the northeast corner of the Territory.¹² Charles Cook, a preacher from Illinois,

⁶George Adams obituary, 203.

⁷*Ibid.*, 203; Conference Sessions, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1922), 207.

⁸George Adams obituary, 203; Wilbur Fisk, "The History of the Arizona Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church," Southern California Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1934), 200.

⁹*Sixty-first Annual Report*, Missionary Society, The Methodist Episcopal Church (1879), 173; *Sixty-second Annual Report*, Missionary Society (1880), 210. Hereafter cited as number *Annual Report*, M. S. (year); Florence Yount, *A Centennial of Methodists - Prescott, Arizona* (870-1970) (Prescott, Az.: The Centennial Committee of The United Methodist Church, 1970) states on p. 30 that George Bovard served the church for several months in 1880.

¹⁰*Missionary Advocate*, XV (1859) 4(July) 29; *Weekly Arizonian* (Tubac) April 7, 1859, 1; *Fall Minutes of the Annual Conference*, California Conference (ME) (1859), 289.

¹¹*Journal of the General Conference* (ME) (1860) 197, 366; Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, II: 422-423.

came later that year to work among the Pima Indians. However, no ME mission aid was available to him. The Presbyterians were willing to help so he transferred to that denomination.¹³

In 1872, Bishop Simpson found Rev. Glezen Reeder of the North Ohio Conference (ME) willing to go to Arizona as a mission superintendent. Reeder served three years there alongside a military chaplain and fellow ME minister, Alexander Gilmore, in Prescott and the surrounding area. When Reeder returned home in 1875, the work was left to Gilmore and a new arrival, Derrick B. Wright. By the time Reeder departed, one church was established which had a membership of 46.¹⁴ No superintendent was found for the mission for the following four years, but in the meantime, Gilmore, Wright, and J. Winnega carried on the work alongside their fellow ME Church, South co-workers. The ME Church, South had been in Arizona since 1870 working out of California. The only thing these ministers could do was "hold the ground."¹⁵

Adams arrived in Prescott in September, 1879. During the next two years, Adams held the dual role of mission superintendent and minister at Prescott.¹⁶ That year, he worked with William Mills at Tucson, Derrick Wright at Florence, and J. J. Wingar at Globe.¹⁷

On his first tour of southern Arizona that year, Adams secured property at Globe, Tucson, and Tombstone. His first day's work at Tombstone was memorable. He arrived in Tombstone at 4:00 AM. By 10:00 that morning he had received ownership of a lot for the ME Church. He then announced, by way of posted notices, that worship would be held that evening. A merchant was willing to open his yet unfinished building to have the worship service even though the walls, roof and doors were all that existed. That evening by candle and kerosene light, women and miners and other town citizens packed into the building. Adams lined out the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." After prayer Adams preached a sermon which brought back "memories of childhood, examples of fathers, prayers of mothers and the love of the Savior" and asked the audience to assert their manhood and . . . resist the evil influence around them." Lining out the hymn, "Rock of Ages," Adams closed the service and was thanked by the audience with praise and handshakes. Early the next morning, the minister/missionary was on his way by stagecoach to

¹²John L. Dyer, *The Snowshoe Itinerant*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cranston and Stowe, 1890), 252f.

¹³Charles Cook, *Among the Pimas*, (Albany, New York: Ladies Union Mission School Association, 1895).

¹⁴*Fifty-seventh Annual Report*, M. S. (1875), 167.

¹⁵*Fifty-eighth Annual Report*, M. S. (1876), 167; *Fifty-ninth Annual Report*, M. S. (1877), 184; *Sixtieth Annual Report*, M. S. (1878), 191f.

¹⁶See note 9 above.

¹⁷*Sixty-first Annual Report*, M. S. (1879), 173-174.

other points of the mission. Later, W. P. McIntyre was appointed minister/missionary at Tombstone.¹⁸

By 1881, the superintendent had helped develop the mission to the point it could be designated a mission conference. The mission had

. . . made more advancement in the way of accumulated church property during the . . . year than in all the former years of her history combined. Two years ago we had but one church - namely at Prescott. Last year we erected two . . . at Globe City and at Tombstone. . . . Since last March we have built three, . . . at Phoenix, Pinal and Tucson. . . . We now own in Arizona about \$35,000 worth of church property. . . . All the leading towns are now supplied by Methodist houses of worship.¹⁹

Bishop Thomas Bowman called the first session of the Arizona Mission Conference to order on July 7, 1881, in the Presbyterian Church in Tucson. The ME church was not yet completed. Adams continued as superintendent. Tucson, Tombstone, Globe, Phoenix, Prescott, and San Carlos Reservation received ministers, but Pinal-Florence, Verde, Tonto Basin, Safford-Clifton were left "to be supplied."²⁰ A lack of missionaries was a continual problem for the bishops and Adams.

Adams worked with over thirty ministers/missionaries during his eleven-year tenure. The churches could only be filled half the time with appointed missionary ministers.²¹ Two of his co-workers later gained some church-wide stature. Joseph Barry, of the Detroit Conference, came to Arizona for one year because of his health and was appointed to Tucson in 1882. Barry returned to Michigan once his health was regained. In 1904, he was elected a bishop of the church.²² George Bovard, of the Southern California Conference, served Camp Verde, Prescott and First Church, Phoenix during Adams' tenure. Bovard succeeded Adams as mission superintendent in 1890 for a seven-year term. He later served as president of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.²³

A variety of conferences were represented among the missionary/ministers who served in Arizona between 1880 and 1890.²⁴

¹⁸*Sixty-first Annual Report*, M. S. (1879), 175-176; Fisk, "History in Arizona Mission," *Southern California Conference (ME) Minutes*, (1934), 200-201; *Sixty-second Annual Report*, M. S. (1880), 210.

¹⁹*Sixty-third Annual Report*, M. S. (1881), 261.

²⁰*Fall Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Arizona Mission, (1881), 302 shows these to be supplied appointments. However, the *Sixty-third Annual Report*, M. S. (1881), shows all appointments (p. 260) but Safford-Clifton (p. 262) filled.

²¹See *Annual Reports*, M. S. (1880-1890) appointments.

²²Nolan Harmon, editor, *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (two volumes) (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1974) "Joseph Barry," I:256. Hereafter cited as Harmon, *Encyclopedia*.

²³Edward D. Jervoy, *The History of Methodism in Southern California and Arizona* (The Historical Society of the Southern California-Arizona Conference, 1960) 127-128; *Fall Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Arizona Mission (1880-1890) appointments; Harmon, *Encyclopedia*, "George Bovard," I:308.

²⁴*Fall Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Arizona Mission (1880-1890) appointments.

Conference: (or other status)	Number of ministers:	Conference: (or other status)	Number of ministers:
Colorado	7	Troy	1
Detroit	4	Upper Iowa	1
North Nebraska	2	Illinois	1
Southern California	2	Missouri	1
Southern Illinois	1	Rock River	1
Central Illinois	1	Arkansas	1
Vermont	1	Local Pastors	5
Iowa	1	Unidentifiable	
Northwest Indiana	1	Conferences	3

During Adams' superintendency, church buildings were constructed in Globe, Tombstone, Phoenix, Pinal and Tucson. Churches were organized in Benson, Flagstaff, Gila River, Kingman, Tempe Tucson (Spanish work), and Yuma.²⁵ Some of these were established along new railroads which were completed across the territory during this decade.

A project Adams hoped would succeed was Arizona Wesleyan University. Created in 1886, in Phoenix, the University existed for only one year with an elected board of trustees, an assembled faculty, and enrolled students.²⁶

Two of the problems unique to territory which Adams and the missionaries experienced were travel and lack of missionary personnel. Adams wrote throughout his term about traveling through the mission:

For a long time [Arizona] was almost inaccessible to the outer world, and until recently no railroad penetrated its borders. The only way to reach it was by stagecoach, over deserts, mountains, and vast stretches of plain, for a distance of 500 to 1,000 miles.

Traveling throughout this mission as superintendent is very fatiguing. Of all the charges in the Territory, Tucson is the only one on a line of railroad. In every other case it requires the most exhausting methods of travel to reach the different towns where our churches are located. The roads are, any of them, about as bad as they can be, and allow for the passage of a vehicle at all. I doubt if a worse road can be found in the face of the globe . . . for the passage of wheels than the one to Prescott. And be it remembered that during my four years' residence there I passed over its whole length to the railroad, 140 miles, not far from thirty times.²⁷

The superintendent of so large a field is no trifling matter. One circuit of the Territory is an experience of fatigue and labor such as the average Eastern minister knows absolutely nothing of. The distances are immense. The modes of travel are the most exhausting. I have often wished some of our Eastern men could have one ride across the two hundred miles of desert and mountains between Maricopa and Flagstaff which I am expected to travel from six to eight times in each year on a jolting stage coach by day and by night. . . .²⁸

[In coming to annual conference] one of our men drove in a buggy with his wife 350 miles over mountain and plain; another 250 miles; while in the case of most of our

²⁵*Annual Reports, M. S. (1880-1890) Arizona Mission.*

²⁶*Arizona Mission Conference (ME) Minutes, (1886), 11.*

²⁷*Sixty-sixth Annual Report, M. S. (1884), 219-220.*

²⁸*Sixty-eighth Annual Report, M. S. (1886), 311.*

other preachers a stageride of 110 miles involved, besides the railroad travel that was necessary.²⁹

Nearly all the charges are remote from each other, and long stage-rides are necessary to reach them. The preachers rarely see the face of a[nother] minister from one year's end to another.³⁰

Missionary deficiency was mentioned often: "The missionary must often be content to toil for years with little visible fruit of his labors."³¹

I have been greatly embarrassed in my work on account of the frequent change in our ministerial working force. . . . Every man who was appointed to the mission by Bishop Bowman during his visit last year [1881] is gone, and every charge has been supplied by a new minister.³²

"There has been constant change in the *personnel* of the mission, thus crippling and retarding the work."³³

If we could secure about a half-dozen young men without families to take charge of several circuits we could enlarge operations of the Arizona Mission most effectively. The towns are remote from each other, and it is hard to so group them together as to form any thing like a compact circuit. Still something in that direction could be accomplished if the necessary men could be found.³⁴

To chart some of what Adams was saying, the following is a breakdown of some of the appointment years:³⁵

- 1880: All seven charges were filled.
- 1881: Three out of ten charges were left to be supplied.
- 1883: Seven out of twelve charges were left to be supplied.
- 1887: Eight out of seventeen charges were left to be supplied.
- 1889: Ten out of nineteen charges were left to be supplied.
- 1890: Five out of thirteen charges were left to be supplied.

The missionaries/ministers helped increase the Methodist Episcopal Church membership from 57 in 1880 to 348 in 1890.

Increasing blindness caused Superintendent Adams to have to retire in 1890. Bishop Daniel Goodsell, who presided at the 1890 Arizona Mission Conference, appointed George Bovard to continue superintending the work. Taking the retired relationship from the Colorado Conference, the Adams moved to Phoenix. Both suffered from near blindness for the

²⁹*Seventieth Annual Report*, M. S. (1888), 346.

³⁰*Seventy-first Annual Report*, M. S. (1889), 296.

³¹*Sixty-second Annual Report*, M. S. (1880), 212.

³²*Sixty-fourth Annual Report*, M. S. (1882), 182-183.

³³*Sixty-seventh Annual Report*, M. S. (1885), 257.

³⁴*Seventieth Annual Report*, M. S. (1888), 347.

³⁵*Annual Reports*, M. S. (1880), 211f.; (1881), 261f.; (1883), 213-215; (1887), 319; (1889), 345f.; (1890), 296f.

rest of their lives. He was able to sell insurance in his last years.³⁶ In 1911 he was listed as one of the incorporators of the Arizona Deaconess Hospital in Phoenix.³⁷

Death came in 1911 for his wife Lucinda. He died in Phoenix on January 17, 1922. Both are buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Phoenix.³⁸

At his death, Adams probably knew the Methodist Episcopal Church in Arizona had grown to over thirty charges and over 4,400 members. The conference lost its mission conference status in 1920 and had become a mission district (until 1925 when it became just a district) of the Southern California Conference.³⁹ Many missionaries gave of their time in Arizona through the years. For George Adams, superintending a home (foreign) mission was "no trifling matter."⁴⁰

³⁶Dr. George Adams obituary, *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix) Jan. 18, 1922; Arizona Mission Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1890), 8-9; *Seventy-second Annual Report*, M. S. (1890), 277; Rev. George Adams obituary, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1922), 203.

³⁷James Lovelace, *The Journey and The Centennial of First United Methodist Church, Phoenix, Arizona*, (Phoenix: First United Methodist Church Centennial Committee, 1981), 12.

³⁸Lucinda Adams obituary, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1912), 67; George Adams obituary, Colorado Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1922), 203; Dr. George Adams obituary, *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix) Jan. 18, 1922, 6.

³⁹Jervey, *History of Methodism in Southern California and Arizona*, 145; Southern California Conference (ME) *Minutes*, (1920), 162-165; Southern California-Arizona Conference *Journal* (1950) (The Methodist Church), 337 (Districts).

⁴⁰*Sixty-eighth Annual Report*, M. S. (1886), 311.