Pride, Shame, & Pain:
Methodism’s History with
Racism and Efforts to
Dismantle it
Heritage Sunday 2021

General Commission on Archives and
History of The United Methodist Church

1 Logo borrowed from the General Commission on Religion and Race. Kelly Fitzgerald, ed. Racism: The Church’s Unfinished Agenda, a Journal of the National Convocation on Racism (General Commission on Religion and Race, 1987).
"The formidable task of The United Methodist Church is to understand and embrace its Mission as a Spirit-sent body placed in the bowels of racist policies, politics and programs wherever they are found. The Convocation logo attempts to describe this Mission. The Spirit is depicted by the doves and their flaming wings. The colors of the doves represent the colorful peoples of Methodism who have been charged with a continuing mandate to overcome the evils of Racism. The word ‘RACISM’ is rendered in bold, white letters signifying that Racism is still a blatant reality in our society and is overwhelmingly White. The cracked letters symbolize that the specter of Racism has been around a long time and is nothing new! The informal script of the ‘agenda’ is like a memo to the Church. It is a call from the people to the Mission and not a formal, finished program. The doves have penetrated part of the ‘sign’ but only a part. There is much yet to do which is the church's unfinished agenda.”
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Pride, Shame, & Pain

Why an exploration of our history is important

“Denial is the heartbeat of racism, beating across ideologies, race, and nations.” - Ibram Kendi

Denominations are no less at fault for denial. Too often, denominations, like those in the Methodist tradition, seek to highlight their proud moments in their past. For Methodists, this comes easily. From our educational systems, healthcare institutions, missionary endeavors, and disaster response to our emphasis on eradicating malaria, poverty, malnutrition, and hunger—Methodists, throughout history, have accomplished much of which to be proud. But there’s more to the story. There’s the side of Methodism that isn’t worthy of pride, that is harder to tell, that is easier to deny. But “denial is the heartbeat of racism.”

On June 8, 2020, amidst a racial reckoning in the United States that reverberated across the globe and on Juneteenth 2020, the day that marks the end of slavery in the United States, the Bishops of The United Methodist Church (UMC) called on fellow United Methodists to dismantle racism through a “multi-level effort to initiate a sustained and coordinated effort to

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2 Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist* (New York City: One World) 9.
dismantle racism and promote collective action to work toward racial justice.”3 In their call, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi reminded United Methodists of the cycle of racism:

You know the story—A few days of headlines followed by a few days of protests followed by short-lived initiatives, hollow acts of repentance and broken promises. You know the story—A spark of hope that gets doused when something else comes along to grab the headlines or to grab financial resources. You know the story—A fading of emphasis, a sigh of relief from some—“we don’t have to deal with that anymore.” You know the story—A cry of despair from others that “it will never change,” and a voice of anger that says, “I knew it was too good to be true.” It is a story that has played out far too many times. And in the midst of it all, we wait for the next gunshot, the next knee on the neck, the next cry of, “I can’t breathe.”4

Do you know the whole story? You might know how the story has played out in contemporary times if you’ve watched national and international news or paid attention to social media. But do you know the story of Methodists’ complicity in racism? Do you know that Methodists segregated African Americans into a separate jurisdiction because white Methodists wanted to ensure that Black Methodists wouldn’t be sent to serve white congregations? Do you know that our historic denomination (the Methodist Episcopal Church) separated over whether or not slavery was moral, even some Methodists claiming it was biblical? Do you know that some of our founding leaders pulled Black Methodists from their prayer-bended knees and ordered them to leave because it was white peoples’ turn to pray? Do you know that Methodist preachers were members and leaders of the Ku Klux Klan? Do you know these stories?

Bishop Moore-Koikoi hopes that, “This time—this time—it has to be different. We must change the story this time as we press on to freedom.”

But in order to change the story, you have to know the full story.

This Heritage Sunday, we’re going to tell that full story. It won’t be easy to hear, and it shouldn’t be. Confronting and acknowledging a racist past and the ways that past creeps into the present is not easy work. It demands intention, humility, ownership, vulnerability, and, most of all, action. This story is not merely words or information—even though it is also that. It’s a call to be different, a call to act differently, a call to create a future where historians one hundred years from now will recognize this as the moment that United Methodists finally got the full story.

This workbook is divided up into glimpses of our past. These glimpses are meant to be places to begin discussion, self-reflection, and action. They provide the basic historic information and are presented in hopes that you will be intrigued to learn more about Methodism’s past. I’ve done my best to capture the narrative of race within Methodism in a few short pages, but there are dozens of books that, necessarily so, provide more detail and nuance to this narrative. I encourage you to design book studies around those larger

3 Kendi, p. 9.
https://www.umc.org/en/content/bishops-juneteenth-dismantling-racism-announcement
monographs. GCAH would be more than happy to help you design these book studies. We’ve included well-known and lesser-known historical documents, presented with brief historic context. These are meant to help you engage directly with statements from our past, to wrestle with the language, and to digest often unknown efforts to support, discern, or dismantle racism.

This is also not a complete story. There are many local churches who do not have a recorded historical narrative. This is why we’ve provided step-by-step instructions for those interested to begin to research the history of their congregations, to record that history, to present that history, and to create a more anti-racist future. I also ask that as you read through this narrative, as you examine the documents, and as you listen to the videos, if there are stories, documents, images, or videos that you think are missing and need to be a part of the larger narrative, please reach out to me personally. Historians work better as teams for no single historian can provide the whole narrative.

As any and all efforts to do this work are never correctly done alone, we thank the General Commission on Religion and Race and United Methodist Women for their assistance in putting together these resources and their willingness to let us borrow some previously published resources.

As you read, please keep in mind that, “[T]he only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it. The attempt to turn this usefully descriptive term [racism] into an almost unusable slur is, of course, designed to do the opposite: to freeze us into inaction.”

It’s time to act.

Ashley Boggan Dreff, Ph.D.
General Secretary
General Commission on Archives and History
United Methodist Church
April 2021

5 Kendi, 10.
Historical Narrative

John Wesley and Anti-Racism

It’s the responsibility of white people to identify, call out, and stop racism as white persons are, through the way that societies privileges whiteness, the perpetrators of racism and not victims of it.

This is not a political statement. This is a Weslayan statement. It is a modern-day verbiage of John Wesley’s Thoughts Upon Slavery, written in 1774.

Wesley was first exposed to the racist institution of slavery while living in the American colony of Georgia in the 1730s. The abolitionist movement in America did not officially begin in an organized fashion until the 1830s with the formation of American Anti-Slavery Society. However, prior to this organization, there were individuals, Black and white, protesting the injustices of the institution, the hierarchies it created within God’s Kingdom, and the resulting systems of oppression imposed relentlessly on those who were not white.

John Wesley was one of them. Writing Thoughts Upon Slavery in 1774 makes this tract one of the earliest written by a white person condemning the white-controlled institution. Wesley condemned, in particular, the American form of chattel slavery, which gave the “master an arbitrary power” that was unlimited for it was so often without “any correction” and which “descends in its full extent from parent to child, even to the latest generation.”

In his early commentary we see Wesley as calling out a system, a system which esteemed and degraded persons from Africa as lesser, as somehow justified as property, based on no other quality except from where they were kidnapped.

Wesley further calls out the colonial assumption that Western society was somehow superior to those of the Southern hemisphere. He quotes various reports from missionaries and others to show that Africa was, in fact, civilized, and thus the persons therein were not “savages” or “lesser” but were equally created in the eyes of God. He describes the land of Africa as “fertile, producing abundance of rice and roots,” a place which had its own economy, policies, religions, and traditions. In case his descriptions of civilization were not direct enough, Wesley went further and called out persons who perpetuated these stereotypes as racist:

Upon the whole therefore the negroes who inhabit the coast of Africa, from the river Senegal to the southern bounds of Angola, are so far from being the stupid, senseless, brutish, lazy barbarians, the fierce, cruel, perfidious savages they have been described, that on the contrary,

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1 Thoughts upon slavery, XI:59, sec. 2.11
they are represented by them who had no motive to flatter them, as remarkably sensible,
considering the few advantages they have for improving their understanding:--As very
industrious, perhaps more so than any other natives of so warm a climate.--As fair, just and
honest in their dealings, unless where white men have taught them to be otherwise:--And as far
more mild, friendly and kind to strangers, than any of our forefathers were. Our forefathers!
Where shall we find at this day, among the fair- faced natives of Europe, a nation generally
practicing the justice, mercy, and truth, which are related of these poor black Africans? Suppose
the preceding accounts are true, (which I see no reason or pretense to doubt of) and we may leave
England and France, to seek genuine honesty in Benin, Congo, or Angola.²

In this one paragraph we can see the beginnings of anti-racism within John Wesley’s thoughts. He
calls out a stereotype. He corrects it. And he places the burgeoning racism, correctly, in the laps of
the “forefathers,” those white or “fair-faced natives of Europe” who were supposed to be
beacons of “justice, mercy, and truth” but instead colonized lands, kidnapped persons, and
enslaved them. Thus, Wesley proclaims that the virtues of “justice, mercy, and truth” cannot be
learned from Europeans for they are enslavers, but must be learned from the people of Africa for
it is they who are exemplars of “genuine honesty.”

One of the more unusual elements of this tract is that Wesley is not basing his main
argument in citing Scripture (his normal defense) but instead invoking natural justice, in
which slavery is contrary to the basic way that God creates:

Where is the justice of inflicting the severest evils, on those who have done us no wrong? Of
depriving those that never injured us in word or deed, of every comfort of life? Of tearing them
from their native country, and depriving them of liberty itself? To which an Angolan, has the same
natural right as an Englishman, and on which he sets as high a value? Yea where is the justice of
taking away the lives of innocent, inoffensive men? Murdering thousands of them in their own
land, by the hands of their own countrymen: Many thousands, year after year, on shipboard, and
then casting them like dung into the sea! And tens of thousands in that cruel slavery, to which
they are so unjustly reduced? But waving, for the present, all other considerations, I strike at the
root of this complicated villainy. I absolutely deny all slave-holding to be consistent with any
degree of even natural justice.³

Finally, Wesley recognized how the institution of slavery would affect Black persons for
generations to come, preventing them from being recognized and treated as equals for
generations. Wesley argued that enslavers had deprived Africans of any and all means of
improvement and he blamed the creation of social inequalities not on Africans but on white
people. He wrote, “It is not their [the enslaved] fault, but yours [Europeans]. You must answer
for it, before God and humanity.” White people must answer for these crimes, these hierarchies,
these systems. White people must call out racism when they see it and seek to correct it for “you
first acted the villain in making them slaves (whether you sold them or bought them). You kept

² Thoughts upon slavery, XI:59, sec. 1.2
³ Thoughts upon slavery, XI:59, sec. 4.2-3
them stupid and wicked by cutting them off from all opportunities of improving either in knowledge or virtue.”

John Wesley, in 1774, with the writing of this tract, declared himself an anti-racist. He called white people, like himself, to identify racism and to proclaim it loudly as contrary to basic human nature. And he didn’t stop with just writings. He acted.

When John Wesley formed his Methodist societies, he did not allow enslavers to be members. This is a practice that was continued beyond his British movement and into the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) when it was formed in 1784 in Baltimore, Maryland. However, it was also a practice which was quickly abandoned. White Methodists, those in charge of the MEC, compromised Wesley’s original intent to form an anti-racist Christian movement when they refused full ordination to Black preachers simply because they were Black, when they began to allow membership of enslavers into their societies, and when they began to segregate worship services according to race.

There were Methodists who continued John Wesley’s anti-racist legacy within the denomination, seeking to remind those white Methodists in charge of Wesley’s original intent for the movement. They continued to challenge the systemic injustices that replicated social hierarchies within the denomination, fighting the creation of second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God.

**PAIN AND SHAME IN OUR PAST: METHODISM’S COMPLICITY IN RACISM**

Adhering to Wesley’s anti-racist ideology, when the Methodist Episcopal Church was initially formed in 1784, it maintained a strict policy against its society members owning slaves, threatening to deny communion or excommunicate anyone who enslaved others. However, this stance did not last beyond its first year. As the majority of Methodists lived in Virginia and Maryland at that time, this stance was almost immediately compromised and became limited only to clergy of the Methodist movement and not applicable to lay persons. What began as a bold, proto anti-racist stance was watered down, compromised, and caved to white-supremacist interpretations of Christianity in each ensuing year. By 1800, members and clergy were given one year to emancipate any persons that they enslaved, but this was more of a statement in writing and rarely a policy in practice. Eventually the divisions between those who sought to maintain anti-racist policies and those who compromised with white-supremacy resulted in schism at multiple levels.

One of the first groups to leave the MEC because of its racist policies were Black Methodists, led by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. They left St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1787, after they were physically assaulted and removed from their

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4 Thoughts upon slavery, XI:59, sec. 4.2-3
knees while praying. Forming the Free African Society, Allen purchased a plot of land down the street which was officially established as Mother Bethel in 1794. White Methodists were determined to maintain control over the land, clergy, and members of Mother Bethel through legal efforts. They attempted to use the Deed clause of the Methodist Constitution to claim the land and thus maintain white control of Black Methodist faith. Allen sued the MEC in both 1807 and 1815, successfully leading to the formation of an independent congregation. Due to these unrelenting acts of white supremacy, the Free African Society eventually became a separate denomination called the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in 1816, with Richard Allen as its first bishop. According to Methodist Historian Dennis Dickerson, the true spirit of John Wesley’s anti-racism and egalitarian understandings of the world were carried on through Allen and the AME, not necessarily through Bishop Francis Asbury and the Methodist Episcopal Church (predecessor to the UMC):

Richard Allen could justifiably view himself as John Wesley's truest American heir. In his devotion to spiritual fervor, social witness, and strict adherence to Methodist doctrine and discipline, Allen’s claim as a quintessential Wesleyan is both compelling and credible.\(^5\)

However, some African Americans remained in the St. George's congregation. Several years later, in 1794, eighteen of these members began holding their own religious services. They first met in homes; then in 1796 they purchased property and built African Zoar Church north of Philadelphia's city limits in a section called Campington. "Black Harry" Hosier is the church's patron founding pastor. The members of this new church never loosed their ties to the Methodist Episcopal Church, making Zoar the oldest black congregation in the United Methodist tradition with a continuous existence.

Zoar was the fourth congregation in the United Methodist tradition to be organized in Philadelphia. On August 4, 1796, Francis Asbury dedicated the church building at Fourth and Brown Streets. He recorded in his journal that he "was called upon by the African society in Campington to open their new house, which I did, on Rom.i, 16-18, and had an unwieldy congregation of white and black." Asbury preached at Zoar several times and ordained two African American local preachers, Jacob Tapsco and James Champion, there on April 9, 1809. Zoar Church's first black pastor was Perry Tilghman, a lay preacher who served the church from 1835 to 1844. At least five other congregations have been organized out of Zoar church, earning it the affectionate nickname "Mother Zoar." On August 23, 1852, the first Convention of Colored Local Preachers and Laymen convened at Zoar Church. This was the first gathering of its kind in United Methodism. The African American preachers continued to meet annually until 1863, and in 1864 they organized the Delaware Annual Conference, the first of what were eventually twenty-five "Negro Annual Conferences" in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

White supremacy within Methodist ranks did not end with the mistreatment of Allen and Black Methodists in Philadelphia. Similar racist actions in New York City led to the formation of various Black congregations by 1800. Just as St. George's MEC tried to maintain white control over Black led Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, John Street Methodist Church in New York City

tried to maintain control over six Black congregations. In 1820, these six congregations founded the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) denomination and elected James Varick as their first bishop.

In 1844, white supremacy, yet again, led to a split in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The resulting two denominations, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (MECS) resulted from the divide over different interpretations as to the morality of slavery and whether or not bishops could enslave persons. The MECS did not see a moral quandary in allowing bishops, clergy, and lay members of the denomination to enslave Black persons. In 1840 and 1844 when Bishop James Osgood Andrews (Georgia) bought one slave and inherited another through marriage, the debate reached the level of General Conference, and ultimately led to an institutional split.

Racism as sin continued to plague the Methodist tradition. After the Civil War, Black Methodists associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, organized against white control of their congregations and formed their own denomination in 1870. Originally called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1956 the name was changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME).

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, conversations began between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as to possible reunion. These conversations seem to suggest that since enslaved persons had been emancipated by the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, the two denominations no longer had reasons to remain separate. This is a shallow interpretation of the 1844 schism. The two denominations had grossly different exegetical methods and social constructions of race which were exacerbated by the development of Biblical Criticism in the 1870s and the Social Gospel movement in the early twentieth century.6

Discussions between these two denominations and with the Methodist Protestant denomination became more serious by the 1930s. In 1939, the three denominations merged to form The Methodist Church, but not without racist actions.

Behind this merger was an undergirding intention to be the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the US. Other denominations in the 1920s split according to modernist and fundamentalist biblical interpretations. At that time, it was seen as an opportunity for Methodists to claim power and prestige, particularly in the United States, through membership numbers. The desire to be powerful dominated the desire for true racial reconciliation and theological discussion. In 1939, as a way to appease the white supremacists, all Black members and clergy of the three denominations were racially segregated into their own jurisdiction, the Central

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6 Biblical Criticism first emerged in Germany and made its way to the United States. It analytically approaches Scripture as a historic document written in a certain context and prioritizes this lens when understanding and interpreting Scripture in the present.
Jurisdiction. White members and clergy were organized in jurisdictions by geographic region; Black members and clergy by race. This was explicit segregation. And this is expression of white supremacy made its way into the very system that still organizes our jurisdictional structure in the UMC today. In 1968, with the creation of The United Methodist Church, the jurisdictional structure was maintained and the Central Jurisdiction was simply dissolved into the pre-existing racist system. Again, in 1968, there was an opportunity to attempt racial reconciliation, to listen to Black Methodists as to how to best ensure that their voice was heard in an equitable way, and again, this did not happen. Black United Methodists stepped up in 1967 and created Black Methodists for Church Renewal which saw to the creation of the General Commission on Religion and Race which ensure that Black United Methodists are represented, but the General Conference and the local church have yet to fully, deeply, and honestly discuss how race and racism inform our current structures.

**Pride in our Past: Methodists who continued Wesley’s Anti-Racism**

There were Methodists, who despite the above racist actions, continued to push the denomination to reclaim Wesley’s anti-racist theology.

One of the larger groups to engage in anti-racist work was the Woman’s Society of Christian Service (WSCS), one of many predecessors to today’s United Methodist Women. At the formation of Central Jurisdiction in 1939, the WSCS immediately began to argue for its dissolution and to challenge the white supremacist underpinnings of racial segregation. These women organized sit-ins, boycotted Jim Crow states, and by 1952 wrote a Charter for Racial Justice (included in the Historical Documents section of this book). Within the UMC, the Women’s Division (successor to WSCS and immediate predecessor to UMW) brought the Charter for Racial Justice into the newly formed denomination, leading to its denominational endorsement by 1980 and every eight years since.7

With the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968, the Central Jurisdiction was dissolved due to the demands of the Evangelical United Brethren who did not wish to maintain a segregated structure. Black Methodists such as Ethel Johnson sought to ensure through their advocacy that Black Methodists would be given the same opportunities as white Methodists. Johnson and others created Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) in 1967 to ensure that Black Methodists were not left out of merger discussions. This organization led to the creation of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRR) in 1972 whose goal is to ensure that racial minorities in the denomination have equal representation and leadership opportunities.

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7 The Woman’s Division and United Methodist Women have historically prioritized dismantling racism arguably more than any other constituency within the Methodist tradition. For a historical narrative of their efforts we recommend, Thelma Stevens’ *Legacy for the Future: The History of Christian Social Relations in the Woman’s Division of Christian Service, 1940-1968* which talks about the creation of the charter. For a history of Black women involved in these efforts please see *To a Higher Glory: The Growth and Development of Black Women Organized for Mission in The Methodist Church, 1940-1968* available online via [https://fliphtml5.com/eiek/hori](https://fliphtml5.com/eiek/hori)
Throughout the history of the UMC, there have been sustained efforts to discuss and dismantle racism. As mentioned above, GCRR was formed in the early 1970s. In the 1980s, largely through the efforts of Bishop Woodie White and GCRR, General Conference adopted a resolution on Global Racism and asked that a national convocation on racism be held (documents from this convocation can be found in the historic documents section of this book). In the 1990s, racism was discussed as sin in an eight-part series produced by GCRR and the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) entitled *Anti-Racism: The Gift of Diversity*. In 2000, the General Conference held a service of repentance for its racist past, inviting leaders from the AME, AMEZ, and others. In 2020, the Council of Bishops again called for the dismantling of racism in light of the repeated, senseless murder of Black persons at the hands of police officers. United Methodists continue to call out racism when they see it. This harkens back to Wesley’s understanding of social and spiritual equality. It recalls the original Methodism that was so attractive to Black and white persons in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It perhaps is why—despite the overt and covert ways that white Methodists have been racist—many Black persons remain Methodist even as they continue to suffer from the continuing effects of white supremacy.

An analysis of the journals and statements that were written in these decades show progress. The conversations began with getting Methodists to acknowledge that racism exists and is a sociological issue (1950s and 1960s). The conversation progressed, helping white Methodists realize that it was also a denominational issue through the existence of the Central Jurisdiction. In order to combat continued racist structures, GCRR and BMCR were formed in order to ensure equity at all levels of the denomination (1970s). Through the efforts of Bishop Woodie White, in the 1980s racism was finally being discussed as sin, as a theological issue, one that was embedded not only institutionally but theologically into United Methodism. These efforts continued into the 1990s, culminating in a General Conference Act of Repentance in 2000.

We’ve made progress in these conversations. United Methodists have begun to nuance how racism is built into the various sociological, institutional, and theological structures that all merge to form our denominational. However, this work is far from over. As good Wesleyans, we must always strive for Christian perfection, the ability to truly see ourselves and each other through the eyes of God. Dismantling racism, telling our stories, reflecting on where we’ve been, what we’ve accomplished, and the historical sins that we continue to repeat (or ignore) is a step in this process of Christian perfection.
Methodism has a long history of discussing race. The following documents depict some of the major turning points in the way Methodists have discussed race in the past. This is not an exhaustive list, but an attempt to show some of the lesser-known examples of when Methodists have had this discussion. As you read, we encourage you to think about how far our conversations on race have come. What rhetoric is the same or different? What lessons did Methodists learn? What actions did Methodists take in response to these? More importantly, what lessons did we not learn? What actions have we yet to take?

Figure 2: 1832 Petition to General Conference from "People of Colour in the Philadelphia Charge"
Records of the General Conference Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
1832 and 1848 Petitions to General Conference

General Conference meets every four years and is the legislative body of the denomination. This has been the case since the days of Wesley. In the first half of the nineteenth-century, Black Methodists were ordained as deacons but not as elders, meaning that they could preach but could not administer the sacraments. This is largely a way to ensure white control over baptism. Many Methodists (and other Protestants) believed that if Black, particularly enslaved Black persons, were baptized that they then could not be owned for that would violate the will of God (as if that weren’t already the case). White persons were also scared that if enslaved Black persons were spiritual equals, they might assume that they could also be political or social equals and thus would seek equality at all levels. It is vital to note that Wesley was a staunch believer in the universality of the Gospel and the redemptive work of Christ. This means that Wesley believed that Christ’s death on the cross meant that all persons were equal, baptized or not, Christian or not, enslaved or not.

Below are two petitions to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.13 The first, written in 1832 by Black Methodists, asks for Black preachers to be in charge of Black congregations. It states that given the large number of Black Methodists, it only seemed reasonable that the Bishops have the power to “appoint Ministers of colour to coloured congregations.” Congregations were typically led by white ministers. White ministers, when they were preaching to all-Black or racially diverse congregations, emphasized docility in spirit and obedience to masters instead of the liberatory, empowering message of the Gospel.

It is important to also note that this petition comes from the ministers in Philadelphia. Black Methodists in Philadelphia had been battling white control of their congregations for over fifty years. Absalom Jones and Richard Allen left St. George’s MEC of Philadelphia in the 1790s after they were pulled from their knees during prayer and told that it was the white members turns to pray. They formed the Free African Society, purchased a plot of land in Philadelphia, and formed Mother Bethel. White MEC clergy tried to attain control over Mother Bethel by tactics which included trying to seize the land from Allen. After multiple law suits, Allen was able to maintain control of his property and eventually formed an independent denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This historically Black Methodist denomination still exists today and was born out of white racism.

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13 The below two petitions are transcribed from the original. The original 1832 petition is on the preceding page.
To the General Conference [sic] in Philadelphia assembled

Gentlemen:

We the undersigned [sic] being Deuly [sic] Sencilbe [sic] of the great increase booth [sic] in membership and congregation in our churches and consequantly [sic] our Ministers in many places from the Press of Business among the whites[sic] they have not time to Devote to the Satisfaction [sic] and general Benefit of the coloured Congregations—And as thier [sic] are many of our coloured Bretherin [sic] in the ministry [sic] of a congregation—–and many of them where it is Practicable would be willing to Receive sutch [sic] an appointment.

Therefore your humble petitioners sincerely [sic] pray that you would add to the Discipline [sic] so as to give the Bishop power to appoint Ministers of colour to coloured congregations when asked for and when it is Practicable to Remain with sutch [sic] congregation as long as the discipline [sic] may Direct—they being held amenable [sic] as you in your wisdom may Direct.

Believing [sic] as we do that sutch [sic] an alteration would be conducive to sutch [sic] good to many of our congregations and our Brethern [sic] having sutch [sic] a field of labour opened to them would be Induced to seek for that knowledge so necessary for the gospel Ministry [sic] and we have too no doubt that it would be a final pre-ventive [sic] to sutch [sic] a seacation [sic][i.e., secession] among the ministers as hertofore [sic] all of which we respectfully submit to your honours.

signed on Behalf of the Peopel sic
of colour in the Philadelphia charge,

Simon Murray, Pres.,
attested Cyrus R. Miller Secret.

Philadelphia April 23, 1832

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT in General Conference papers, Drew University Library
In 1848, Black Methodists in Baltimore made a request similar to that of Black Methodists in 1832 in Philadelphia. In Baltimore, however, instead of wanting to have more Black preachers appointed to serve Black congregations, these Methodists were asking General Conference to form a Black Annual Conference within the confines of the Baltimore Annual Conference.

They state their reasoning in the third paragraph. Methodism had grown drastically in the first half of the nineteenth-century (from approx. 58,000 in 1790 to approx. 1,186,000 by 1850). This growth was consistent with both Black and white membership. However, the denomination was still largely run by ordained white ministers. Both Black and white Methodists decided that Black Methodists would have their own houses of worship. Some Black preachers were appointed to serve these churches but they did not have any authority outside of these congregations. In other words, Black preachers did not enjoy the same privileges that white ordained clergy enjoyed particularly when it came to administering the sacraments. Only through full ordination rights would Black Methodist preachers have a voice at the table of white Methodism. Not wishing to separate from the MEC and join one of the Black Methodist denominations in existence (the AME or AMEZ), these Black Methodists thought of a different solution. Giving Black Methodists within the MEC full episcopal power over their own congregations via their own annual conferences. This did not come to fruition in 1848, nor in 1856 when the petition was again brought to the General Conference. Only in 1864, after the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, did the MEC agree to form separate annual conferences and give Black Methodists full clergy rights. In other words, white Methodists decided that once Black Methodists were free according to federal law, then and only then, were they worthy of full ordination rights, but these full rights would only exist in separate annual conferences. This is white supremacy. When the same request was made by Black Methodists for Black empowerment, it was denied. When it was made by white Methodists to “deal with” newly freed Black Methodists, it was granted. This was not the first nor the last time that institutional segregation would be a part of Methodism.
Black Methodists in Baltimore Petition General Conference to organize Black Pastors into a Black Annual Conference, 1848

[Source: Proceedings of the General Conference, Friday May 12, 1848, Christian Advocate (May 24, 1848) p. 81. Emphasis in original.]

J. A. Collins presented the following petition from the colored people of the Sharp-Street and Asbury charges in the city of Baltimore.

To the bishops and Members of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Conference assembled

Respected Fathers and Brethren: Permit us, the official members of the Sharp-Street and Asbury Station in the city of Baltimore, on behalf of our colored brethren and sisters of the aforesaid Station, to address you on a subject to us of great importance, and we indulge the hope that it will not appear less important to you.

In the first place, we humbly beg that you will please accept our sincere thanks for your long and arduous services to us when in our infantile state, believing that the Great Head of the Church has and will continue to reward you—having made you instrumental in his hands of bringing us from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to himself.

In the next place, we would remark, that when the Methodist Churches in these United States were small, the colored people enjoyed comfortable [privileges in the same houses [of worship]]: but as the white Methodists increased rapidly, as did also the colored, the latter as it was well known, and is in the recollection of many, were deprived often of the privileges that they had hitherto enjoyed. Therefore, it was thought necessary, both by the white and colored people, that we should have houses of worship for our special benefit, where they could be obtained, in order that we might have more room to invite our colored brethren who were still out of the ark of safety, to come in; and it is well known that the good Lord has great enlarged our membership since that ever-to-be-forgotten period by owning the labors of our colored preachers in conjunction with some of the white, in the conversion of many thousands of the colored race: and quite a large number of colored preachers among us, some of whom, all things considered, had and still possess respectable talents, and have done much good in their local capacity: but hitherto they have been quite limited in their sphere of operations, having had no opportunity of being extensively useful, they being generally poor, and no provision having been made for them to go forth and dispense the bread of life to their perishing fellow men, their usefulness, has inconsequence been greatly hindered—and or colored fellow men have thereby been deprived of those blessings Almighty god would have granted through their instrumentality. And now, reverend fathers and brethren, your memorialists would say that it does not seem clear to them that the time has come when something should be done for the prosperity of the ministry among our colored brethren;
and the question arises, how shall o can this desirable object be accomplished? For we have no expectation that the ministers, the descendants of Africa, will ever be admitted to seats and voice in the conference of their white brethren, however well they may be qualified for the work of the ministry: nor do we desire to unite with any of the existing colored connections. Therefore our colored brethren in this city of Baltimore, after due prayerful consideration, have been led to the conclusion, for the reasons already mentioned, and others which might be mentioned, that a far greater amount of good would of necessity result from our being placed in a condition so that colored ministers should have the pastoral oversight of all the colored people in connection with the Methodist church in all places of the United States where the laws and usages do not forbid.

But it may be said and truly, that Africa, downtrodden, bleeding Africa proffers a field for usefulness in missionary operations. Your memorialists concede the point, and it afford us a pleasure which human language is too meager to express., that even benighted Africa has already (though very limitedly) received back not only some of her sable progeny, but the Gospel of the ever blessed God also: and we verily believe tat the period is rapidly approaching when that whole land will be enlightened with the light of life. But merit us to ask, are there not other fields of labor in which the colored preachers can be employed to great advantage to themselves and to their fellow colored men: Your memorialists humbly conceiver that there are such openings: and are further of the opinion that if colored eh are employed here at home it would awaken and beget in them a missionary spirit and zeal which would prepare them for more effective service abroad. Again, your memorialists speak the truth and nothing but the truth, when they state that it has been for many years, the unceasing effort of a portion of the thinking men of our officiary to still and to keep quiet many of their brethren, both of the official and lay members, by which exertion the peace of the church has in some sort been preserved. But, as honest men, we do say, that to us it does seem clearly manifest that something should be done to prevent the occurrence of a state of things which may take place, but which we sincerely deprecate, and which, we are quite sure, would be deprecated by the General Conference. Our only object (and we speak as true men) is to prevent a schism in the Church.

Your petitioners believe that a change can be effected, and that a union may continue to exist with our white brothers.

Your memorialists need not tell your venerable body that the Discipline of our Church contemplates a healthy action therein, which we conceive is to be effected by the use of the means and the proper observance of the rules of said manual. But if classes are not attended to once in two or four years, the rules seldom read, the sick nor seen, and as for pastoral visits, they are not known among us, can a people thus circumstanced prosper? The truth is, from the past we infer what will be the future. We have no grounds to expect that matters will be different from what they have been. We verily believe that the prosperity of the colored people, both morally and temporally, imparts pleasure to our white brethren; but then it is necessary that they should have a knowledge of the fact that we regard our lot as a hard one.
It is a fact of general notoriety that we have been liberal in making provision for the comfort of those stationed among us from time to time, paying sometimes a thousand dollars per year.

Therefore, your memorialists, in view of what we have said, and believing that the number of colored preachers would justify it, pray the general Conference to organize for them an Annual Conference, within the bounds of the Baltimore Annual Conference, to be under the supervision of the [white] Bishops, who shall preside in said Colored Annual Conference.

All which is respectfully submitted, and your memorialists will ever pray for the peace and prosperity of the Church of Christ.

Signed in behalf of sixty of the official members of Sharp Street and Asbury Station.

          John Fortie
          Thomas Watkins
          Benjamin Brown
          David P. Jones
          Richard J. Chew
1939: Creation of the Central Jurisdiction

After emancipation of all enslaved Black persons in the 1860s and after the failure of Reconstruction, the MEC and MEC, South began conversations of merging. They, falsely, believed that now that slavery was no longer an “issue” to divide Methodism, that the two should re-unite. This overlooks the underlying theological and sociological understandings that are the true cause of the division.

In 1939, the MEC, MEC South, and Methodist Protestant denominations merged to form The Methodist Church. In negotiations of this merger, the MEC South wanted to create an entirely separate denomination for Black Methodists. This they had done after the Civil War with the creation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (now called the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church). The MEC suggested doing something similar to what they had done with the creation of separate annual conferences for Black Methodists (see 1848 petition to General Conference). What ended up happening was sort of a compromise between the two. In 1939, the white annual conferences within the United States were divided regionally into our current jurisdictional system (Northeast, Southeast, North Central, South Central, and Western). All Black Methodists were put into a separate jurisdiction, not regionally bound, but racially bound. Thus, only Black bishops would serve Black preachers and Black preachers would serve Black congregations. Segregation was institutionalized.

Some might ask, how is this different from what Black Methodists had requested in the 1848 Baltimore petition? It’s different in many ways. First and foremost, the 1848 petition was sent to General Conference by Black Methodists in order to ensure that Black Methodist congregations were going to be led by Black Methodist ordained clergy who had full ordination rights, including access to the sacraments, in order to ensure that white Methodists could no longer control their faith. Second, the 1939 creation of the Central Jurisdiction was not created in order to empower Black Methodists but in order to comply with white fear of Black Methodist religious authority. It was created without the voice of Black Methodists, thus it was born out of white supremacy, and it sought to institutionalize the tradition of white control of Black Methodist faith.

In 2018, United Methodist News Service wrote a brief history of the efforts to dismantle the Central Jurisdiction. It is reprinted in full on the following pages for it engages with and quotes many persons whose ministries began in the Central Jurisdiction. As you read, think about how our current jurisdictional system still reflects many of these racist assumptions.
NOTES
Northeastern Jurisdiction—Now includes Washington and Delaware, formerly of Central Jurisdiction. They are in process of merger with geographical conferences.
North Central Jurisdiction—Now includes the former Lexington Conference, Central Jurisdiction. North Indiana and Northwest Indiana Conferences are authorized to merge at a time of their choosing.
Southeastern Jurisdiction—Cuba is expected to become an autonomous church during the quadrennium. Memphis and Tennessee Conferences are authorized to merge if they choose.

AREAS
A - Southwestern
B - Atlantic Coast

CONFERENCES
1 - Central West
2 - Southwest
3 - West Texas
4 - Texas
5 - Louisiana
6 - Tennessee-Kentucky
7 - North Carolina-Virginia
8 - South Carolina
9 - Upper Mississippi
10 - Mississippi
11 - Central Alabama
12 - Georgia
13 - Florida

LEGEND
- Jurisdiction boundaries
- Area boundaries
- Conference boundaries
- State lines not used as conference boundaries

SCALE OF MILES
0 100 200 300
50 years on, Central Jurisdiction’s shadow looms

By Joey Butler April 18, 2018 | NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)

The April 1968 merger that created The United Methodist Church not only birthed a new denomination, it abolished a painful part of Methodist history: The Central Jurisdiction, which segregated African-Americans from their Methodist brethren.

It was an earlier 1939 merger that created The Methodist Church from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South and Methodist Protestant Church. The Southern church only agreed to union after a compromise created a jurisdiction based exclusively on race — not geography.

Nineteen black annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church were placed in the Central Jurisdiction and the white conferences were placed in five regional jurisdictions. Seventeen of the 19 black conferences voted against the 1939 Plan of Union.

Almost as soon as the Central Jurisdiction was established, attempts began to get rid of it.

Though the episcopal address to the 1940 General Conference alluded to black Methodists’ “cordial acceptance of the outcome” and urged delegates to “attempt no radical changes” to church structure, the 1944 General Conference appointed a commission to study race relations in the church. That commission’s report to the 1948 General Conference acknowledged the problem posed by discrimination and offered hope that it “shall ultimately be eliminated from our fellowship.” The report did not specifically suggest abolishing the Central Jurisdiction.

The 1956 General Conference took probably the most significant steps toward ultimately doing away with the Central Jurisdiction. More than 4,000 petitions were submitted regarding the jurisdictional system, specifically the Central. As a result, delegates took two actions: drafting Amendment IX to the constitution and creating a study commission to evaluate the jurisdictional system.

Amendment IX provided a means for a local church to transfer to another annual conference, or for a conference to transfer out of its jurisdiction. The proposal acknowledged that when all of the Central Jurisdiction’s conferences used this process to voluntarily transfer to other jurisdictions, it would in effect be abolished.

It seems a given that members of the Central Jurisdiction would have overwhelmingly supported its elimination, but that was not the case.

“Central Jurisdiction leadership supported Amendment IX but discouraged its strongest churches from leaving, for fears it would weaken us financially,” said retired Bishop Woodie W. White. “They didn’t want the jurisdiction to be weakened by attrition.”

Despite its segregated existence, the Central elected its own bishops, was given representation on church boards and commissions, and provided leadership opportunities that blacks may not have otherwise been granted.
At a 2004 reunion of Central Jurisdiction members, some spoke of those opportunities and the sense of family that was fostered within the segregated church body.

“If there was no Central Jurisdiction, a lot of our people wouldn’t have had opportunities for real leadership,” said Mai Gray. “This is where they honed their skills, even though it was not pleasant.” Gray, who passed away in 2010, became the first African-American to lead United Methodist Women in 1976.

Mollie Stewart, former president and CEO of Gulfside Assembly in Waveland, Mississippi, called the Central a “nurturing community, where everybody was your momma and your poppa.”

But at that same reunion, the Rev. Joseph Lowery laid out the complicated choice that faced African-American Methodists if the church were to desegregate.

“In the Central Jurisdiction, blacks elected their leadership. In a larger church, blacks don’t have enough members to elect leadership,” Lowery said. “The real power to elect black leadership (in an integrated church) rests in the hands of whites. That was the dilemma.”

The State of the Church report to the 1960 General Conference declared: “There must be no place in the Methodist Church for racial discrimination or forced segregation …. We recommend that discrimination or segregation by any method or practice, whether by conference structure or otherwise … be abolished with reasonable speed.”

In its report, the Commission to Study and Recommend Action Concerning the Jurisdictional System, noted the 1956 conference placed the Central Jurisdiction “in the line of ultimate extinction.”

The commission reported that six local churches had already transferred out of the Central Jurisdiction and 36 more were in the process. The commission took a wait-and-see approach to whether voluntary transfer via Amendment IX would solve the problem.

In a 2005 interview with United Methodist Communications, the late Bishop James S. Thomas said that “if you read the (legislative proposals) of 1964, the church was intensely concerned about segregation, but there were very strong efforts to hold on to the past.”

By this time, plans were well underway for the Methodist Church to merge with the Evangelical United Brethren. The EUB, which was not segregated, made it clear that the Methodists needed to resolve the issue. They ultimately made abolishing the segregated institution a condition for union.

The Commission on Interjurisdictional Relations’ report to the 1964 General Conference cited some positives — namely that the Central Jurisdiction allowed blacks to hold church leadership positions. However, the report also noted that it made Methodists “the only church in America which segregates, by its constitution, one sector of its membership on the basis of race.”
While hoping Amendment IX would dissolve the Central Jurisdiction, the commission did ask that if there were still conferences that had not transferred out by 1967, a formal termination of the jurisdiction by the end of 1968 should be enacted.

Dissatisfied with the passive recommendations of the committee, W. Astor Kirk, an alternate delegate from West Texas, introduced an amendment that stipulated “the Central Jurisdiction structure … not be made a part of the Plan of Merger.” It became known as the Kirk Amendment, passing 464 to 362.

The following year, Southern church leaders argued before the Judicial Council — the church’s top court — that jurisdictions had the right to preserve segregated conferences. Kirk prepared the brief opposing their stance, and the council decided in his favor.

Kirk passed away in 2011 after a lifetime of advocating for a more inclusive United Methodist Church. In a 2004 interview, he said, “My hope is that we can take the past as a guide and get beyond it and really begin within the UMC to interact with people just as people, without regard to race, color or gender.”

Moving toward integration, delegates approved a $20 million Temporary General Aid Fund to assist the Central Jurisdiction in raising the levels of pensions and minimum salaries. Salary assistance was supposed to steadily decrease over a 20-year period as the post-merger conferences got their financial footing.

“The efforts of the church to respond to the gap in income, pensions and health care of the black pastors of the Central Jurisdiction and the white pastors of the geographical jurisdictions was commendable,” said the Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell, a civil rights pioneer and retired clergy member of the Rocky Mountain Conference. “My preacher father was one of those pastors.

By the 1968 Uniting Conference in Dallas, all that remained was to make official the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction. Still, some trepidation remained.

Retired Bishop Melvin Talbert said he favored doing away with the Central Jurisdiction until the time came to vote at General Conference.

“I voted against the merger because it gave the EUB everything they wanted while the black jurisdiction got nothing but a promise. There was no commitment to having a number of delegates; they just did away with it.”

“Only one jurisdiction was closed in 1968: the one that gave people of African-American descent power around appointment, around personnel, around vote, more power in voting our episcopacy,” said Vance Ross, director of annual conference relations at Discipleship Ministries. “That segment of people — my grandmother and her contemporaries — said, ‘We will stay and cause you to have to look at us and say you don’t love us, that we’re not equal.’”

White added that there was a risk of losing representatives at the agencies. “But they felt segregation was so untenable, they’d be willing to make that sacrifice,” White said.
1952 Charter on Racial Justice

The Charter for Racial Justice was written by the Women’s Division (predecessor to United Methodist Women) in 1952. “On the evening of January 9, 1952, at Buck Hill Falls, the report of the committee on Racial Practices was brought to the Women’s Division by Mrs. [Louise] Oldshue, chairman. An artist had written the new Charter of Racial Polices on a large wallboard visible to the entire group. After discussion, the charter was adopted unanimously by a standing vote. …”\(^1\)

The BOARD OF MISSIONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

A CHARTER OF RACIAL POLICIES presented to the Womans Society of Christian Service

1. We believe that God is the Father of all people and all are His children in one family.
2. We believe that the personality of every human being is sacred.
3. We believe that opportunities for fellowship and service for personal growth, and for freedom in every aspect of life are inherent rights of every individual.
4. We believe that the visible church of Jesus Christ must demonstrate these principles within its own organization and program.
5. We believe that the Womans Division as an agency of The Methodist Church must build a fellowship and social order without racial barriers in every area it may touch.

WE WILL

1. Commit ourselves as individuals called by Jesus to witness by word and deed to the basic rights of every person regardless of cost.
2. Unite our efforts with all groups in the church toward eliminating in the Methodist Church all forms of segregation based on race whether in basic structure or institutional life.
3. Create in local churches opportunities for inclusive fellowship and membership without restriction based on race.
4. Act with other groups and agencies to involve families in new experiences with other races and cultures.
5. Share in creative plans that challenge youth, students, and young adults of all races to new understandings of the church's mission and ministries.
6. Interpret and strengthen recruitment and employment practices of the Women's Division consistent with our belief in the oneness of God's family.
7. Open the facilities and Services of all Woman's Division institutions without restrictions based on race and make such policies clearly known.
8. Establish all Schools of Missions and Christian Service and all leadership development and enrichment programs on a regional basis without restriction based on race.
9. Seek to change community patterns of racial segregation in all relationships including education, housing, voting, employment, and public facilities.
10. Work for national policies that safeguard the rights of all the nations people.

Records of the Women's Division, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
1972 CREATION OF GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE

In 1967, just prior to the merger that created The United Methodist Church out of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, Black Methodists sought to ensure their equality within the newly emerging denomination. With the dismantling of the Central Jurisdiction, there was a need to ensure that Black (United) Methodist voices would be not only present at the table but listened to at the table. This led to the creation of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, an ethnic caucus that successfully lobbied the General Conference of 1968 to ensure that a general agency would be created within the new denomination that would prioritize race and hold white United Methodists accountable. The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRR) was created in 1972 at General Conference.

Just prior to the creation of GCRR, the denomination began a national discussion and analysis of its own white racism. From the written record at GCAH, we can see that racism was being discussed in The United Methodist Church since its inception in 1968, largely by the Department of Youth Ministry, which created a packet on racism in 1968. There is evidence that the General Board of Global Ministry’s National Division was holding consultations in 1970 and continued to do so till at least in 1987 when the National Convocation on Racism was held. As part of these efforts, in 1973, GCRR published the following document entitled, “Reflections on White Racism,” written by James Jones, the Associate Executive Secretary at GCRR. We asked current UMC leaders to read through this text and reflect on it. Their reflections are included on our website, http://www.gcah.org/resources/heritage-sunday-2021.
REFLECTIONS ON WHITE RACISM

Tracing the development of racism in America, one soon realizes that the mores of today's society, in relation to problems between the races, took root with the American colonists, and continues right on through the Civil War down to the present day.

Admitting that racism is an old problem, however, suggests that the blame is not ours—the blame belongs to those who have come before us. We must see that it was their problem in their day. We have inherited their problem and compounded it by our own unwillingness to confront it in our day.

For us as white people to reflect on white racism is admittedly a difficult process for it means that we admit that we have been brought up in a society that has educated us, formally through our institutions and informally through our living, to be racist. The real tragedy is that most of the time we did not know what was happening. The fact that white is better than black was never really questioned. The subtleties of "Pure as snow" and Black as tar got transferred to the human family in many ways. That was a "Black deed" you did. "Nigger" was what you called a black person and with it came the understanding that that meant dirty, ignorant, not to be trusted, animal like. The black man was not considered a part of society. His role was not much different from the mule or the tractor. In the south he was to be taken care of like you cared for your other possessions, i.e., cattle, and work equipment.
In the north he was told "the door is open", but somehow it always got slammed just before he got in.

Today the situation is not different. A few blacks have "made it", but the larger majority are still outside of society. Capital for black business is hard to get. For example, the Church is willing to help finance individual black businesses, but not broadly based corporatives. To push black capitalism is racism. The employment practices in the boards and agencies only need to be looked at and we see racism. How many of our institutions, such as hospitals, homes for children and the aging, institutions for higher education, and, yes, conference boards and agencies have any significant representation of black people, brown people, or red people employed? What are the employment practices of the companies our Church does business with. Not to know these facts is racism. The danger that we as white churchmen face is not knowing the facts, but when we see them a deeper danger is not speaking and acting out ways to correct them.

Commenting on the possibilities of finding a solution to the racism in the United States, Frank H. Joyce, Executive Director of People Against Racism, states that:

"The first step in the solution of any problem is its correct definition. To this day whites have attempted to devise a realistic definition of the race problem. The task has been fundamentally evaded by the belief that the race problem is a Negro problem. In fact, whites do not have a white problem. Even those, such as the Kerner Commission, who have recently begun to recognize racism in the white community, direct their recommendations and solutions, not at white Americans, but at reforms for Black America. Such reforms are obviously prevented by the very racism which created the need for reforms in the first place. What is required is an analysis of white supremacy--however crude as this stage--and a strategy and program for combating it."
Again, one major problem for individuals and/or groups, such as the Church, is to admit that we are racists. After this admission is made, we must then continue to deal with the racist psychology which engulfs us at every turn.

Mr. Joyce continues to talk about racism by saying:

"First, a distinction must be made between individual and institutional racism. Second, the main difficult differentiation must be made between what might be termed attitudinal and behavioral racism."

The following are examples of different types of racism:

A. **Individual racism** is represented in the bombing of a Birmingham church, which resulted in the death of four black children.

B. **Institutional (systematic) racism** is represented in the deaths of 500 black infants in the same city, compared to the much lower infant mortality rate among whites.

C. **Attitudinal racism** is defined as any action taken against people of color simply because they are not white.

D. **Behavioral racism** may be defined as any action, individual or institutional, which disadvantages non-whites to the advantage of whites, regardless of conscious motivation.

At this point, I would challenge us to sit for a while and ponder these definitions. Think for yourself, and see if you can give concrete examples that fit these definitions. If you have trouble thinking of examples, it may just be that this is the reason we are faced with the problem.

To those of us in the Church, the door to true confession and repentance is open. We have "allowed" blacks to come to our white church. However, in the south, we have not really even "allowed" blacks to come. No, but they came anyway, and most of the time, they were turned away.
I was once approached by a white clergyman in the South and asked if I could get some blacks to attend his church. To talk of mergers is not the same as talking about blacks coming to our white churches.

However, to purge the institutional church of racism may be possible, if we can accept all men—without regard to their color—instead of accepting them in spite of it.

To become serious about racism, in order to be the true Church of our Lord is the most perplexing challenge that the institution has faced in 2,000 years—if in fact, we are facing it!

All over the United States, we must sharpen our senses, and be willing to purge ourselves of both our conscious and unconscious racism.

To create a community of people who come together as equals in order to address themselves to the problems of living and celebrating life, is not easy.

To create a community where all can affirm their past and look to the future by realizing the value of the present, is not easy.

It is to this task, of creating such a community, that we have always been called. The urgency of the call in our day manifests itself in our inability to respond to it. This exposure has come through the sit-ins, demonstrations, and various other forms of civil disobedience—all of which have resulted in the demands of the people of color. Further, these legitimate exposures are judgments which show us our possibilities.

They are judgments for us, because as a white church, we have
not made substantial efforts to meet these demands. They are possibilities because they could be our last chance to adopt and enact concrete programs which will help to rectify the failures of the past. Recognition of our racism is the first step. Confession is a second step. Acts of repentence is the third.

As leaders, we must see our role as one of creating an inclusive church. There can be no such church as long as we refuse to deal with our racism. The "Why Mary, I don't think of you as a Negro" attitude must be dealt with effectively.

"Like much of American society, racism is a matter of subtle and not-so-subtle euphemism. An elaborate rhetoric exists to disguise it. Schools are segregated not to keep black separate, but to preserve the neighborhood school. Police are given excessive power in the ghetto not to deny basic constitutional rights to second class citizen black people, but to stop "crime in the streets". Blacks are not denied jobs because of their skin color, but because they are not "qualified". Housing integration is not opposed because people do not wish to live next door to "niggers". But because black people lower property values. Black students, it is argued, fail to learn in ghetto schools, not because the schools are inferior, but because the black students are inferior by virtue of "cultural disadvantage" and a poor home environment."

These euphemisms and other devices by which we have absolved ourselves from the responsibility for racism must no longer be allowed to blind us.

The war has been declared. We in the church can no longer claim immunity. We must move quickly and with determined commitment to the goal of inclusiveness and community involvement.
1987 National Convocation on Racism

The below is historical background taken directly from the *Journal for the National Convocation on Racism* held in 1987 in Louisville, Kentucky and hosted by the General Commission on Religion and Race:

In 1980, The World Council of Churches sponsored a World Consultation on Racism to consider developing a process for churches to use in combating racism between 1980-1990 and to decide how such a process could be given a high priority by churches.

Bishop Woodie W. White, then General Secretary of The General Commission on Religion and Race, disseminated recommendations from the World Consultation throughout the connectional system. His report was distributed and portions were printed in an October 1980 New World Outlook article titled, “Racism: The Church’s Unfinished Agenda.”

In 1984, the General Conference adopted a Resolution on Global Racism. One recommendation was that a national Convocation on Global Racism be sponsored by the Council of Bishops and The General Commission on Religion and Race, in cooperation with program boards, followed by five Jurisdictional Convocations.

In June 1985, a National Planning Committee, composed of representatives from these bodies, was organized to implement the Resolution. A representative from each of the four major national racial ethnic caucuses joined the Committee in January 1986.

At the same time, five Jurisdictional Chairpersons were invited into the planning process. These individuals will serve as the Chairpersons of their Jurisdictional United Methodist Convocation.

The Convocation on Racism was held September 13-16, 1987 in Louisville, Kentucky. Attending were 631 persons, including 32 active Bishops and 420 annual conference leaders. Agencies, seminaries, the Judicial Council, and racial and ethnic minority centers and caucuses were represented. Ecumenical observers were also present. Approximately 150 persons engaged in leadership roles, either as major presenters and preachers, seminar leaders or Living Unit Group Facilitators.14

Bishop Woodie W. White gave the following speech titled, Racism: The Church’s Unfinished Agenda at the 1987 Convocation. It is reprinted below. We invite you to compare this 1987 speech with his 1980 article from *New World Outlook* which holds the same title. Are there major differences or similarities between the two speeches?

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14 Kelly Fitzgerald, ed. *Racism: The Church’s Unfinished Agenda, a Journal of the National Convocation on Racism* (General Commission on Religion and Race, 1987) 2-3. Records of the General Commission on Religion and Race, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
"RACISM: THE CHURCH'S UNFINISHED AGENDA"

Bishop Woodie W. White

God of Our Weary Years,
God of Our Silent Tears,
Thou Who has brought us
Thus Far on the Way;
Thou Who has by thy Might,
Led us into the Light,
Keep us forever in the Path we Pray
Lest our feet Stray from the Places,
Our God where we met Thee,
Lest in our hearts, drunk with the wine
of the World,
We forget Thee ...

It is important for me (and for us, I believe)
in any assessment of our battle with racism as it mani-

fests itself in the life of The United Methodist
Church, to properly acknowledge some realities that
might be overlooked because they are so utterly obvi-

ous.

I have this God-sense about life that causes
me to acknowledge the fundamental belief that it is
God's world. God's will is Good and wherever
Good is evidenced, God is manifested. It is God
who has brought us thus far on the way -- sometimes
with the help of and sometimes in spite of the Gener-

al Conference! Sometimes with the help of and
sometimes in spite of the Council of Bishops! Some-
times with our efforts and sometimes in spite of our
efforts!

Today my brothers and sisters I come to
bring you some Good News. And some Bad News.
And Some Good News. The Christian's final word
is always Good News. Our preaching must always
conclude with Good News. We must send our peo-
ple home with Good News. They come to church
with the bad news, but we send them home with the
Good News.

Parenthetically, I find incongruous some or-
ganizations that call themselves organizations of
Good News yet simply spread bad news. Our final
word then is Good News. It does not mean we ig-
nore bad news; it simply means that for the Christian
the final report is Good News -- no matter how deva-
statingly awful the bad news may be.

Dr. Eddie Fox, staff member of The General
Board of Discipleship, introduced me to what is
called "Johnson Grass." Now, you must remember
that I was born in New York City and my orientation
is primarily urban. All I ever knew was plain grass.
Or, more accurately, the absence of it! My agricul-
tural knowledge and understanding of nature is best
summed up in "If it crawls, kill it!" So, for me, grass
is grass -- pure and simple.

But Dr. Fox says it's not so. He told me
about "Johnson Grass" and its amazing qualities and
characteristics intrigued me. He says that first of all,
Johnson Grass is ugly. It is not one of the attractive
grasses. Johnson Grass is difficult to destroy; you
can't kill it. If you take the most sophisticated herbi-
cides and spray it, it will droop, it will appear to go
away, but as soon as you think you've got it under
control, you'll see it growing again.

Johnson Grass, I'm told, will grow any-
where. In good soil and in bad soil and even in no
soil at all. In fact, Johnson Grass will even grow
through concrete. It's not regional. It will grow in
the South. It will grow in the North. It will grow in
the East. It will grow in the West. It seems perva-
sive. An interesting grass, this Johnson Grass.

Now, what we are going to address this
week is like Johnson Grass -- it's called racism. Like
Johnson Grass it is tough; it is stubborn; and it
seems to grow in the strangest places. In fact, racism
seems to grow anywhere. No, racism seems to grow
everywhere.

Racism seems to be omnipresent --

It grows in the South
It grows in the North
It grows in the East
It grows in the West

Racism seems to be omnipresent --
You find it in councils
You find it in commissions
You find it in boards
You find it in committees
You find it in men
You find it in women
You even find it in children.

Racism is like Johnson Grass -- when you think you have it arrested, it will reappear. When you think you've eradicated it here -- it shows up over there. It just doesn't seem to want to die.

Racism soils everything it touches. It is not a simple sociological phenomenon. It is complex, it is deep, it is tenacious, it is diabolical. We must not delude ourselves with unrealistic expectations about combating it or eradicating it. We must instead understand the complex and endemic nature of racism.

Racism Defined

As a participant in the World Consultation on Racism held in the Netherlands in 1980, we made a number of observations about racism. I share two of them with you:

1. "Racism is still pervasive, a worldwide phenomenon. It is not confined to certain countries or continents."
2. "Racism manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways on the local, national and international levels."

In your program book you will find the following definition and description:

"White racism is the value system which assumes that one race is innately superior to all other races and that the "superior" race has the inherent power to dominate all other races. Racism may be classified as personal or institutional. Personal racism is the individual expression (attitude and/or behavior) which accepts the assumptions of a racist value system and maintains the benefits of the system. Institutional racism is the established social patterns which support, implicitly, the racist value system."

"Because white racism is systemic in nature and practice and exists throughout the United Methodist structure nationally and worldwide, the effects of racism globally must be addressed within the local churches, conferences, seminaries, agencies and other institutions."

Noted columnist Carl T. Rowan, in an article entitled "Perhaps Racism Never Went Away", observed that racism "... is an ugly word describing a sordid state of the human mind. Racism will become the great American curse. A force more destructive than anything the Kremlin or any other enemy might devise."

We examine, therefore, the context of racism in the life of the Church and seek to discover where it continues to thrive unabated and where it has been successfully confronted.

I have a daughter who, in spite of my best efforts, is a Dallas Cowboy fan! Some years ago, when the Dallas Cowboys and the Philadelphia Eagles were in the playoffs, I took her to see a game. Early one Sunday morning (after appropriate devotions, of course) we drove to Philadelphia. It was a cold, miserable day -- 15 below zero. As we sat in the stands, we met some friendly people seated next to us. They kept offering me something in a flask; they said it would keep me warm! At any rate, it was a joyful day and we had a good time with these new friends. Fortunately the Eagles won!

As we were driving home, my teenage daughter made a cutting observation. She said, "Dad, isn't it funny how nice white people are when they are not in church?" I was momentarily speechless. There is something haunting and awful about the blot of racism as it manifests itself in the life of the Church. What happens to people when they go to church? People who have grown accustomed to sitting in classrooms together, who work in offices together, who will work side-by-side on projects together, but who balk at the prospect of worshipping God together! I hang my head in shame. Isn't it strange how we behave towards each other in church.

We must first examine our theological context. Racism for the Church is an affront to God -- a scourge on the Body of Christ, the Church, and is fundamentally and unequivocally sin. Racism is fundamentally sin.

The theological assumptions are important for us as Christians. Racism is not merely antisocial behavior but is God-questioning. It seeks in its ordering of the human family to determine the value of human life based on skin color and essentially to redefine the creative act of God. The late Dr. George Kelsoy has helped me immeasurably in understanding this aspect of racism.

The Genesis account affirms that when God created humanity God declared it to be good, suggesting that henceforth all human life as the product of the creative activity of God was of inherent value. Racism redefines creation. As such, racism and the racist seek to play God. The racist denies or challenges the creative genius and wisdom of God. God willed that the human family be created in an array of hues, diverse physical characteristics and declared it good!

Those who declare otherwise say in no uncertain terms that God did it wrong -- God made a
mistake. They know better. That, my friends, is the highest expression of blasphemy. It is even more offensive than disobedience.

The World Council of Churches Consultation on Racism declared:

"Every human being created in the image of God is a person for whom Christ died. Racism, which is the use of a person's racial origins to determine the person's value, is an assault on Christ's value and a rejection of his sacrifice. Whenever it appears, whether in the individual or collective, it is a sin ..."

While the context for our discussion of racism is, in part, a mid-decade assessment of how The United Methodist Church is combating racism, one must enlarge upon that context and recall that this denomination celebrates its 20th birthday next year. While its predecessor bodies are older to be sure, and while our personal histories in the denomination vary, our common history is now but 19 years old. Consequently, we must not fail to assess what the state of racism is in that shared historical context.

A critical benchmark in that history is the constitution of the new United Methodist Church which sought to define its ordered life as one free of racist structures, i.e. institutional expressions. Article IV, Division One of that Constitution declares:

Inclusiveness of the Church

"The United Methodist Church is a part of the Church Universal, which is one Body of Christ. Therefore, all persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, to participate in its programs, and when they take the appropriate vows, to be admitted into its membership in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member of any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin or economic situation."

Combating Racism

I believe that efforts toward combating and eliminating racism must always be pursued on three levels:

- **Attitudinal** - what one thinks and believes.
- **Behavioral** - how one acts and reacts.
- **Institutional** - the manner in which ideas, beliefs and values are systematically perpetuated.

If we don't successfully and faithfully address all three -- not one, not two, but all three -- we will never come close to seriously confronting the pervasive, systemic and tenacious character of racism. Therefore, any assessment of our success or lack thereof must examine all three manifestations of racism.

Attitudinal racism cannot be considered unimportant even as we address the important issue of institutional racism. I agree with Sister Carolyn Osiek, a Roman Catholic nun, who has written a most provocative and helpful book entitled "Beyond Anger: On Being A Feminist in the Church." She says:

_I am a firm believer that forced structural alteration does not of itself produce lasting change (my emphasis) precisely because it does not convince those who hold power that the new way is better._

... (such things as) Affirmative Action ... are but temporary solutions unless there is a conviction on the part of those in authority and power to implement them and that these policies will indeed in the long run benefit all concerned.

Make no mistake about it, combating institutional racism is crucial. Affirmative action, employment and Board membership goals are necessary and important. The considerable progress made in the denomination would not have been made without such commitment. But, if we have learned anything these past few years, it is that such structural changes do not assure permanent or lasting change.

Thus my brothers and sisters, we must confront not only institutional racism but attitudinal racism and behavioral racism as well. For unless we seek to change the racist mind, it will simply find a way to circumvent changes in institutional racist structures. Like Johnson Grass which appears to be eliminated, it will appear elsewhere, sometimes in more subtle and sophisticated forms.

The Good News is that our efforts to eradicate institutional racism have been significant in The United Methodist Church. The bad news is that before I could announce the good news, indications suggest that the gains are not permanent but only temporary. Thus, the Bad News!

The United Methodist Church ethnic minority constituency numbers 419,000. The breakdown by racial/ethnic groups is as follows: Blacks 330,000; Hispanics 40,000; Asians 36,000; Native Americans 13,000. These numbers represent 4.5% of a total membership of approximately 9.2 million members. One measure of our effectiveness at eradicating racism is determined by evaluating how inclusive we are in the organizational structures of the denomination at the General Church (National), Annual Conference and local church levels.
Dr. James M. Shopshire, professor at Wesley Theological School, Washington, D.C., has done an exhaustive research analysis of racial and ethnic minority participation at the Annual Conference and General Church levels. His study details data which reveals by the statistical measure that the denomination has made significant strides in becoming a racially inclusive church through the elimination of racially discriminatory policies and practices, especially at the national or General Church level. This is good news. The quantity and quality of inclusiveness varies. There is, nonetheless, at least an anti-racist institutional posture.

However, Dr. Shopshire's caution must be heeded. What he says regarding some of the data might well be applied to the overall study.

Careful study (of the data) is required if The United Methodist Church is to be thoroughly in touch with what it is saying to racial-ethnic minorities. If ... viewed with a feeling of self-righteous accomplishment ... then they are seriously flawed. On the other hand, if the patterns are seen as indicative of what the Church ought to be doing, the constructive consequences of certain trends are to be acknowledged and encouraged.

However, there is concern that the pattern is inconsistent, that the gains may not be permanent even at the national levels of the church, and that the commitment to such a policy is not uniformly strong, even at the General Church level. But even this is not the whole story. My observation has not changed over the years -- and the data supports me in this claim -- that the closer one gets to the local church, the more obvious are expressions of racism. And if, as we are prone to say, "It hasn't happened until it happens at the local church," then the bad news is that we have not begun to seriously address the issue of racism until it is addressed at the local church level. The data at the Annual Conference level reveals considerably less inclusiveness and the local church level is almost nil. Sadly, eleven o'clock Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week!

A recent Consultation on an Inclusive Church sponsored by the Consultation on Church Union produced a report that contains words I believe are relevant to us in our predominantly white denomination:

\[
\text{The hard reality that COCU itself faces is that any failure to commit itself to an emerging church that forsrays racism in its own life and}
\]

struggles with racism in American culture will result in its demise.

Indeed, the credibility of predominately white churches will be determined by the level of integrity in confronting racism. It is both an institutional and evangelization issue.

The bad news in this mid-decade assessment is that we have done very little as a denomination to address attitudinal and behavioral racism and the commitment to combat racism has been largely ignored at Annual Conference and local church levels. To ignore the racist heart and the racist mind and believe that one will eliminate permanently racist structures is pure folly. This is theologically unsound as well, for we are called first and foremost to save persons, not institutions!

Lerone Bennett, a noted historian, said years ago something that rings true today:

"It is fashionable nowadays to think of racism as a vast impersonal system for which no one is responsible. But this is still another evasion. Racism did not fall from the sky; it was not secreted by insects. NO -- racism in America was made by men (and women), neighborhood by neighborhood, law by law, restrictive covenant by restrictive covenant, and deed by deed."

Seven years ago I called for a twenty-year program that would commit the denomination to an intentional effort to combat and overcome racism; to touch every level of the church and address racism in all its forms -- attitudinal, behavioral, institutional. An effort that would reach every local church, theological school, hospital, home for children and the aged, college, annual conference and General Church agency, as well as the leadership from the local church down to the Council of Bishops! I still make that call today. Without such intentional and comprehensive efforts, gains made will be lost and we can foresee the emergence of a stronger, more entrenched, albeit subtle, racism throughout the life of the Church.

The bad news is that in many places in the church we are already taking giant steps backwards. While a decade ago we were seriously grappling with racism, there is now only an effort to evade it. Where honest, but painful, dialogue was taking place a decade ago, there is little or none today. Where there was a commitment to broaden the racial and ethnic presence, there is less today. Where there was genuine excitement about the value of inclusiveness, some agencies and institutions have not moved beyond where they were five or six years ago. Where there was a willingness to examine racism, attitudinal as well as behavioral, there is a growing sense that we have done it all and no longer need examination.

And almost nowhere do we hear racism
preached as sin. How can our people be convicted if they do not know the nature of the beast within them and in our structures?

*The Good News* is that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Christ died for the racist and the anti-racist. The good news is that we must share Christ, Christly. That is to say that in our efforts to eradicate racism we must not reveal the spirit of discord while trying to establish harmony. In our efforts to erase racism we are fundamentally trying to help all to see Christ more fully. Christ will more likely be seen if we are more Christ-like in our efforts and methods; we must remember that our object is to destroy racism, not the racist. For the racist is but a brother or sister who has lost the way. And what we say to these brothers and sisters is "Come home!"

Some of you have heard me talk about Will Campbell, an earthy, profound man. His most recent book is entitled "Forty Acres and A Goat." It is a kind of personal reflection on the Civil Rights Movement. Some of you would be proud to see the names of prominent United Methodists like James Lawson, Joseph Lowery -- and my former roommate, Ed King, the most committed anti-racist I have ever seen and one who today bears the physical scars of that commitment, a white Mississippian like none I've met before, who is present at this Convocation.

In the book there is a powerful episode about racism and the relationship of the racist to his/her victims. Will Campbell said that in his reading he found the following quote by John Ross which perhaps explains the reason the racist finds it difficult to acknowledge racism: "The perpetrator of a wrong never forgives his victims."

Will Campbell says to Jim Lawson: "Is that what makes white folks behave like white folks? We can't forgive them for what we've done to them? ... By the accident of birth, I can't forgive you for a wrong I never did to you. And you have to forgive me for not forgiving you for something you don't need forgiving for."

My brothers and sisters, the Good News is simple. Go from this place and tell white people everywhere the Good News:

Your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**
Sharon, your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**
Joe, your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**
Mary, your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**
Bill, your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**
Nancy, your sins are forgiven **go and sin no more!**

*And I looked and saw a New Earth.*
*And I looked and saw a New America.*
*And I looked and saw a New United Methodism.*

And I looked and there was racism no more.

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14 Kelly Fitzgerald, ed. *Racism: The Church's Unfinished Agenda, a Journal of the National Convocation on Racism* (General Commission on Religion and Race, 1987) Records of the General Commission on Religion and Race, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
During the week of June 16-21, I along with several other United Methodists attended a World Council of Churches Consultation on Racism in Noordwijkerhout, Lance-laan (Holland). It was my first experience in a conference to examine the phenomenon of racism as a world issue.

Participants from across the world, representing every continent, were present. I was reminded in a most dramatic way of the pervasiveness of racism. Indeed it was out of this observation that I found myself embroiled in a debate with a representative from the Soviet Union.

I have become convinced that racism has the power to transcend all forms of barriers. Racism can be found in different countries, among different races, religions, and political ideologies. There are those who adhere to the position that racism can only exist in a capitalist system. I disagree! While I recognize the historic relationships of racism to colonialism and capitalism, I have seen racism raise its ugly head in some places where it "theoretically" is not supposed to be found. Even more alarming, we are becoming aware that today's oppressed may be tomorrow's oppressors!

The World Consultation on Racism observed:

"1. Racism is still a pervasive, world-wide phenomenon. It is not confined to certain countries or continents."

"2. Racism manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways on the local, national and international levels."

As we in The United Methodist Church look to our mission in the 80's the issue of race must still be on our priority list. It is still the unfinished agenda of the Church.

We United Methodists suffer a denominational hazard. We tend to think in quadrennia. Programmatically and organizationally we see problems and solutions operating in four year cycles. We recognize a problem, set our sights in a direction to deal with the problem, and in four years we believe the problem has been solved. So we move on to the next problem.

For the last four years, the church and the nation have placed the issue of racism on a "back burner." Many have concluded that if you didn't talk about racism, didn't mention the word, it would just fade away. Even articles have been written suggesting a moratorium on the use of the word. So we have seen a nation and a church move away from the issue of racism by addressing themselves to other or related issues.

As we move into the 80's, and draw close to the culmination of this century, it is necessary to again address the issue of racism boldly and uncompromisingly. Until racism is taken more seriously than we have been willing to do as a nation and as a church, we will continue to be faced

**RACISM: The Church's Unfinished Agenda**

Woodie W. White
This member of the Ku Klux Klan was arrested in Chattanooga, Tenn., for allegedly carrying the components to manufacture bombs.

with the resurgence of such groups as the Ku Klux Klan. We will see "Miami" repeating itself. And the church will reflect in attitude and structure a racism more pervasive and demonic than we've known.

How can the church more effectively address the issue of racism in the 80's?

Examine The Theological and Biblical Issues Which Speak To Racism

I believe we in the church have not attacked racism as sin. I have talked to church leaders, and discovered their willingness to see racism as a sociological issue—some acknowledge it as an ethical issue, but very few define it as sin. Well, that's what racism is—sin.

In our local churches, and elsewhere throughout the church, as we seek to lessen and eradicate racism, it would be helpful to underscore that racism is not just an indication of how we view other human beings, but it is also indicative of how we view God.

Racism at its core claims that some human beings are more valuable than others because of their race. Having thus established a hierarchy in the human family, privilege and disadvantage is provided on the basis of race or color. In the United States, the hierarchy has been established on the basis of race and those who are white have been defined as superior or more valuable and thereby assigned a place of privilege. Persons of other races (color) have been assigned a lesser place in the hierarchy—opportunities, privileges, and advantages have been provided accordingly.

Racism is sin because it questions the wisdom of God. It suggests that God made a mistake when creating persons who are not white—not the superior ones. Further, racism is sin because it defines some of God's children (those who are not white) as less valuable than others (those who are white). Clearly, the Christian perspective proclaims God as good, perfect, and wise. We do not serve a capricious, imperfect, bungling deity.

The World Consultation on Racism has rightly pointed out:

"Every human being, created in the image of God, is a person for whom Christ has died. Racism, which is the use of a person's racial origins to determine the person's value, is an assault on Christ's value and a rejection of His sacrifice. Whenever it appears, whether in the individual or in the collective, it is sin, and must be openly fought by all those who are on Christ's side, and by the Church as the designated vehicle and instrument of Christ's purpose in the world."

How then can we address the sinful nature of racism? First I believe those responsible for developing our church school curriculum and other resources throughout the church need to provide materials which helps the church understand racism as sin. Such materials need to be provided for every age level in the church—pre-school to senior adults.

Second, our pastors must begin or in some cases reemphasize the sinful nature of racism through their preaching and teaching. I have been appalled at the number of Christians who do not see the correlation of their faith to racism and racial discrimination. Indeed, some prominent voices in the Church Growth Movement, C. Peter Wagner and Donald McGavran, have suggested that such concerns are really "ethical issues" that often cause "overloading the gospel with all the ethical issues on the agenda of the evangelizing culture." (Wagner, Peter C., Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimension of Church Growth in America, Knox Press, 1979.)

The acceptance and treatment of members of the family of God is not a secondary issue but central to an
understanding and acceptance of God who creates and a Lord who saves. I can't love God with all my heart, soul, and mind, and reject other persons because of the shape of their eyes, or the texture of their hair, or the color of their skin. The Christian's love of God is inextricably tied to his or her love of other human beings.

All of us need to be brought face to face with the theological and biblical foundation of our faith as they address and have application to the nature of racism.

What I am calling for is a theology against racism. The acknowledgment of racism as sin is to admit its demonic nature. Our attempts to lessen and eradicate racism can only be ultimately successful, to the extent that we recognize this is a spiritual as well as an ethical battle. It is a battle not only against institutions, but against behavior, and attitudes which create, maintain, and have need of racism.

Let's Begin a Twenty Year Program Responding to the World Council of Churches Call for a Program to Eradicate Racism During the 80's.

If the United Methodist Church through its local churches, annual conferences, general boards, agencies and councils would commit themselves to work towards the eradication of racism, significant progress toward that goal could be achieved. If for the next twenty years, the whole denomination would be sensitive to identifying and eliminating racism (attitudinal, behavioral, and institutional), what changes could take place. What I am calling for is not a new quadrennial emphasis or priority, but a new commitment by the total church to deal forthrightly with racism once and for all. Such an effort would not take the place of what the Church is doing in response to other critical issues like hunger, ecological conservation, sexism, strengthening the ethnic minority local church, or ministry to and with persons with handicapping conditions. Rather, it is to eradicate racism wherever it is found, even when it exists within these other critical issues.

Such a commitment for the next twenty years would touch every level of the churches' life—local church, theological institutions, hospitals, homes and colleges, annual conferences and general church structures, leadership—laity and clergy. I would therefore propose that:

1. All congregations, conferences and general church agencies participate in a “Service of Repentance, Self-Examination, and Commitment” as they seek to identify the evils of racism and commit themselves to the eradication of all forms of racism—institutional, behavioral, and attitudinal.

2. All conferences and general agencies and local congregations examine their structures and organizations, policies and programs, to determine if there are “Indicators of Racism” present and operative. They might review the Board of Global Ministries' program to combat institutional racism as a possible model and develop ways by which such racism can be eliminated.

We in the church have not attacked racism as sin.
"What I am calling for is a new commitment by the total church to deal forthrightly with racism once and for all."

3. All conferences and general agencies and congregations develop procedures and programs by which racism can be eradicated and arrested. The General Commission on Religion and Race and other appropriate agencies should be utilized as resources to assist in such an effort.

4. All congregations, conferences and general agencies study and utilize the "Charter for Racial Justice" as one means of understanding the scope of racism and determining means by which it can be eradicated.

5. All bishops, district superintendents, pastors, and other church leaders participate in the program called "The Consultation on Racism" provided by the General Commission on Religion and Race.

6. Each conference and general church agency, and related institutions, develop a clear Affirmative Action posture, policy, and program, so as to insure and reflect the rich racial and ethnic diversity of The United Methodist Church.

7. Each conference and general church agency examine and evaluate the nature of the participation in decision making by members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Where appropriate, means should be provided by which such decision making and the sharing of power can be effectively increased.

8. All writers of church publications and materials at the annual conference and general church level read and utilize the handbook entitled, The Elimination of Racist, Sexist, Ageist Language. (Available through General Council on Ministries)

9. Annual conferences, general church agencies, and local congregations provide opportunities for dialogue with persons of racial and ethnic minority groups.

10. The total church vigorously support The Missional Priority for the 1981-84 Quadrennium, "The Strengthening and Development of the Ethnic Minority Local Church."

11. Annual conferences and general church agencies with funding responsibilities be especially sensitive to assist those racial and ethnic minority programs and organizations which are seeking to make changes in systems which perpetuate racism and oppression.

The United Methodist Church has come a long way in its effort to become an inclusive church. We have achieved some notable victories. We have much to celebrate. But, racism is still too apparent at every level in the life of the church—and as such it still remains our unfinished agenda. It will require our Lord who is able to cleanse and forgive; change and renew; heal and reconcile.

Woodrow White is General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, The United Methodist Church.
2000 General Conference Act of Repentance

At General Conference 2000, during a worship service on May 4, United Methodists confessed to the sin of racism, particularly in the 19th c. when white Methodists sought to control Black Methodists, and called for reconciliation. Representatives from the African Methodist Episcopal church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal church were present during the service. The service did not only focus on past sins of racism but on how racism was still ever-present in The United Methodist Church. The end goal of this service was for General Conference, which is the only body that can officially speak for the denomination, to issue an official acknowledgement and apology for past sins of racism.

Below is a video of the entire Service of Repentance and Reconciliation.
The Council of Bishops has been a leading force in the Methodist tradition since 1939. One of the main ways that the Council, as a whole, addresses the denomination (and the world at large) is via statements. These statements often point the denomination to certain actions and are often written in response to historical events, such as the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which led to the desegregation of public schools in the United States, or more recently to the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police. These statements are meant to present a unified response and a unified call to action. But these statements often call for action and rarely lead to it. Below are historic statements from the Council of Bishops which seek to address racism in some form.

As you read through keep these questions in mind. What rhetoric is consistent? Were these statements followed by any action on the part of the Bishops, annual conferences, local churches, or individual (United) Methodists? Do these words spur you to action or leave you wanting to see more from the bishops? What type of language or action would encourage you?
In 1954, one of the first responses from the Council of Bishops on a matter relating to race was issued after the United States Supreme Court called the segregation of public schools unconstitutional. In this ground-breaking decision of Brown v. Board of Education, The Methodist Church’s Council of Bishops sought to show their support of desegregation. In this response you’ll see how appalled at segregation the bishops are, and yet, they refused to recognize their own institutional segregation via the Central Jurisdiction and the harm it created.
THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

adopted by the
Council of Bishops
The Methodist Church
November 20, 1954
Chicago, Illinois

The historic Decision of the Supreme Court abolishing segregation in the public school system is in keeping with the attitude of The Methodist Church. In our official pronouncements, including the Social Creed and the Episcopal Address adopted by the 1952 General Conference, our position has been clearly stated. The Supreme Court itself recognized that such a ruling brought with it difficulties of enforcement, and thereby made provision for sufficient time to implement its Decision. The declaration of the Decision was made in the magnificent home of the Supreme Court in Washington, D. C., but the ultimate success of the ruling will be determined in the hearts of the people of the nation. Thus the Church is furnished with an unequaled opportunity to provide leadership during this period in support of the principles involved in the action of the Court. We accept this responsibility, for one of the foundation stones of our faith is the belief that all men are brothers, equal in the sight of God. In that faith, we declare our support of the ruling of the Supreme Court.

The Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches has rejoiced our hearts and strengthened our faith. This living symbol of our Christian heritage and unity is the best hope of our time. We delight to be a part of the world-wide church, and pledge to the fellowship our prayers, our loyalty, and our support. The unity of men through diversity, so wonderfully symbolized by the Christian Churches, is a sign pointing to the healing of the nations.

The proposal of Universal Military Training threatens to rise again. Yet within our own lifetime, those who were the first to take the sword have perished by it. Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were not saved by military training. Their very domination by the military way of life evoked a false sense of security and a disregard for spiritual values. The Church is concerned with our survival as a democracy penetrated by Christian values. Militarism as a way of life is a foe of democracy, and our forefathers fled to these shores to escape it. We call upon our people to prevent any attempt to fasten peacetime conscription on the American people.

To create and foster a climate in which men may dwell together as brothers is our business. We commend heartily the efforts
of President Eisenhower to create a more effective framework of international cooperation and understanding. Upon another occasion, we applauded his offer to share atoms for peaceful, humanitarian purposes. We believe that urgency in such cooperation is a signal need of our time.

We endorse the Refugee Resettlement Program now being sponsored by the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief. We appeal to our Methodist people to provide sufficient sponsorships to care for the 5000 refugees who constitute our responsibility, our of the 209,000 people who are anticipated as seeking homes in the United States under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act. We believe that the sponsoring of these families by a church or individual Methodists becomes a privilege and a source of spiritual joy.

Finally, we who are the inheritors of the Wesley tradition feel the power of a great evangelistic passion. We remember that with a Revolution flaming across the Channel, John Wesley felt his primary responsibility to be the proclaiming of the good news of God in Christ. This has been and is now the supreme goal of all our endeavors. Since Methodist union in 1939, the Church has grown by nearly two million members. In all our history, there has never been a time that our evangelistic programs have been more widespread than just now. Yet we take no undue satisfaction in our statistical victories, but we seek the commitment and devotion which will give us more spiritual power. Let us pray humbly that the spiritual children of John Wesley--the ministers and laymen of The Methodist Church--may make their rightful contribution to a dark time which longs for the light of Jesus Christ.
In 1963, the Council of Bishops released a statement explicitly on “racial tensions.” This statement was released in response to the imprisonment of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr on April 12, 1963 (Good Friday) in Birmingham, Alabama. It was during this night in prison that King wrote his own call to action, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Which statement, King’s or the Bishops’, calls you to action?
MESSAGE ON RACIAL TENSION

adopted by the
Council of Bishops
The Methodist Church
April 18, 1963
San Francisco, California

The Council of Bishops of The Methodist Church, meeting in San Francisco, wishes to express great concern and regret over the racial tension and violence which have been occurring in our land. The position of the church has been repeatedly stated, and is found embodied in the Book of Discipline of the Church, in the resolutions of the General Conference on race. We stand for justice and brotherhood among all races and people.

We are a world church and proudly claim all peoples among our membership, all races under our banner.

We at this time wish particularly to commend our Methodist ministers and laymen of the racially troubled areas of the world for the sincere and honest efforts that many have made and are making to improve relations between the races. We strongly urge that such efforts be continued, with particular emphasis being given to the right of all people, of all races, to enjoy full citizenship in this nation and every nation under God. Our hearts go out in sympathy to all persecuted groups and to the cause of Christ.

No one has a monopoly on the best methods to attain the goals aimed at. Our main concern is that we be Christian in this and all other relationships of life.
By 1985, the General Conference of The UMC did have new initiatives to examine racism in the ranks of the denomination, but still, this work was left wanting. Their 1985 statement is reprinted below.

“The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, recognizing that not enough progress had been made to eliminate racism, found it necessary to issue their Statement in May 1985 titled,

"Continuing Racism: A Concern of The United Methodist Church."

"Racism is a scourge which plagues all mankind. It determines the relational attitudes of masses of people. It is encased in a multitude of systemic and institutional forms which give privilege and status to some by the mere accident of birth and color, while perpetuating disadvantage to others. To-day there are those who would attempt to justify racism on philosophical and theological grounds. However defined, it is an offense against humanity and the source of untold suffering and oppression. Finally, it is an offense against God the Creator who made all people after the divine image.

"The term "racism" evokes anger, guilt and grief among many persons. Unfortunately, we have spent more time defining, debating and defending racism than in destroying its root causes.

"The United Methodist Church can take pride in its pronouncements and in many of its practices and programs which condemn racism and encourage racial justice. Nevertheless, both our faith and the current climate call for renewed concern and action if we are to be serious about the demonic nature of racism and the need for its destruction.

"There are signs clearly indicating that consistent concern and action are necessary if we are to be faithful to a Gospel that declares that God intends and expects justice for all human beings ... In this struggle we understand ourselves as being linked with other Christian denominations, councils of churches and people of good will; we cannot be effective if we try to act alone. Our call to discipleship and our compulsion to be witnesses to what God has done in Jesus Christ, motivate this prayerful response to the demonic reality of racism. May this ex-pression of concern and commitment be implemented through concrete action."

Council of Bishops
On June 8, 2020 the Council of Bishops issued its most recent call to Dismantle Racism, largely in response to the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Compare the language here to that in the 1985 call.
June 8, 2020

Council of Bishops statement on the Scourge of Racism

The past few weeks have left many hurt, angry and outraged as we have witnessed the deaths of unarmed Black persons at the hands of police and racism; Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the countless others whose names are known only to mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends.

Many bishops have worked to amplify and magnify one another’s voices. The words of Bishop Bruce Ough, resident Bishop of Minneapolis area, were a clarion call to the crisis before us, “There is more than one pandemic ravaging Minnesota and our country at this time. In addition to fighting COVID-19, we are besieged by a pandemic of racism, white supremacy, and white on black or brown violence.”

The voice of Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, resident Bishop of the Baltimore-Washington area, gave power to the realities, “Being Black is not a pre-existing condition; being Black is not justification for probable cause; being Black is not to be inherently suspicious nor suspect. Being Black is a gift from Almighty God and a manifestation of an aspect of God.”

These prophetic voices and those of others have provided words when we had none.

As bishops of the United Methodist Church, we ask every United Methodist to reclaim their baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

We ask every United Methodist to name the egregious sin of racism and white supremacy and join together to take a stand against the oppression and injustice that is killing persons of color.

As bishops of the whole church we affirm the peaceful protests as a means of giving voice where it is needed most.

We are clear that it is beyond time for all United Methodists to act. It is time to use our voices, our pens, our feet and our heart for change.
We join with other church leaders and boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church to add strength to the message that we will no longer remain silent nor complicit but must act now!

As a next faithful step we ask United Methodists to read all they can on the subject of anti-racism and engage in conversations with children, youth and adults. Have conversations with coworkers and friends. These will not be easy but they will help us gain a greater appreciation for one another. In a recent podcast, “Unlocking Us,” lecturer, author and podcast host, Brené Brown, hosted author, historian and American University professor, Ibram X. Kendi who said, “By not running from the books that pain us, we can allow them to transform us. I ran from antiracist books most of my life. But now I can’t stop running after them – scrutinizing myself and my society, and in the process changing both.” May we listen not only with our ears but with our hearts and run after books, podcasts and conversations that transform entire communities.

For at least the next 30 days, we ask every United Methodist everywhere to join in prayer at 8:46 a.m. and p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time the officer held his knee on George Floyd’s neck. Do this for at least the next 30 days. Pray for all persons of color who suffer at the hands of injustice and oppression. Pray for our church as we take a stand against racism. Imagine the power of a concert of prayer heard around the world.

And finally, to borrow from Bishop Easterling once again, “The time is now. Dismantle the architecture of whiteness and white supremacy; stop creating, implementing and supporting policies that perpetuate economic injustice; stop the dog-whistle political maneuverings which incite violence against people of color; commit to being an anti-racist; stop over-policing Black and brown bodies; stop using deadly force in ordinary police interactions with Black and brown people. Stop killing us.”

May the God of Grace and Peace be with you.

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey
President - Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Records of the Council of Bishops Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 0749
After the June 8, 2020 Council of Bishops statement, a few bishops, created a video calling for action. The video led to the creation of a website and encouraged different levels of the United Methodist connection to begin (or continue) anti-racism work. This website is still active and updated continuously: https://www.umc.org/en/how-we-serve/advocating-for-justice/racial-justice/united-against-racism

Figure 3: Video Compilation from Council of Bishops in response to the killings of Black persons in the Summer of 2020

Will this renewed effort lead to actual institutional change?

All of these efforts have led to renewed conversations, book studies, new websites, and many interviews with United Methodists. Few have led to substantial change. Why is this? Why have United Methodists been willing to talk about race, racism, and white supremacy, but not willing to act?

Part of the lack of change has to do with the hesitancy of white United Methodists who refuse to acknowledge the way that they historically and contemporarily participate in racist systems that have formed most of modern-societies and our current denominational structure. We have to do the hard work of personal and institutional examination of our past in order to envision more equitable futures.

This is where GCAH is seeking to join the conversation. We cannot begin to have honest discussions about race until we acknowledge the racist past we have and the way that the racism of our fore-Methodists is seeped into our current structures and theologies. It is our hope at GCAH, that this workbook and the other resources produced by our commission will help guide this effort at the local church, annual conference, and individual level.
Audio-Visual Resources

Voices of the Central Jurisdiction

Figure 4: Voice of the Central Jurisdiction, produced by United Methodist Communications. Images from the Missionary Scrapbook Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
Figure 5: Methodists at the 1963 March on Washington. Bishop Noah Moore Papers, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison NJ 07940

Figure 6: Bishop Moore and Bishop Talbert at the 1963 March on Washington. Bishop Noah Moore Papers, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison NJ 07940
Figure 7: Protest at 1968 General Conference. Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940

Figure 8: Protest at the 1968 General Conference Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
Figure 9: Procession at the 1987 National Convocation on Race. General Commission on Religion and Race Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940

Figure 10: Evacuation of National Convention on Race due to bomb threat General Commission on Religion and Race Collection, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, NJ 07940
The 1960s was an important era of change in the U.S. Nothing was more significant than the challenge to segregation mounted during that time. One particular program from The United Methodist Church was able to capture the feelings and encourage dialogue in a way no other could. “Night Call,” one of the first nation-wide call-in talk radio programs, was able to focus on the issue of civil rights and race relations, along with other important issues of the day, by fostering civil dialogue across the airways. Digitized versions of the program can be found at our historic audio database.

The program ran, with a small hiatus, between 1966 and 1969. It was broadcast late in the evening with host Russ Gibb, followed by Del Shields. Both interviewed leaders of the civil rights campaign who then took calls from people around the country. Civility and respect in dialogue was a hallmark of the program. Once on the audio database home page use the Browse Subjects dropdown and select 'race relations' or 'civil rights' to see between 12 to 21 programs on those topics. You'll discover a variety of other topics to browse as well. We've just added 12 newly digitized programs from the summer and fall of 1968. Here is a short selection:

**Racial Violence: originally aired June 6, 1968**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0012.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0012.mp3)

**Is Integration Out of Date?: originally aired June 28, 1968:**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0007.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0007.mp3)

**Black Panthers and Black Power: originally aired July 3, 1968**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0008.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0008.mp3)

**Poor People's Campaign: originally aired July 11, 1968**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0005.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0005.mp3)

**What's Next for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference?: originally aired July 22, 1968**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0004.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0004.mp3)

**How to Make Black Power Work for Black People: originally aired July 30, 1968**

[http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0001.mp3](http://catalog.gcah.org/DigitalArchives/NightCall/NC0001.mp3)
**Un-Tied Methodism: GCAH Podcast**

As part of GCAH’s efforts to relate in new ways to the UMC in the 2021, we are beginning a new podcast series, entitled Un-Tied Methodism where we’ll “unravel the past to make sense of today.” Once per month we’ll release a new episode where we take a recent headline story from either world news or United Methodist News Service and dig in to how Methodism and Methodists have responded to related news in the past. We are releasing the following five episodes at once as part of our Heritage Sunday collection. These all deal with the history of Methodism and race.

**Racism in the System: Part 1, 2:** Dr. Dreff has a conversation with Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. Taylor Denyer on the history of racism and colonialism within Methodism. Can we call John Wesley an anti-racist? How do we understand spreading scriptural holiness across the land in a decolonial way? How has power been built into the institution(s) that created the UMC?

**Methodism in the District of Columbia:** Dr. Dreff has a conversation with Carol Travis from Asbury United Methodist, Rev. Will Green from Foundry United Methodist, and Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden from John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion on the historic relationship between their congregations. In the 19th c. ow white Methodism sought to control Black Methodist worship experience, leading to the creation of separate Black Methodist churches and denominations.

**A Local Church Researches Its Past:** Dr. Dreff has a conversation with Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, Rev. Megan Stowe, and Rev. Patricia Thompson, all leaders from the New England Annual Conference, to discuss the history of Wellspring UMC. In the Fall of 2020, racist items were found in a cornerstone of the building leading the congregation to confront a racist past in order to embrace an anti-racist future.

**Is the United Methodist Logo, a “no-go”? The Cross and Flame:** Dr. Dreff has a conversation with Bishop Mande Muyombo, Rev. Edlin Cowley, and Adrienne Possenti, leaders from across the UM connection, to discuss how the United Methodist logo, the ‘cross and flame’, is interpreted in different contexts. How do some United Methodists, and especially some non-United Methodists, understand our logo at first glance? Does the logo have a different interpretation globally? And why do we have a logo? Where did its design originate?
Research Resources

If you are interested in researching your own church’s history or larger research projects with the General Commission on Archives and History, here is a brief glance at some of the records we have or research we can help you explore.
The United Methodist Church and its antecedent bodies, more on the Methodist side than the Evangelical United Brethren side, struggled with racism in its many forms since the time of John Wesley in 18th century England. Slavery had established itself as a lucrative market for British merchants who were key drivers in the Atlantic slave trade. Wesley believed theologically in the moral, natural rights of justice, liberty, and happiness for all, including slaves. His abolitionism found its voice in various expressions culminating with the 1774 *Thoughts on Slavery* tract along with his last earthly 1791 letter to William Wilberforce. Wesley implored Wilberforce to continue the fight to end British involvement in state sanctioned institutional slavery. Both above documents reside in The United Methodist Archives and History Center’s holdings.

Unfortunately, there were some American Methodists who interpreted the idea of liberty and justice in other ways that would haunt the church to the present day.

The history of United Methodism’s personal and institutional racism, especially against Black Methodists and other non-white Methodist groups can be found throughout GCAH’s holdings in both the library and archive departments. Much of our 18th and 19th century documentation on Methodism and racism is found in printed matter such as newspapers, tracts, biographies, General and Annual Conference journals, mission reports, etc. A search in our library catalog (https://walter.drew.edu/solr/keyword.php) and Drew Methodist Collection (https://www.drew.edu/library/2019/08/21/methodist-conference-journals/) will reveal the breadth and depth of racism in the various levels of the church over its lifespan.

GCAH’s archival racism holdings range from the records of general boards and agencies, personal papers, audio-recordings, photographs, slides, art work, films, etc. Records from the general boards and agencies are a good source to study institutional racism. Key collections include General Commission on Religion and Race, United Methodist Women, General Board of Church and Society, General Board of Global Ministries, and the Council of Bishops. Much of this material is 20th century but there are examples from the 19th century as well. Personal papers put the “flesh” on understanding Methodist racism unlike most general boards and agencies records. The scope of racism ranges from the 19th to 21st century with the
bulk being post-Civil War. A researcher will for the most part have to excavate the collections to find answers to their questions. Go to http://catalog.gcah.org:8080/exist/publicarchives/gcahcat.xql?term1=Slavery+&field1=su&mode1=contains&field2=any&term2= to discover our collections regarding slavery as well as racism, racial justice and racial reform. Bishop Gilbert Haven’s papers are a good place to start for mid-19th century abolitionism (http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5250.htm) within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Leontyne Kelly papers are worth noting since she is the first Black woman elected to the episcopacy (http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah2712.htm#d1). Try a variety of race related terms to find more information on the subject.

Our Missionary Scrapbook Collection is an on-line pictorial history of early to mid-20th century Methodist Episcopal Church mission work both in the United States and beyond. By this time missions no longer meant just evangelism and conversion but also addressing social problems and inequality by the church and the larger society. The captions can be both racist and offensive to the present-day mindset but they are stark reminders of overt or subconscious institutional and personal racism. The albums can be searched at http://catalog.gcah.org/omeka/.

The African American Methodist Heritage Center archives, housed at GCAH, is another rich source documenting racism in the church. Here you will find first person voices struggling with racism and social justice in the church. See the following finding aids on our catalog site for AAHMC collections that reflect racism and its intersections in United Methodism.

http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5985.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5858.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah4907.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5708.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5884.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5663.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5730.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5924.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5925.htm
http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah5684.htm#d1

If you need help to explore or research our race related holdings, contact our Reference Archivist, Frances Lyons at flyons@gcah.org. She will be able to aid and suggest resources as well as other options not readily apparent in our finding aids.
Documenting and Acknowledging Racism in the Local Church

Racism and the move to become an anti-racist local church is a journey. It is a journey that can be painful, soul-searching. It can cause a feeling of brokenness when local churches discover how racism affected their past and may continue informing the present. Discovering evidence of overt or subtle racism in local church historical sources can also lead to a time of healing and acknowledgement when understood through the lens of the Gospel message. Upon discovery, frank discussions and prayers enlighten the faithful and create new possibilities for genuine inclusiveness and spiritual growth. Even if your church was not overtly racist in the past such as barring Black membership, there are more subtle ways that racism can be found in a congregation’s past. What organizations have hosted meetings on your property? Did you congregation oppose immigrant-based new church plants? How did your congregation respond to the Central Jurisdiction (1939-1968) which created instituted segregation between white Methodists and Black congregations? Do you have a cemetery on the property, and if so, who is (or isn’t) buried there? Whose land does your property originally belong to? Are there race-based clauses in your property’s original deed? How does your church’s land relate to its surrounding community? Is there gentrification? Do the people in your pews resemble the people living down the street? There are countless ways to research how your congregation, the church’s property, and its past have discerned racism.

Before a local church can discover potential racist events or policies in the past, it is important to know that racism shaped the history of United Methodism from its very beginning. And many times, whether overt or subtle racist acts via words or deeds ended up blunting the original meaning of the phrase “Kingdom of God” as United Methodists understand it, which, in turn, still reverberates in our denomination’s soul.

But you ask, “How can we find racism in our past?” It’s a good question that requires digging not only into past congregational records but also area newspapers, including advertisements of church services, town and county archives, oral histories, personal diaries, even remembered casual conversations of church members with family, friends and neighbors, etc., for a larger context.

In local church records what is not said is often louder than what is documented. Silence, however, is not necessarily racist but could be interpreted as such if previously uncovered evidence has emerged.

The best places in the local church to discover overt or subtle racism can be found in the following examples:
• Annual conference reports (Formerly known as charge conference reports)
• Minutes of meetings
• Church and annual conference histories along with newsletters
• Church announcements in broadsides or pamphlets
• Bulletins and copies of sermons if available
• Where ministry was focused in the community via church related events
• Financial reports: Did any offerings go to the Freeman’s Aid Society if your church is a former Methodist Episcopal Church between the latter 19th century to 1935? Or where did offerings go to support mission projects which included work amongst persons of color? What was the motivation of sending offerings to overseas mission projects? Was it out of Christian compassion to lift God’s children or to instruct heathen populations to become more like white American Protestant church culture?
• Sunday School documents: What was being taught or not taught? Were there segregated classrooms? Was there a bus ministry to Black or Brown parts of town?
• Vital records such as membership, marriage, baptism, and death. Though rare there may be commentary for individual entries.
• Videos, recording or photographs of church events such as a Christmas play: Look to see who had what parts if your congregation was racially mixed. If not, then how were certain characters presented. Are racial stereotypes being projected?
• Property deeds or church property sales/purchases reflecting racial discrimination. If so see if there were cultural or legal barriers disallowing sales to non-white populations. Also check to see if the church through its various groups stood up to racist real estate practices.
• Church cornerstones: Does your church still have the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South, designation or racist content in the cornerstone time capsule? If so, make a display acknowledging past racist acts and have a service of acknowledgement and repentance at the opening of the time capsule’s contents display.
• Current outlets such as podcasts, social media and YouTube videos
• What outside organizations did the church support in the form of advertisements in programs or property usage.
What’s Hiding in Your Church’s History?

Recently, we heard about the discovery of a cornerstone, originally belonging to the Fairlawn UMC in Shrewsbury, MA, which closed its doors in 1997. Wellspring UMC, the successor to Fairlawn is closing its doors this year – 2020. When District Superintendent, Rev. Megan Stowe, went to collect the records from this church, she learned that the cornerstone of the Fairlawn UMC which was included among the records actually contained items related to activities of the KKK in the 1920’s and 1930’s. This was the result of a resurgence of such activity in relation to European immigrants and Roman Catholics, who were moving into the United States during those years. These items, a part of the history of Fairlawn, had literally been buried in their cornerstone and might never have surfaced if the church had not closed.

This, then, raises the question. What might be hiding in your church’s history? Is there any history of KKK activity in your church? Or, on the other side, any evidence of anti-slavery activity? Often, when we write the history of our churches, we want to celebrate all of the positive, uplifting parts of that history, and we would often rather not talk about any of the negative parts of that history – whether it might have been the activities of the KKK, a pastor who may have run off with the choir director who was the daughter of one of the leading members of the church, or events which may have ended up splitting the church or, at the very least, caused a rift among members.

Yet, it may be those very events that continue to shape the functioning of the church in the present day, for they are often there, just under the surface, causing anxiety or even anger. And comments are often made now and then, that reinforce the need for more conversation or clarification about what really happened. Sometimes, because the events have never been brought out into the open and discussed, there has never been the option for the rumors about what happened to have been corrected or for repentance and healing to take place.

Thus, it is important to know as much about your church’s history, as possible, so that you can deal with both the not-so-positive pieces as well as celebrate all that has been done well, and then allow the whole history to enable you to move forward into the future.

So, how do you go about finding out about your church’s entire history? First, of all, you should consult with your local church historian and determine if a comprehensive history of your church has ever been written. If you do have a written history, read that document thoroughly to see what you might learn.

If you do not have a local church historian, this might be the time to think about identifying someone for that role, since it will soon be time to elect officers for your church for the coming year soon. Although our United Methodist Discipline strongly recommends that every church
elect a local church historian, currently only about one-third of the churches in the annual conference actually list a church historian on their lay leadership report.

If you do not have a local church historian with whom to consult, is there anyone else who is responsible for keeping track of the church records? The church secretary, perhaps. Or even the pastor (if you are reading this and are not the pastor). If you currently have no one who does that, this would be a good time to scour the church to see where your records might be. They are often hidden away in a remote closet somewhere or in the basement of the church. Or, even in someone’s home. And, you might inquire if, indeed, your church has a cornerstone that might have had records stored in it when the current building was constructed!

Your first step, then, after locating all of your records, including that written history if there is one, is to attempt to house all of them in one place, safe from bugs, changing temperatures, etc. Given the space limitations in some older churches, this might be a challenge, but do the best you can.

Read through your records, especially early quarterly conference records, Official Board minutes, Trustees’ records, minutes of men’s and women’s groups, etc. to see what you can find.

Another resource which may, in fact, yield more actual information about activities in which members of the church were involved than the actual minutes of meetings, is local newspapers. Many area newspapers often had columns for each town which included information about church activities. I have, in fact, written an entire local church history using only information from local newspapers - since there are no existing records available!

Yet another source, with which you may already be familiar, are your older members. Talk with them and ask them about their early memories of the church. If there are negative or troubling parts of the church’s history, they will most likely remember those. In fact, if that is the case, you have probably already heard about some of them, mentioned in passing during a meeting or referred to when something happens that causes a memory to surface. Often, as mentioned earlier, however, these will probably never have actually been brought up, researched, and discussed in order to discover exactly what happened as well as what needs to happen to help resolve any issues that may still be festering, or how to help the church repent of activities such those involving the KKK or other racist or xenophobic activities that might have taken place at one point or another.

This is a good time to explore any such issues which might be a part of your church’s history and to have a discussion about the best way in which to handle them. If there are such issues, there may be folks on both sides of whatever the issue may be, and the issue(s) needs to be handled in a respectful and mature manner. Listen carefully to what each individual is saying. If you are a lay person reading this and not the pastor, then talk with your pastor about leading a discussion which could lead to repentance (if that is necessary) and more importantly, could help to bring about the healing of old wounds. It is far healthier to have an open discussion of the issues than to continue to let whatever went on before fester underneath the surface. Depending upon the issue and how deeply feelings may go, you might want to contact your District Superintendent to help you identify someone who might help in the resolving the issue.
This is not to say, however, that every church has such issues hiding somewhere in your history. And even if there are such issues, there will be many other events in your history to remember and celebrate, as well. Many of you have already researched those and written about them. But if you haven’t, now might be a good time to do just that while also working to resolve any issues that might be hiding near the surface.

And, in fact, there may be some very positive history hiding almost in plain sight which has never been explored. That was the case for the little church in Wolcott, Vt, where I now attend. One line in the 125th anniversary celebration history published in 1980 noted that the congregation had been gathered by an African American named George S. Brown. Yet, until this information was brought to my attention around 2005, nothing had ever been done (as far as we knew) to uncover Rev. Brown’s story. Most likely, because the kind of resources that are available today were not available to either of two former local church historians. As it turns out, Rev. Brown had an amazing history and as far as can be determined, this church is the only white UMC in the United States that was actually organized by an African American who then supervised the construction of the church building which is still standing today.

Who knows what might be hiding in your church’s history?

- Pat Thompson

*To hear a discussion with Rev. Pat Thompson, Rev. Megan Stowe, and Bishop Devadhar on Wellspring UMC and its past, listen to Un-Tied Methodism: A Local Church Researches Its Past*
Liturgical Resources
A SERVICE ON THE CHARTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE
The following service was written by United Methodist Women and is reprinted here with their gracious permission.

Call to Worship
Great and rich is the legacy we bring. Many are the gifts we offer to one another. We are a rainbow of colors, a mosaic of cultures. Jointly we are a tower of wisdom and a fellowship of strength. Every gender, we are created in the image of one eternal God!


Hymn
“Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life,” The United Methodist Hymnal #427, verses 1-4

Scripture
Matthew 25:31-46

Prayer of Confession

LITURGIST: O Lord, you created us as equal, yet we have treated one another unjustly.
PEOPLE: Forgive us, O God.
LITURGIST: You created us in your holy image. Yet we have failed to recognize the dignity and sacredness of your image in every person.
PEOPLE: Forgive us, O God.
LITURGIST: Some of the old wounds of injustices are still bleeding, and the callousness of our scars prevent us from being as sensitive to others as we ought to be.
PEOPLE: Heal us, O God.
LITURGIST: Help us listen to those to whom injustices have been done until we hear your cry in theirs and feel your pain in theirs.
PEOPLE: Help us, O God.
LITURGIST: As new, tender skin emerges from under old scars, create in us a new humanity through the brokenness of our experiences.
PEOPLE: Create in us, O God, a new humanity.
LITURGIST: That we may celebrate together the dignity and sacredness of humanity in one another for the sake of your glory.
PEOPLE: For the sake of your glory. Amen.

From Ceremonies III: A Collection of Worship Resources for United Methodist Women (New York: Women’s Division, the General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1996). Out of print
Hymn
“For the Healing of the Nations,” The United Methodist Hymnal #428

Prayer of Commitment

ALL: We believe …
LEFT: that God is the creator of all people and all are God’s children in one family; RIGHT: that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ;
LEFT: that racism denies the redemption and reconciliation of Jesus Christ; RIGHT: that racism robs all human beings of their wholeness and is used as a justification for social, economic and political exploitation;
LEFT: that we must declare before God and before one another that we have sinned against our sisters and brothers of other races in thought, word and deed; RIGHT: that in our common humanity in creation, all women and men are made in God’s image, and all persons are equally valuable in the sight of God;
LEFT: that our strength lies in our racial and cultural diversity and that we must work toward a world in which each person’s value is respected and nurtured; and RIGHT: that our struggle for justice must be based on new attitudes, new understandings and new relationships and must be reflected in the laws, policies, structures and practices of both church and state.
ALL: As United Methodist Women members, we commit ourselves as individuals and as a community to follow Jesus Christ in word and in deed and to struggle for the rights and the self-determination of every person and group persons.

Hymn
“For Marching to Zion,” The United Methodist Hymnal #733

Benediction
Go with commitment to do justice and in resistance to racism. Go in the power and freedom of God’s love.
OPENING PRAYER

Written by Alfred T. Day, III, General Secretary, GCAH (retired), April 2021

*Dedicated to the life, ministry, teaching and abiding memory and friendship of Rev. Dr. William B. Bobby McClain
GCAH Commissioner, brother and friend.

Version 1

Love Divine All Loves Excelling
in a time of great need
you raised-up the likes of
John and Charles Wesley,
Harry Hosier, and John Stewart,
Richard Allen and Jarena Lee.
Inspired by your Spirit
they were rooted in life-changing experiences of
amazing grace and emancipating, impartial, inexhaustible redemption.
They sought this experience for ALL
living lives of discipline that demonstrated holiness and true Godliness.

In this our time of great need
when racism rages a centuries-old pandemic
ravaging individuals, families and nations,
stir-up your Spirit among people of the Wesleyan tradition
to do your will as fully and effectively on earth as it is heaven.

We confess the overwhelming and harmful effects of racism—
fear of “the other,” intolerance, inequality and inferiority
rooted deeply in systems that govern us
and influencing life and breath every day.
Police brutality, anger and violence born of deep frustration,
judicial inequity, mass incarceration, redlining,
health care, educational and employment disparities
and voter suppression
hold us in cycles of persistent wrong and abiding damage.

Methodist history indicates pride, shame and the pain of unfair discrimination
in relationship with its Black, Indigenous and People of color members:
the ideals of inclusion and practice of eviction, omission and segregation,
the recognition of wrongs and rationalizing their persisting,
repeated repentance and failure to adopt and adapt lasting change
the lingering hurts and anguish of injustice after injustice.

We repent these painful realities.
Lead us in turning from them.
Forgive our failures, overt or unintentional.
Strengthen us to recognize and face our complicities and indifference. Move us from thoughts and prayers to action and accountability.

Infuse us with the Spirit’s gifts of
depth, abiding wisdom,
clear, fresh, open understanding,
simple trust,
speaking difficult truth in love
keen discernment and interpretation
and miracles we hardly imagine.

Add to these gifts a portion of perseverance
relentless as your love for all your people.

“Finish then your new creation”
until we see your great salvation perfectly at work in and through us.
Order our steps to
root-out, dismantle and eradicate racism wherever we find it.
Mold and shape us to become the fullness of beloved community
that is the world of your imagination.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Version 2

Call to Prayer
Sisters and brothers in the Wesleyan tradition:
the sweep of Methodist history indicates the pride, shame and pain of racism
throughout its life and witness
in relationship with its Black, Indigenous and People of Color members:
the egalitarian ideals of inclusion and practice of eviction, omission and segregation,
the recognition of wrongs and rationalizing their persistence,
repeated confession and repentance and failure to adopt and adapt lasting change
the lingering hurts and anguish of injustice after injustice.

Grounded in this tradition and its best hopes for holiness,
and employing every means of grace and practical divinity,
let us pray to the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Love Divine All Loves Excelling
in a time of great need
you raised-up the likes of
John and Charles Wesley,
Harry Hosier and John Stewart,
Richard Allen and Jarena Lee,
and inspired and rooted in life-changing experiences of
amazing grace, emancipating, impartial, inexhaustible redemption.
We follow in their footsteps.

As racism rages a centuries-old pandemic
ravaging individuals, families and nations,
stir-up your Spirit among “the people called Methodist”
to do your will, fully and effectively on earth as it is in heaven.

We confess the overwhelming and harmful effects of racism—
fear of “the other,” intolerance, inequality and inferiority
rooted deeply in systems that govern us
and influencing life and breath every day.
Police brutality, anger and violence born of deep frustration,
judicial inequity, mass incarceration, redlining,
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“Finish then your new creation”
until we see your great salvation perfectly at work in and through us.
Order our steps to
root-out, dismantle and eradicate racism wherever we find it.
Mold and shape us to become the fullness of beloved community
that is the world of your imagination.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
"PRIDE, SHAME, AND PAIN: METHODISM'S HISTORY WITH RACISM AND EFFORTS TO DISMANTLE IT."

WORSHIP RESOURCES

One learning from the monumental and necessary task of dismantling racism is how interwoven through the structures and systems and experiences of the church and the world the social sin of racism truly is. Worship, therefore, that participates in dismantling racism is worship that pays attention to the wider world and the “pride, shame and pain” inherent in a range of needs and hopes. We cannot, for example, look at healthcare and the pandemic response without an eye to how race plays into our structures and systems. We cannot call for truth telling in our leadership or relationships without attention to the lies we continue to tell to and about the marginalized. These resources are provided to help your local congregation reflect and wrestle with what God is doing through the church as we seek to dismantle racism.

On this Heritage Sunday, you are encouraged to reflect on where we have been as a denomination and where we are today even as we reflect on where we are heading by God’s grace. And may we do it all with eyes wide open to the difficult truth even as we seek a new metanoia, a new repentance and commitment to all people.

Resources provided by Discipleship Ministries, Worship Resources Team (5/5/2021)
INVOCATION

God of faith and science, we turn to you in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, because we trust you. We trust you because you listen to our prayers. We trust you because you act in our lives and our history for our welfare. We trust you because we know you as a God of revelation in faith and science.

God of knowledge and wisdom, we ask that you would dwell with all the scientists who are working daily to develop an effective and safe vaccine to combat this virus. Help them to collate current knowledge and be conduits of new knowledge regarding the secrets of the COVID-19 virus. Grant them the wisdom to unlock the keys that will provide helpful COVID-19 therapies and vaccines.

God of curiosity and wonder, grant the scientists the inquisitiveness of George Washington Carver who combined his love of God and his love of science in his quest to unlock hidden agricultural secrets. As the God of the sweet potato, the peanut and the soybean, you enabled Carver to discover their secrets as he united faith and science, wisdom and knowledge, curiosity and wonder.

God of all creation, in this Eastertide we pray for all coronavirus patients, their doctors and their nurses. We ask that you be a fence around all healthcare workers, first responders, and their families. Expand our faith and buoy our hope as we shelter in place. Lord, teach us how to wait, for you are an on-time God!

Amen!

*Bishop Ernest S. Lyght is a retired bishop of The United Methodist Church. Crystal Caviness, the UMC.org contact, can be reached by email or by calling 615-742-5138.

This prayer was published May 13, 2020.
PRAYER for HEALING

O Holy One,
On this historic day, we come before you with hope, relief, and disquiet. We celebrate our human-made institutions and a new opportunity. We long to breathe and be the Beloved Community. You call us to love one another, to reject violence, and to listen.

*Our hope is in you, our rock and refuge,*
*the Source of all that is good and never-ending.*

*Your Truth makes us free.*

And yet, we mourn division with sisters and brothers. We have made media, coin, and systems our gods and sing My Country ‘tis of Thee. Forgive us. For so long, we have lived in our normal routines at less than our best and we can no longer recognize our need for your healing. Puncture our delusions of privilege and status and deliver us from greed and favoritism. O God, awaken us to the life-taking fear and lies that separate us from one another. Disturb our self-righteousness and reveal your grace where it is needed and not wanted. Remind us to be life-giving, to wish the best for one another, to have compassion for one another, and to acknowledge our own brokenness.

*Our hope is in you, our rock and refuge,*
*the Source of all that is good and never-ending.*

*Your Truth makes us free.*

Today we gather together – at a distance – over the screens of our TVs and devices, Longing to be shoulder to shoulder, touching one another, 350 million strong. Feeling that we are all turning the page together. Feeling our hope passed from one to another. God of love, we thank you for leaders who wear the joys and sorrows of life for all to see: Triumph, disappointment, loss and grief, joy, courage, and service. We pray your blessing upon Joseph Biden and his family and on Kamala Harris and her family.
Bless their leadership and inspire them to be leaders who hold their humanity boldly.
May they recognize your Divine Spirit in all people, especially the poor and marginalized and serve them.
Awaken us to the tangible reality of our holy web of interdependence and inspire us to act in our oneness.
Lead us to work for justice and equity, and let justice roll down like waters with righteousness a mighty stream.
Give us the strength to sustain our spirits and will in this sacred work.
Let us rise together, go up together.

*Our hope is in you, our rock and refuge,*
*the Source of all that is good and never-ending.*
*Your Truth makes us free.*

Guide us each day to embrace your grace and to bring your love and justice into the world.
On this day of hope, gird us for the difficult challenges and holy opportunities ahead.
Help us to be true to you, O God, and true to our native land.
Amen.

*Inspiration: Psalm 62.5-12; Lift Every Voice and Sing, UMH 519.*
(Rev. Ted Crass who is the President of the United Methodist Foundation in New England).
LITANY OF TRUTH

ONE: We are called to proclaim the truth.
Let us together this day proclaim the truth about human worth and dignity. And let us believe: It is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and be lost.

CONG: This is true: there is a future for the children of today.

ONE: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

CONG: This is true: Our Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces and will remove disgrace of people from all the earth.

ONE: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word and that war and destruction have come to stay forever.

CONG: This is true: the Lord foils the plans of the nations and thwarts the plans of the peoples, but the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of the heart of the Lord through all generations.

ALL: So, let us dream, let us prophesy, let us see visions of love.
And let us seek peace and justice with humility, with joy and faith, with courage.
MUSIC SUGGESTIONS:

"TRUST AND ENDURE"
A song for our troubled times; especially appropriate for the Advent season.
This song is my response to the Atlanta shooting. It is my best worship that I can offer as an Asian American for my community.

Lyrics

Trust and endure
Trust and endure
All you heavy-laden
Wondering how long?
Wondering how long?
And there is no end in sight

Worry and fear
Anguish and tears
Don't know how to go on
God-with-us sees you
Sees you and hears your cry

Trust and endure
Trust and endure
In the aching, longing
Wait and take heart
Wait and take heart
When you've done all you can do

Daylight will come
Daylight will come
O trust that God will act
Bringing forth justice
Justice and righteousness

Be still, be still
Patiently wait
Be still, be still
Patiently wait
Those who wait will see God's hand
Trust and endure (x4)

credits
Music & Lyrics - Gloria Fanchiang, Singer/Songwriter, Worship Leader
Recorded & Performed by Gloria Fanchiang, gloriafanchiang.com
Mixed & Mastered by Gene Paul, gandjaudio.com
Album art by ericnomiddlenametal.com

For streaming permissions for churches please email glofanmusic@gmail.com. Sheet music available at: bit.ly/2UphFny
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THE CORINTHIANS SONG

I am troubled, yet not distressed,
Perplexed, but not in despair.
‘Cause I'm a vessel full of power,
With a treasure none can compare.

Persecuted, but not forsaken,
Cast down, but not destroyed.
I'm a vessel full of power
With a treasure, from the Lord.

Bruised and battered, but not broken,
Born in sin, but from sin set free.
I am a vessel, got a whole lot of power
With a treasure delivered me.

Thank you, Jesus, for your power, it has resurrected me.
Over painful circumstances
That my poor soul could not flee.

I'm a vessel, you're a vessel full of power
You've got power from the Lord.
I'm a vessel, full of power with a treasure from the Lord.

The Corinthian Song · Kathy Taylor Live: The Worship Experience (2-CD Set) © 2009 TyScot Records,
Provided to YouTube by TyScot
LLC Under Exclusive License from Katco Music Group
Source: LyricFind
Composer: V. Michael McKay
https://youtu.be/7fSXQahJ0g
You Have Not Passed This Way Before

United Methodist Heritage Sunday 2021
Bishop Ernest S. Lyght, Retired

*Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before.* (Joshua 3:4a)

Greeting

Sisters and Brothers, I am Ernest Shaw Lyght, a retired bishop of The United Methodist Church. It is with abundant joy that I greet you in the name of our Risen Christ. This year we share in a dual celebration, Pentecost Sunday and United Methodist Heritage Sunday. I appreciate the preaching invitation extended to me by Dr. Ashley Dreff, the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH). Also, let me take this opportunity to honor her gifted staff. In addition, I want to commend the faithful partnership that the General Commission on Archives and History has with the African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) as well as their collaborative work with other ethnic constituencies within the denomination.

Purpose

Our worship today is bathed in converging streams of our history. Our story is the chronological record of the significant events that serve as major markers on the journey traveled by people called Methodist from the time of John Wesley to this present day.

First, we are celebrating Pentecost Sunday, which marks the coming of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples. After receiving the Holy Spirit, the once frightened disciples were transformed into bold witnesses for the Resurrected Christ. Enabled by spiritual courage, the disciples no longer hesitated to face the possibility of death, even death on a cross. When touched by the Holy Spirit, they were able to communicate in a common language. In short, Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.

Second, we United Methodists observe Heritage Sunday on Aldersgate Day (May 24), or the Sunday preceding that date. This observance provides an opportunity for reflection on our heritage. What are the memorable landmarks on our historical journey as a denomination? How does our heritage inform our ministry and
mission in today’s world? Does John Wesley’s small group ministry have a place in our ministry today? What is the role of Christian conferencing, particularly when there is conflict among us, especially a denomination wide conflict? Heritage Sunday helps us to remember and honor our past, while Pentecost Sunday calls us to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The confluence of these two streams, Pentecost and Heritage, provides a sure foundation for this year’s Heritage Sunday Heritage Sunday purpose statement: *Pride, Shame and Pain: Methodist History with Racism and Efforts to Dismantle It.*

**The Biblical Text**

*Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before.* (Joshua 3:4a)

Our text paints a picture. Joshua and the people of Israel are gathered on the banks of River Jordan, poised to cross the River and enter the land of promise. Their situation has undergone a dramatic change. The deadly wilderness is behind them. There has been a change of leadership, because Joshua has replaced Moses.

God had guided the Israelites for forty years: a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Not only did God lead them, God fed them fresh bread daily. They obviously became somewhat comfortable with the luxury of having plenty of food to eat, water to drink and safe passage. Their future at this time, however, was unknown. In some respects, perhaps, they were handicapped by a short memory and a lack of knowledge about their own history. Joshua cut to the chase when he said: *You have not passed this way before.* To be sure, the Israelites were confronted by an uncertain future and this prospect unsettled them. They were starting to navigate in uncharted water. They were in new territory that would bring new experiences. In the biblical text, the Israelites were instructed to follow the ark of the covenant.

**The Charted Past**

Events of the past have been charted in numerous volumes and they are a part of our Methodist Heritage. These past events did not always occur in isolation, but there often was a correlation or a kind of cause and effect. Based on what we learn from our history we can choose to change the course of the history that we are making. Whatever we do, current events are recorded in our history. John Wesley
and his brother Charles, working with other likeminded people laid a sure foundation for the Methodist movement in England which grew and eventually spread to America. The early Methodists were organized into classes and bands for the purpose of spiritual growth, accountability and fellowship. The Methodist movement in America attracted black people from its inception in America, and the movement spread scriptural holiness across the nation, from East to West following the frontier.

A review of Methodist history reveals that it is a complex history that is stained by the sins of slavery, racial segregation and racism. John Wesley made clear his opposition to slavery in his treatise titled, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. He opposed the slave trade which enabled American slavery to thrive. There were many early Methodists who supported slavery, while there were those Methodists who like the Quakers were opposed to any form of slavery.

African Americans were a part of the Methodist movement from the beginning in America. Richard Allen, however, protested the racism. He left the Methodist movement, and later formed the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1816). Some black leaders chose to leave the John Street Methodist Church in New York City and form the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1821). In 1870 some forty African American men left the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and formed the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The denominational name was later changed from Colored to Christian. Racism was the culprit that led to these three departures of African Americans from the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1864 there was a group of Black Methodists who chose to remain in the denomination despite the presence of racism and segregation in the denomination. These African Americans organized the Delaware Conference and the Washington Conference, and other black conferences emerged soon thereafter.

In 1912 Rev. Charles A. Tindley from Philadelphia addressed the General Conference. In a few words he affirmed loyalty to the Methodist Episcopal Church, discarded the notion of leaving the denomination, and affirmed black humanity.

Remember that in 1845 The Methodist Episcopal Church, South was formed as a result of the debate about slave ownership and the slave trade.
The Methodist movement remained divided until 1939 when the Methodist Church was organized, resulting from the union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. But there was a factor that led to a painful and unholy compromise. Remember now, there were African American Methodists who never left the denomination. The perplexing question was what should be done about the black presence. The dilemma was resolved by placing the black annual conferences into the Central Jurisdiction based on race. The white annual conferences were placed in one of five jurisdictions based on geography.

The Methodist Church remained a legally segregated entity until 1968 when the Central Jurisdiction was ended. It should be noted that the 1968 merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church was predicated on abolishing the Central Jurisdiction. The EUBs insisted on this.

These elements of our past are an integral part of our history, and they provide a backdrop for our present efforts to dismantle racism. To be sure, we had never passed this way before.

**The Uncharted Present**

Sailors refer to their nautical charts when navigating their ship, especially in unfamiliar water. Someone has gone before them to chart the waters for the sailors who would follow them. It is not safe for a ship’s captain to navigate in uncharted water because of the danger of ship wreck caused by shallow water or hidden obstructions such as sandbars or reefs.

When we examine our charted past, we see a journey that was fraught with pride, shame and pain.

Pride was experienced as the denomination grew, following the frontier and spreading across the continent. At one point it was said that there were more Methodist churches than there were US Post Offices. Pride was expressed when the Methodist Church was formed in 1939, the merger of the two Methodist Churches, North and South. Great pride was exhibited when the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968 forming The United Methodist Church. We were proud. But, did we exhibit a sense of false pride? Did our new sense of pride become a navigational hazard?

Pain was an irritant for African Americans throughout this history, because of pervasive racism, discrimination in the general society and segregation in the
denomination. Some black delegates wept when the General Conference established the Central Jurisdiction in 1939. For African Americans, the journey has been stained with the tears of faithful sisters and brothers who toiled for the denomination in the name of Jesus. Our Methodist history has not always been a pleasant experience for all participants, especially people of color.

Shame characterized the journey for both black and white Methodists. What is shame? Guilt and impropriety have caused painful emotions. Shame is characterized by humiliation and disgrace. Racism in our denomination yields shame for some people. The Central Jurisdiction was a shameful experience for which the denomination has expressed its shame and sought to amend this tragedy through confession and reconciliation. The denomination participated in the shameful exclusion of women from ordination until 1956.

For decades there has been a divisive disagreement about the denominational pronouncements about the LGBTQ+ community in the United Methodist Church. This has been a matter of both inclusion and exclusion, as well as general mistreatment. It also includes the question of ordination and marriage. Currently the UM Book of Discipline prohibits the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals and it prohibits our clergy from officiating at a gay wedding. There is obviously a division of opinion on these matters of human sexuality.

As we observe Heritage Sunday 2021, we are facing two pandemics. First, we have the COVID-19 Pandemic which has claimed the lives of more than one-half million people in the US and more than three million people world-wide. The imposed quarantine and the resultant economic fallout have had a significant impact on United Methodist congregations in this global denomination. Second, we are faced with the Racism Pandemic. The Black Lives Matter movement has had a focused response to the several police killings of unarmed black men and women. There have been demonstrations in cities across America as well as in Europe and other places. Racism is a worldwide issue. Racism and white privilege are a profound problem in the United States, and it continues to be a disruptive factor among United Methodists. There are still vestiges of colonialism in the United Methodist Church and in our world.

Our Methodist Heritage is stained by racism, however, there have been genuine efforts to dismantle racism. This is an ongoing effort. The establishment of the General Commission on Religion and Race was an attempt to tackle racism in our midst and strive to eliminate it. The establishment of the General Commission on
the Status and Role of Women was a commitment to affirm the rights of women in our church and society. Significant gains have been made, but the struggle goes on.

Friends, we now are navigating in uncharted waters, troubled by the storms fomented by our past actions and present inaction in matters of racism and white privilege. Although our denomination has come through many storms, we are in unchartered territory today. We also are distracted by the rumors of a possible denominational split. Denominational loyalty is eroding.

Joshua told the people of Israel: *you have not passed this way before.* Sisters and brothers, as a denomination we have not passed this way before.

**Charting our Future**

The United Methodist Church today is pondering the way forward. Where do we go from here? To be sure, in the present moment we are faced with uncertainty. Will the denomination split? What will be our future? Let me suggest that the secrets of our future are couched in our past and our present.

The future is always uncertain because it is unknown except to God. To some extent, the future is something of a mystery. Yet, with God, we go forward with faith. Joshua said to the people, *sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*

Tomorrow belongs exclusively to God. We experience today which is given to us by God. Jesus has prepared us for today to the extent that we have accepted Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. We are guided by the principles of faith, hope and love. With this certainty we go forward into what for us will be an uncertain future. The children of Israel knew their past, but they did not understand their present, therefore, they had extreme difficulty in comprehending their future. They did not understand God’s grace that had led them out of Egypt. They needed Joshua to point out to them that they had not passed that way before.

We have not passed this way before, but we have the certainty of our Methodist heritage. The Israelites had the experience of forty years with God in the wilderness. They had the experience of deliverance from bondage. God enabled them to cross the sea that blocked their path. God provided them with free room and board on their wilderness journey. So too, God has brought us forward from the days of Wesley, segregation, separation and merger. God has cared for us even
when we strayed from the path of God’s leading. Hopefully, we have learned God’s lessons of deliverance.

We have not passed this way before, but we have the spirit and power of Pentecost. The holy Spirit gave the disciples the power and authority to go into all of the world. The influence of the disciples was so great that on one occasion, they were described as turning the world upside down.

We have not passed this way before, but we have the certainties of the present. The Israelites had Joshua, while we have Jesus who taught us to love our neighbor and to pray. Listen to the prayer for the Church at the Charter Meeting of the Central Jurisdiction Women’s Society of Christian Service, December 9, 1940:

O God, we pray for Thy Church, which is set today amid the perplexities of a changing order, face to face with a great new task. We remember with love the nurture she gave to our spiritual life in its infancy, the tasks she set for our growing strength, the influence of the devoted hearts she gathers, the steadfast power for good she has exerted. When we compare her with all human institutions, we rejoice, for there is none like her. But when we judge her by the mind of her Master, we bow in contrition. Oh, baptize her afresh in the life-giving spirit of Jesus! Put upon her lips the ancient gospel of her Lord. Fill her with the prophet’s scorn of tyranny, and with a Christlike tenderness for the heavy-laden and downtrodden. Bid her cease from seeking her own life, lest she lose it. Make her valiant to give up her life to humanity, that like her crucified Lord she may mount by the path of the cross to a higher glory. (To a Higher Glory. The Board of Global Ministries)

We have not passed this way before, but we claim the certainty of the future when following God’s leadership. We are striving for a higher glory!

As we journey into the future on a seemingly unknown path, just remember the words of John Wesley (1703-1791) who said on his death bed: The best of all God is with us. This is our heritage.

Charles Albert Tindley declared in his hymn that “We are tossed and driven on the restless sea of time” but “we’ll understand it better by and by.”

Trials dark on every hand, and we cannot understand,
All the ways that God would lead us to that Blessed Promised Land.
But He guides us with His eye, and we’ll follow till we die,
For we’ll understand it better by and by.
(U.M. Hymnal, #525)

This is our heritage.

The words of *Lift Every Voice and Sing* by James Weldon Johnson are apropos:

*God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,*
*Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way,*
*Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,*
*Keep us forever in the path, we pray.*

*(U.M. Hymnal, #519)*

We have never passed this way before, but God knows the way. We only have to follow God’s leading. As pilgrim disciples of Jesus Christ, we want to embrace the future with faith, hope and love, while dismissing all fear, because -

*We are marching in the light of God.*
*We are living in the love of God.*
*We are moving in the power of God.*

We thank God for the Power of the Holy Spirit and we thank God for the richness of our Heritage. Because through it all we have learned to trust in God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit, and lead us to a Higher Glory where we can claim the potential of God’s mighty acts; enable us to extract the pain and the shame from our heritage, as we transcend the racism of this present age, so that we can proclaim unity in faith, unity in hope and unity in Love with a new sense of pride.

Friends, even though we have not passed this way before, *we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

Amen! Amen!
Additional Resources on United Methodism and Race

The following additional resources were produced and published by our partnering General Agencies of The United Methodist Church. Please check their websites regularly for updated information and resources for use in your local congregations and in your academic research.
Abridged Resource List

Books

- *How to Be an Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi (2019)
- *Sing a Rhythm, Dance a Blues*, Monique Morris (2019)
- *So you want to talk about race*, Ijeoma Oluo (2018)
- *We Were Eight Years In Power*, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2017)
- *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas (2017)
- *Stamped from the Beginning*, Ibram X. Kendi (2017)
- #NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women, Lisa Charleyboy, Mary Beth Leatherdale, eds. (2016)
- *Nobody Cries When We Die: God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood*, Patrick B. Reyes (2016)
- *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)
- Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness, Joseph Barndt (2011)
- PLUS: Study Guide Prepared by Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference
- Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race, Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003)
- Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes, Justo González (1996)
- A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1986)
• *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, bell hooks (1981)
• *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman (1976)
• *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, Angie Debo (1973)
• *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin (1963)

**United Methodist Women Resources**

• Tools for Leaders: Resources for Racial Justice: [unitedmethodistwomen.org/racialjustice](http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/racialjustice)
• Racial Justice Time Line: [unitedmethodistwomen.org/rjtimeline](http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/rjtimeline)
• Remembering King 50 Years Later: [unitedmethodistwomen.org/king](http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/king)
• School-to-Prison Pipeline Bible Studies: [unitedmethodistwomen.org/school-to-prison-pipeline-bible-study](http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/school-to-prison-pipeline-bible-study)
• Online Class on *So you want to talk about race*: [umw.convio.net/site/MessageViewer?em_id=4991.0&dlv_id=8777](http://umw.convio.net/site/MessageViewer?em_id=4991.0&dlv_id=8777)

**Websites & Online Resources**

• General Commission on Religion and Race: [gcorr.org](http://gcorr.org)
• Advancement Project: [advancementproject.org/home](http://advancementproject.org/home)
• African American Policy Forum: [aapf.org](http://aapf.org)
• Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI): [baji.org](http://baji.org)
• Colorlines Magazine: [colorlines.com](http://colorlines.com)
• Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training: [crossroadsantiracism.org](http://crossroadsantiracism.org)
• Dignity In Schools: [dignityinschools.org](http://dignityinschools.org)
• Justice For Our Neighbors: [njfon.org](http://njfon.org)
• National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR): [nnirr.org](http://nnirr.org)
• NAACP and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund: [naacp.org](http://naacp.org) and [naacpldf.org](http://naacpldf.org)
• National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls: [nationalcouncil.us](http://nationalcouncil.us)
• Race Forward: [raceforward.org](http://raceforward.org)
• Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference: [sdpconference.info](http://sdpconference.info)
• Sentencing Project: [sentencingproject.org](http://sentencingproject.org)
• Southern Poverty Law Center: [splcenter.org](http://splcenter.org) and [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)
• SURJ: Showing Up for Racial Justice: [showingupforracialjustice.org](http://showingupforracialjustice.org)
• United for a Fair Economy: [faireconomy.org](http://faireconomy.org)
• United We Dream: [unitedwedream.org](http://unitedwedream.org)
• “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh: [nationalseedproject.org/images/documents/Knapsack_plus_Notes-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf](http://nationalseedproject.org/images/documents/Knapsack_plus_Notes-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf)