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.”
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
Night Call Radio Show:

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

Is Integration Out of Date?: originally aired June 28, 1968: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

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

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