

Chapter V. 1939 and Later

Everyone knows that Methodism was founded by John Wesley in England in the eighteenth century, and soon spread to the American Colonies. After the Revolution it was necessary to establish a separate organization for this country and that was accomplished at the famous Christmas Conference in Baltimore in December 1784, the resulting society being known as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Like Christianity itself and all large religious systems, it tended to break up because of differences in interpretation. Several minor sects broke away, but only two divisions need detail us here. The first of these occurred in 1828 when a group, "largely moved by an insistence on lay representation" and interested in church government with bishops, became a separate church under the name of Methodist Protestant." The big historic break between North and South came in 1844. It has usually been understood that this was caused by the slavery question; but it seems that there was also a difference of opinion about the power of the Bishops as opposed to that of a the General Conference. At any rate the seceding group called itself the "Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

These three great branches of Methodism functioned separately through most of the nineteenth century and almost half of the twentieth. The principle of lay delegation was introduced in the Church North as early as 1869, and was further developed from time to time by the General Conference and incorporated in the Discipline. For some years before 1939 lay conferences as counterparts to the General and Annual Conferences were recognized parts of the church government. As to slavery, although individual rancor persisted here and there, as between the two churches this issue ceased to be more than a memory. These and others might be called the negative reasons for union—that is the lapse of the old, positive causes for dissention. But the great positive argument for union was a growing conviction throughout the years that a divided church is less effective and less in keeping with the mission of a church, than one that is united. After years of agitation the machinery for elections was set up, each denomination conducting its voting in its own way. The voting process went on from 1936 to 1939 and resulted in large majorities in favor of union in all three churches. The historic Uniting Conference was held in Kansas City, Missouri in May 1939; and this fact is in itself important for the Lawrence churches because Lawrence is so close to Kansas City that many people from here could attend some of the inspiring sessions. But the results of the conference are of vast importance for all Methodism. Some of them are technical and many must be completely passed over in a discussion of a single local church, but others require some explanation.

First, there is a territorial arrangement into which local churches are fitted. It seems that for many years the bishops were general superintendents of the whole church with equal powers, and a degree of movement throughout the country that accorded with the itinerant character of the ministers. Later areas were established with a bishop resident in each and having supervision over it, though a bishop living in one area could preside over a conference in another. The contribution of the merger to this situation was to introduce a new geographical division. This is the Jurisdiction made up of several

areas. We have already seen that the Wesleyan Service Guild introduced into its organization, an element which seems to be a forerunner of this system. There are five such divisions taken together covering the whole country, besides one central jurisdiction overlapping most of the others and made up of Negro conferences.

Each Jurisdiction has a Conference made up of elected representatives both ministerial and lay, from the Annual Conferences, with power to elect bishops and exercise various types of administrative authority. From the time this system was put into effect our local church was a part of and in a sense subject to three other conferences – the General, Jurisdictional, Annual, and under some circumstances a fourth the District. Probably few persons except the ministers and lay delegates from any given local church would be very keenly aware of this hierarchical arrangement. And yet several organizations, such as women's societies, find themselves constantly in touch with conference officers on these various levels.

Some aspects of the new set-up are very apparent to many church workers. First, there is the name. Although the Disciplines from 1940 on carry on their title pages the historic names of the three uniting churches printed in brackets, yet the official name of the combined organization is The Methodist Church.

Secondly, there are certain changes in the organization of the Official Board. For many years that body had elected a chairman to preside in the absence of the minister, and yet it was the latter who was considered the regular presiding officer. Now the Board is instructed by the Discipline to elect officers, the chief of whom shall be a chairman.¹⁹ There have long been committees of the Board, but now the main subdivisions are called Commissions and to deal respectively with Membership and Evangelism, Education, Missions, and Finance. Also, numerous committees continue to be appointed and to function in connection with the Official Board.²⁰

In the third place great changes have been made in the form of various sub organizations. The Church School looks outwardly much as it did before with a general superintendent and several departmental superintendents, as well as other officers and teachers for the various age groups. And these persons who formerly constituted the Sunday School Board, are still authorized to meet as a Workers' Conference; But the authority over the school rests now in the Commission on Education, reporting to the Official Board and the Quarterly Conference.

The organization formerly known as the Methodist Brotherhood is now working under a new constitution and with the official title, Methodist Men. The Lawrence group became affiliated with the National Methodist Men in 1950. It seems to function much as before with monthly dinner meetings and other activities as occasions require.

The old historic name, Epworth League, applied for so many years to the youth organization of the Church, is no longer used. In its place is the term Methodist Youth Fellowship. According to the Discipline this name applies to all Methodist young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-three; but probably no church would have people

with so wide a difference in age in the same society. There is considerable latitude in carrying out this provision because of different local conditions. In Lawrence the Wesley Foundation has maintained a Youth Fellowship which, until the opening of the new Methodist Student Center, has met in the basement of the church on Sunday evening for supper, devotions, and addresses. Younger people are organized into the Senior M.Y.F., the Junior M.Y.F. etc. according to age. One of the important and significant activities of these young people is the annual "Booth Festival." Large quantities of canned fruit and other food products are gathered and taken to some Methodist institution within a radius of a few miles. Money also is collected. Late in 1951 the M.Y.F. of Ottawa District gave \$10,241 to help restore the Argentine Methodist Mission which had been destroyed by the disastrous flood of that year. The Lawrence young people made a contribution to this fund.

Perhaps the work of women in the church provides the most striking example of obvious changes since the merger. We have seen that before the merger the church had a Ladies' Aid Society, with several divisions, a Woman's League, two missionary societies, each at times sponsoring groups for children and youth, and Guilds for employed women. The Women's League as we have noted was not a Disciplinary organization and it did not continue after the new arrangement was put into effect. Its last meeting was on May 10, 1940 and there was a note of sadness in it as each member told what membership in this society had meant to her.

The Ladies Aid and the two Missionary Societies were superceded by an organization called the Woman's Society of Christian Service. That is, this is true on the local level, but this organization, commonly spoken of as the W.S.C.S. reflects a corresponding change in the Church as a whole. There is now one Board of Missions which takes over the work formerly done not only by certain agencies in the Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church, with which we are not concerned, but also by certain boards of the Methodist Episcopal Church formerly dealing with Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Church Extension, the Ladies' Aid and other activities. This one central Board has three important divisions, one dealing with Foreign Missions, one with Home Missions and Church Extension, and the third having the title of the Woman's Division of Christian Service. This not only has a central organization to determine policy and administration but also has regional counterparts arranged in the same hierarchical manner as the Conferences. That is, there is a Jurisdictional, a Conference, a District, and a local W.S.C.S. It is chiefly the last named that concerns us here. Each society has various departments. One having to do with spiritual life conducts prayer meetings and devotional exercises. Others deal with literature, finance and other aspects of women's work. But the one that best illustrates the movement of which this is a part is the Department of Missionary Education which supervises study classes and other means of introducing missionary material. The important thing to note is that all missionary subject matter introduced is balanced between the foreign and home fields. Also that some activities of the local society correspond rather closely to those handled earlier by the Ladies' Aid. Unification is the keynote of these recent years; and we find it not only in the coming of three churches in the Uniting Conference of 1939 but also in

the resulting organization. Also the age long and frequently criticized distinction by which one society dealt with Home missions and another with Foreign is done away.

The Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized in Lawrence First Church in a morning meeting August 21, 1940. It included a beautiful enrollment ceremony, at which the women signed the charter. It naturally took a little time to get the new machinery into complete working order; but for something like fourteen years now—1954—this has been a very active and alive society. It contains all the departments listed above and others, which take charge of various phases of work. It is not a moneymaking organization. Occasionally a little money is made on a dinner which is served as an accommodation for some other society, but practically all the money comes from pledges and special collections. The budget, including provision for local activities, district, conference, and jurisdiction expenses, and missionary enterprises, amounts up to thousands of dollars. Many members take one or two or three Methodist magazines, thus keeping in touch with the work of the church as a whole. Every summer members of this society attend the School of Missions at Baker University in Baldwin, and later the subjects studied there are presented here in study classes or through other group meetings. Members attend district conference meetings and some of the officers are also present at gatherings at the jurisdiction level. Moreover several members of the local society have held Conference and District offices. For a number of years Mrs. Minnie Walker was corresponding secretary of the Conference organization; and Mrs. H.B. Latimer is now Conference secretary of Missionary Education, having served some time previously in the similar office for the District. Mrs. C.C. Stewart was for years treasurer of the district, Mrs. O.E. Allison secretary of Spiritual Life, Mrs. George Hoefler, secretary of Christian Social Relations and Local Church Activities, Miss Nettie Wismer, Secretary of Wesleyan Service Guild and later of Missionary Personnel, Mrs. Sam Ferguson, Secretary of Children's work and later president of the District. Just as the old Ladies' Aid was broken up into divisions for better acquaintance and more effective work, so the W.S.C.S. is organized into smaller groups, usually called Circles. They are sometimes arranged on a geographical basis, other times not. There is a frequent reorganization to give members wider acquaintance in the society as a whole. Each Circle has its own officers, usually a counterpart for each officer of the general society. It has its own meetings, with devotions, program, and social hour, and carries on to some extent at least its own projects especially as to charitable work. But membership pledges of the general society are collected through the circles. A large number of women in the last fourteen years have held office in the general society or a circle or both. It is of course impossible to give a list of them; but perhaps the names should be given of those who have been general presidents. They are as follows: Mrs. Howard Sutherland, Mrs. Leon Abele, Mrs. Sam Ferguson, Mrs. George Hoefler, Mrs. F.G. Snart, Mrs. Clifford Dean, Mrs. Maurice Myer, and Mrs. Olie Parsons.

Of course the Standard Bearers, Little Light Bearers, and all the other sub organizations for children and youth that used to be fostered by the Home and Foreign Societies came to an end with the Merger. But this does not mean that the organized women of Methodism have no concern for interesting younger people in missions. One way in which this is done is for the secretary of children's work to visit certain departments of the Church School at stated times and talk on Missionary subjects to the

children. There were two organizations for children, which overlapped the Merger. These were the King's Guards and the King's Swordsmen, for boys and girls, led from 1934 to 1949 by Miss Naomi Light, who had returned from missionary work in India. Young as these children were, they made substantial money contributions to church enterprises and also learned much about missionary work. They specialized in attention to leper colonies and interested many adults in collections for the unfortunate people in those areas.

The Harmony Circle, which we have seen had been organized by Mrs. Hunt in the days of the old Ladies' Aid, was reorganized to fit into the W.S.C.S. constitution after the Merger. It now functions as one of the Circles of that organization, but holds its meetings at night because the members are kept at home in the daytime with young children.

As to the Guild, we have seen that from 1933 to 1940 there were two Guilds in the Lawrence Church; one was the old Guild, which was purely local and went back to 1916, the other was a national organization embodying at least two important principles that were adopted by the church as a whole in 1939. These are the jurisdictional organization, and the combination of Home and Foreign Missions. The church as a whole also adopted this Guild as part of its new set-up after the Merger, and incorporated in the Discipline a recommendation that a Wesleyan Service Guild be established in each church as auxiliary to the Woman's Society of Christian Service. The old Methodist Guild in Lawrence held its last meeting in July 1940. On September 5 of that year Dr. Hunt held a called meeting of women eligible for this group and organized them into something which for some months was called the Business and Professional Women's Unit of the Woman's Society of Christian Service. This cumbersome title was broad enough to cover both of the former societies. But the women present at the initial meeting signed the charter roll and elected officers. The first president was Miss Nettie Wismer and other members were chosen to look after phases of the work corresponding to the chief departments of the W.S.C.S. After a few months the W.S.G. Handbook came into use, from early in 1942 delegates were sent to W.S.G. conferences in other towns, and from about this time the name Wesleyan Service Guild was used and the society conformed completely to the constitution of that organization.

There is little to be said about its meetings that has not already been said about those of its predecessors. They have been mostly dinner meetings and mostly at the church. There is always a devotional service and a business meeting. Occasionally some recreation is indulged in; but usually the Guild has a serious program. At times this consists of discussions by members, perhaps on some subject suggested by the central office for all W.S.C.S. and Guild chapters; but frequently the program is a talk by a guest speaker, and such a speaker is likely to be a returned missionary. The Guild makes financial contributions to both Home and Foreign Missions, and frequently helps with charitable projects, local or otherwise. In 1944 a Junior Wesleyan Service Guild was organized, and continued to function for something like two years. The sponsor of this project was Mrs. George S. Ware.

Complex as the Lawrence First Church must seem to be from the above narrative, there are other activities and interests, which have not been described, some of which

cannot be because of lack of records. And yet they have left their impression on many people, and they must be at least briefly referred to.

Little or nothing has been said about the prayer meeting. In the old form of a special gathering in Wednesday evening it ceased to exist some years ago. But this does not mean that the church ceased to pray. One of the intangibles of church life which have a powerful impact but cannot be reduced to statistics or narrative is the prayer life of its people. Many times this has caused the formation of "prayer circles" which leave no record.

Music is an important part of worship services, and no doubt many church members look back through the years and wish they might give some testimony to the excellence of some organist or soloist or choir director whose ministrations have been a blessing. But no narrative can gather up and pass on to people all the Christmas and Easter programs, and scores of solos and anthems that have been a part of the service of this church. The choir has sometimes been a quartet and sometimes a chorus. At various times youth choirs have been organized to give young people, large and small, a part in the Sunday worship. In recent years there have been four choirs, the Chancel Choir, the Junior Choir for people of high school age, the Angelus Choir for a younger group and the Wesley Choir.

Any church, but especially a large one, has an enormous amount of clerical work to be done. There are letters and financial statements to the members that must be typed or mimeographed, bulletins to be arranged and either sent out to be printed or produced by some manifolding process in the office, records of membership, financial contributions, committees etc. to be kept and filed, and many other duties of a clerical nature to be performed. Moreover someone has to be in the office to keep in touch with members by telephone and act as a general clearinghouse for church information. For many years the Church employed a secretary whose constant work has been invaluable but of which we have no real record.

Little has been said about Haskell, and yet the ministry to this group of Indian young people has been a constant concern to this church. Years ago on Sundays the Haskell students of Methodist leaning came to the church. In more recent years the church has gone to them. Many times the minister, whoever he might be, has personally conducted weeknight services at the school. At other times laymen and laywomen have assumed chief responsibility for holding these meetings but with frequent talks by the minister. For some time the leader in this work has been Mrs. Lyle Hart.

The Boy Scouts are not really, of course, a denominational organization, and it seems that a troop is not usually made up of boys from any one church. But on the other hand a church has responsibility for a troop. For years Troop number 52 has been affiliated in this way with the First Methodist Church in Lawrence. For nearly twenty years the large third floor room of the Ecke Building has served as headquarters for this group of boys; and their activities have been led by laymen from this church.

Temperance is always a subject of interest to Methodists. We have no records of special temperance organizations, but at various times, particularly in the period of agitation about repeal, this church has offered rooms for temperance meetings and in various other ways co-operated with the "dry" forces.

We have seen that the spirit of co-operation has been at work for many years. As to the three great branches of Methodism it ended in complete unification. But throughout the years there has been also a type of co-operation within communities that transcended denominational lines. This is as true of Lawrence as of other towns. A Ministerial Alliance has existed in this community probably without interruption since 1871. At various times there have been such organizations as a Sunday School Union in the county, and a Missionary Union made up of women's Missionary Societies from the different churches. For some years there has been a Lawrence Council of Church Women, co-ordinating all their activities, missionary and otherwise. It is now made up of groups from twenty-two churches. Also since about 1939 there has been an organization made up of Brotherhoods in the different churches. In recent months still another organization has been in process of development. It is to be called the Lawrence Council of Churches, and is to be auxiliary to the Kansas State Council of Churches. Each local church is to be represented on the governing body by the minister, one layman, one laywoman, and one representative of the youth.

One of the most important questions to ask about any local church is the extent to which it has contributed the number of people going out into the world to do fulltime religious work. It is very difficult to know about this accurately and completely because some people take the first steps toward such a career in their home or university church and later complete their training and enter upon their life work in other surroundings. Contact with the home church may be lost. Even so the list in Lawrence is fairly long. Of course it is much longer than it would be without the University. Many young people of the Wesley Foundation, or of the student group before the beginning of that organization, have become ministers, missionaries, deaconesses, Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A. workers, or teachers or directors of religious education. Also a number of such religious workers have received their first recommendation for license to preach from the Quarterly Conference in Lawrence First Church. The total list, from the University and down town now stands at about 125.

Footnotes

1. By appointment of the Annual Conference of 1915 Dr. Wolfe became district superintendent of the Topeka District and he and his family moved to Topeka. He continued to hold this position until 1918; then for about five years he was executive secretary for the Centenary movement in the Wichita Area. In 1925 he was district superintendent of the Manhattan District, and in 1926 and 1927 executive secretary for the Home for the Aged in Topeka. He held many offices of responsibility in the Conference throughout the years and was also elected to represent that group at the General Conference.
2. Frank Herron Smith continued his missionary work in Korea till 1926 when he was transferred to this country and made superintendent of Japanese churches scattered over something like half the United States. More will be said of his work later.
3. Mr. Thompson left Lawrence in 1918 and for two years had charge of the Washington Avenue church in Parsons. After that he served six pastorates of from two to seven years each in the following churches; Coffeyville First, Lowman Memorial Topeka, Dodge City First, Hutchinson First, Pittsburg First, and Ottawa First. He retired in 1952 and has since been the pastor of the Oskaloosa Church.
4. From here Dr. Hargett went to Baldwin. He then transferred to the Indiana Conference and continued there for several years. His last charge being in Rushville, Indiana. On retirement he moved to Akron, his old home, and it was there that he died suddenly of a heart attack on September 8, 1944. Mrs. Hargett still (1954) lives at the family home 59 Mount View Avenue, Akron, Ohio. These statements about Dr. Hargett are taken from the old history and from a letter of July 8, 1954 from Mr. Howard E. Strauch, Alumni Field Secretary for Ohio Wesleyan University.
5. See a historical sketch by Professor H.K. Ebright published in the minutes of the Kansas Conference held in September 1939, p. 489. It is stated that the forty-eighth and last session of the West German Conference was held at Lincoln, Nebraska in 1926. Thus it appears that the disbanding of the German congregation in Lawrence came only a few years before that of the Conference.
6. This brief account of Dr. Klyne's life and work is taken from his "pastoral record" in the minutes of the Kansas Conference for 1922. In that year he was transferred to Colorado and for two years was pastor of the First Church in Colorado Springs. He is believed to have gone from that city to someplace in California in 1924. A member of the Colorado Springs church who was there in Dr. Klyne's time believes that he died at least as long ago as 1944; but we have no records with regard to his late life or his death. See a letter of May 28, 1954 from Esther L. Wickard, chairman of the Committee on Records of the Colorado Springs church. In November 1934, when the church celebrated its eightieth anniversary, Dr. Klyne wrote a letter from Fontana, California.

7. The Methodist Church in the United States has celebrated at least three centenaries. The first, in 1866, commemorated the first Methodist preaching in this country, the second in 1884 marked the one hundredth year since the church was organized under the United States government; and the third celebrated a century of missionary effort, launched by a committee of one hundred in 1917. This last was not limited to 1917 but consisted of a huge money-getting project in the interest of missions and post war reconstruction, which continued for about five years. See a book called The World Service of the Methodist Episcopal Church, printed by the Methodist Book Concern in 1923, page v.
8. The account of Dr. Klyne's ministry is based on Official Board records, old Bulletins, and other scattered records. A separate pamphlet was printed about the Eggert gift.
9. This record of Dr. Hislop's ministry is based on Official Board minutes, old Bulletins, and various reports and miscellaneous papers preserved by the Official Board. In October 1928 Dr. Hislop was transferred to Kansas City, Missouri and remained there fourteen years, spending eight years as District Superintendent and the rest in pastorates. In 1942 he returned to Kansas and for about two years had charge of the Oakland church in Topeka. His death occurred in Topeka on May 27, 1944. The account of his life is taken mostly from an obituary printed in the minutes of the Kansas Conference for 1944, pp. 103-104.
10. After leaving Lawrence in the spring of 1931 Dr. Gordon had a seven year pastorate in Pittsburg and then went to Abilene for the Conference year 1938-39. In the latter year the three churches were united and the conference and district boundaries were made over. Dr. Gordon continued in Abilene some time longer but was in the Central Kansas Conference. He served several years as superintendent of the Concordia District; and in 1944 retired because of ill health. He died October 28, 1944 at Concordia. Mrs. Gordon died in Kansas City, Missouri in July 1946. This account of Dr. Gordon has been taken from Official Board records, Bulletins and other local material, the Official Record of the Kansas Conference 1939, p. 356 and 1944 p. 22; also a letter from his brother, Dr. Ernest Gordon. This account of the anniversary is taken from the Lawrence Journal World, October 11, 1929.
11. Dr. Hunt left Lawrence in May 1941. He went to First Church Salina, stayed there five and a half years, and then was appointed superintendent of the Wichita District in the Central Kansas Conference. This account of Dr. Hunt's ministry is based on records of the Official Board and Board of Trustees, Bulletins and old programs, newspaper clippings, and a letter from Dr. Hunt.
12. Every one of our ministers has had various responsibilities in connection with the Annual Conference or the Methodist Church on some other level or both. It was at first planned to include in a footnote the record of such service for each of them. But a list of this sort would be very long and would probably be confusing and perhaps tiring to any reader not particularly interested in this type of activity. It seems desirable, however, to give somewhere an account of someone's record in this

connection that lay members may catch a glimpse of the enormous amount of work that a minister has to do outside his own parish. It is fitting to give a report of Dr. Allison in this connection because he seems to have established a record for this Conference. He was:

- Elected to General Conference seven times
- A delegate to the Uniting Conference in Kansas City in 1939
- A member of the Committee of 200 in connection with the Crusade for Christ, as we have seen
- On the General Board of Education for some years
- A member of the National Board of Men's Work for a time
- Has been a trustee of Baker University, Southern Methodist University, and Philander Smith College
- Has been chairman of the Board of Ministerial Training in this Conference for about thirty years
- Has served on twenty-five other boards and committees of the Annual Conference. Some of these were temporary groups to perform some special duty, such as the uniting of two conferences; but others were standing committees and in some cases Dr. Allison was named year after year

This list is taken mostly from a collection of minutes of the Annual Conference; but the collection is not complete. If the gaps were filled the list might be longer. Compare this with Dr. Hislop's activities in Lawrence, spoken of on page 17. The two taken together show something of the demands that are made on a minister's time and strength over and above the regular work of his church.

13. These statements about Dr. Smith's work are taken from the reports that he made from time to time to the Board of Missions, and magazine articles and circular letters that he wrote at the time to keep church members in touch with the work among the Japanese.
14. This account of student work is based chiefly on official reports by G.B. Thompson and E.F. Price.
15. See the Discipline for 1932, #323; 1940, #528, 541-2; 1944, #141; 1952, #145, 206 and following.