

## METHODIST BODIES

### GENERAL STATEMENT

The Methodist churches of America, in common with those of England and other lands, trace their origin to a movement started in Oxford University in 1729, when John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and a number of others began to meet for religious exercises. Finding as they read the Bible that, as John Wesley expressed it, they "could not be saved without holiness, they followed after it, and incited others so to do." During the succeeding years the little company was derisively called "The Holy Club," "Bible Bigots," "Methodists," etc.; and this last term, intended to describe their methodical habits, seems to have been accepted by them almost immediately, as the movement they led soon became widely known as the "Methodist movement." The next step and its outcome are described by John Wesley as follows: "They saw likewise that men are justified before they are sanctified, but still holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise a holy people. \* \* \* In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London and desired that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come; this was the rise of the United Society."

About this time, the Wesleys came into intimate relations with the Moravians, first on a visit to America<sup>1</sup> and subsequently in London, and at their headquarters in Herrnhut, Saxony, and to the influence of these conferences may be traced much of the spiritual power of the new movement.

The three leaders, although ordained ministers of the Church of England, soon found themselves excluded from many of the pulpits of the Established Church on the ground that they were preachers of new doctrines, and they were obliged to hold their meetings in private houses, halls, barns, and in the fields. As converts were received they were organized into societies for worship, and as the work expanded class meetings were formed for the religious care and training of members. Then the circuit system was established, by which several congregations were grouped under the care of one lay preacher; the itinerancy came into existence, as the lay preachers were transferred from one appointment to another for greater efficiency; and finally, in 1744, the annual conference was instituted, in which Mr. Wesley met all his workers. Thus the principal distinctive features of the Methodist organization grew out of the necessities of the work.

As was natural, the doctrinal position accorded in the main with that of the Church of England, and the Articles of Religion were largely formulated from the Thirty-nine Articles of that church, although no formal creed was accepted save the Apostles' Creed. The stricter doctrines of Calvinism, predestination, and reprobation were cast aside, and the milder emphasis of Arminianism on repentance, faith, and holiness was accepted. As John Wesley said: "The first of these we count as it were the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself." This acceptance of Arminianism caused a divergence, though not a permanent breach, between the Wesleys and Whitefield. Whitefield was Calvinistic, though not of the extreme type, and became identified with the Calvinistic Methodists, both the Welsh body<sup>2</sup> and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection. He afterwards withdrew from the leadership of the latter body, and gave himself to general revival work in England and America.

<sup>1</sup> See Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 926.

<sup>2</sup> See Presbyterian bodies, p. 1112.

Though the Wesleys lived and died in full ministerial relations with the Church of England, serious differences arose, as already noted, between that church and the Methodists. In 1745 John Wesley wrote that he was willing to make any concession which conscience would permit, in order to live in harmony with the clergy of the Established Church, but he could not give up the doctrines he was preaching, dissolve the societies, suppress lay preaching, or cease to preach in the open air. For many years he refused to sanction the administration of the sacraments by any except those who had been ordained by a bishop in the apostolic succession, and he himself hesitated to assume authority to ordain; but the Bishop of London having refused to ordain ministers for the Methodist societies in America, which were left by the Revolutionary War without the sacraments, Wesley, in 1784, by the laying on of hands, appointed or ordained men and gave them authority to ordain others. He thus ordained Thomas Coke, D. C. L., who was already a presbyter of the Church of England, to be superintendent of the Methodist societies in America, and set apart for a similar purpose in Great Britain Alexander Mather, who had not been episcopally ordained.

The development of church government, while following the general lines laid down by Wesley, was somewhat different in England and in America. In England the conference remained supreme, and the superintendency was not emphasized. In America the superintendency was in fact an episcopacy which, while not corresponding exactly to the episcopacy of the Church of England, became a very decided factor in church life. In each country, but especially in America, considerable opposition has developed at different times in connection with some features of the parent body, and divisions have resulted. In every case, however, the general principles of the founders have been preserved, and, notwithstanding the various separations, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in England and the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States remain the strongest representatives of the movement initiated in Oxford nearly two centuries ago.

It is to be noted that the influence of the Methodist doctrine and church organization has not been confined to those bodies which have adopted the name Methodist, but has been manifest in the development of a number of bodies which use modified forms of the episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational systems. In the United States several bodies, including the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church (now one denomination), the United Brethren bodies, and particularly the large number of organizations emphasizing the doctrine of "holiness," or entire sanctification, claim to be true exponents of the doctrines of the Wesleys, while their polity is generally Methodist in type. On the other hand, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, with whom Whitefield identified himself, were Presbyterian in polity, though Methodist in every other respect, as are the Wesleyan Methodist and some other Methodist churches in England and America.

#### STATISTICS

The denominations grouped as Methodists in 1926, 1916, and 1906 are listed in the following table with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods. Since 1916 there have been some changes. The African American Methodist Episcopal Church has disbanded. Other bodies have been added—the Reformed Methodist Church, the Independent African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Holiness Methodist Church, the last an organization listed in 1916 as the Lumber River Mission under the Evangelistic Associations. For general convenience of reference the Negro bodies have been grouped together in 1926, as in 1916. There were 15 independent churches reported at the 1890 census, with a membership of 2,569; these were not reported as a group, however, at the two succeeding censuses, probably having been absorbed by various denominations.

## SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE METHODIST BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount (dollars)	Churches reporting	Amount (dollars)	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
<b>1926</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	<b>60,644</b>	<b>8,070,619</b>	<b>56,493</b>	<b>654,736,975</b>	<b>59,483</b>	<b>152,151,978</b>	<b>54,804</b>	<b>6,567,654</b>
Methodist Episcopal Church.....	26,130	4,080,777	25,290	406,165,659	25,790	89,422,307	24,730	3,796,561
Methodist Protestant Church.....	2,239	192,171	2,064	16,817,278	2,160	3,137,211	1,917	173,438
Wesleyan Methodist Connection (or Church) of America.....	619	21,910	555	1,804,719	585	773,981	561	34,314
Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America.....	80	11,990	79	1,676,800	80	326,598	78	15,190
Methodist Episcopal Church, South.....	18,096	2,487,694	16,443	161,986,430	17,798	41,651,150	15,525	1,802,464
Congregational Methodist Church.....	145	9,691	110	127,775	120	29,529	80	4,807
Free Methodist Church of North America.....	1,375	36,374	1,140	4,921,760	1,269	1,617,802	1,026	69,549
New Congregational Methodist Church.....	26	1,229	21	23,900	19	1,234	3	126
Holiness Methodist Church.....	7	459	7	18,500	7	2,073	7	531
Reformed Methodist Church.....	14	390	13	26,300	13	9,176	12	356
African Methodist Episcopal Church.....	6,708	545,814	5,829	32,092,549	6,492	7,600,161	5,884	288,247
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.....	2,466	456,813	2,370	18,515,723	2,464	4,757,066	2,429	267,141
Colored Methodist Protestant Church.....	3	533	3	36,000	3	6,685	3	98
Union American Methodist Episcopal Church.....	73	10,169	64	478,951	68	222,621	69	4,240
African Union Methodist Protestant Church.....	43	4,086	40	476,269	43	99,563	42	2,851
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.....	2,518	202,713	2,341	9,211,437	2,477	2,428,234	2,351	103,523
Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church.....	48	4,538	45	184,075	44	37,601	42	2,882
Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal Church.....	25	2,265	21	74,800	24	17,282	19	673
Independent African Methodist Episcopal Church.....	29	1,003	28	98,050	27	11,704	26	663
<b>1916</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	<b>65,686</b>	<b>7,166,451</b>	<b>60,982</b>	<b>317,916,402</b>	<b>64,139</b>	<b>70,887,406</b>	<b>59,191</b>	<b>6,473,500</b>
Methodist Episcopal Church.....	29,315	3,717,785	28,134	215,104,014	28,791	43,993,681	27,549	3,872,264
Methodist Protestant Church.....	2,473	186,908	2,266	7,944,467	2,393	1,509,243	2,081	177,918
Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America.....	579	20,778	514	787,731	525	329,294	500	29,850
Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America.....	93	9,353	91	829,035	92	147,695	90	14,918
Methodist Episcopal Church, South.....	19,184	2,114,479	17,133	62,428,433	18,751	17,139,398	16,308	1,688,559
Congregational Methodist Church.....	197	12,503	195	166,932	139	13,806	147	8,034
Free Methodist Church of North America.....	1,598	35,291	1,205	2,236,325	1,426	772,038	1,150	58,553
New Congregational Methodist Church.....	24	1,256	18	14,450	16	1,372	6	302
African Methodist Episcopal Church.....	6,633	548,355	6,232	14,631,792	6,516	3,413,395	6,084	311,051
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.....	2,716	257,169	2,475	7,591,393	2,641	1,700,737	2,535	135,102
Colored Methodist Protestant Church.....	26	1,967	16	52,733	23	12,129	24	870
Union American Methodist Episcopal Church.....	67	3,624	59	182,305	65	40,664	54	1,982
African Union Methodist Protestant Church.....	58	3,751	53	205,825	53	47,231	49	2,813
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.....	2,621	245,749	2,490	5,619,862	2,613	1,736,692	2,541	167,880
Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church.....	47	3,977	47	79,325	41	13,156	42	2,505
African American Methodist Episcopal Church.....	28	1,310	27	6,280	28	13,455	6	200
Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal Church.....	27	2,196	27	35,500	26	3,420	25	699

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE METHODIST BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906—Con.

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount (dollars)	Churches reporting	Amount (dollars)	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1906								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	<b>64,255</b>	<b>5,749,838</b>	<b>59,077</b>	<b>229,450,996</b>			<b>55,227</b>	<b>4,472,930</b>
Methodist Episcopal Church.....	29,742	2,986,154	27,888	163,357,805			26,809	2,700,742
Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (Colored).....	77	4,347	59	170,150			76	3,372
African Methodist Episcopal Church.....	6,608	494,777	6,299	11,303,489			6,056	292,689
African Union Methodist Protestant Church.....	69	5,592	68	183,697			66	5,266
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.....	2,197	184,542	2,104	4,833,207			2,060	107,692
Methodist Protestant Church.....	2,825	178,544	2,442	6,053,048			2,118	141,086
Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America.....	591	20,043	480	637,117			475	21,463
Methodist Episcopal Church, South.....	17,683	1,638,480	15,859	37,278,424			13,846	1,040,160
Congregational Methodist Church.....	324	14,729	250	194,275			181	8,785
New Congregational Methodist Church.....	35	1,782	33	27,650			27	1,298
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.....	2,365	172,996	2,264	3,017,849			2,207	92,457
Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church (Colored).....	45	3,059	41	37,875			35	1,508
Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America.....	96	7,558	93	630,700			91	13,177
Free Methodist Church of North America.....	1,541	32,838	1,140	1,688,745			1,066	41,443
Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal Church (Colored).....	57	4,397	57	36,965			54	1,792

# NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH

## STATISTICS

**Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.**—A general summary of the statistics for the New Congregational Methodist Church for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of the New Congregational Methodist Church consists of those persons who are enrolled upon the registers of the local churches, upon profession of faith and a promise to support the church in its service and discipline.

**TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH**

ITEM	Total	In urban territory <sup>1</sup>	In rural territory <sup>1</sup>	PER CENT OF TOTAL <sup>2</sup>	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations).....	26	1	25		
Members:.....	1,229	74	1,155	6.0	94.0
Average per church.....	47	74	46		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	415	27	388	6.5	93.5
Female.....	814	47	767	5.8	94.2
Males per 100 females <sup>3</sup> .....	51.0		50.6		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....	14		14		
13 years and over.....	927	74	853	8.0	92.0
Age not reported.....	288		288		100.0
Per cent under 13 years <sup>4</sup> .....	1.5		1.6		
Church edifices:					
Number.....	22	1	21		
Value—Churches reporting.....	21	1	20		
Amount reported.....	\$23,900	\$2,500	\$21,400	10.5	89.5
Average per church.....	\$1,138	\$2,500	\$1,070		
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	19		19		
Amount reported.....	\$1,234		\$1,234		100.0
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$954		\$954		100.0
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$280		\$280		100.0
Average expenditure per church.....	\$65		\$65		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	3	1	2		
Officers and teachers.....	18	8	10		
Scholars.....	126	81	45	64.3	35.7

<sup>1</sup> Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

<sup>2</sup> Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

<sup>3</sup> Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

<sup>4</sup> Based on membership with age classification reported.

The data given for 1926 represent 26 active New Congregational Methodist churches, with 1,229 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by all of the 26 churches and the classification by age was reported by 19 churches, including, however, only 5 which reported any members under 13 years of age. No parsonages were reported and none of the churches reported any debt on church edifices.

Comparative data, 1890-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
<b>Churches (local organizations)</b>	26	24	35	24
Increase <sup>1</sup> over preceding census:				
Number	2	-11	11	
Per cent <sup>2</sup>				
<b>Members</b>	1,229	1,256	1,782	1,059
Increase <sup>1</sup> over preceding census:				
Number	27	-526	723	
Per cent	-2.1	-29.5	68.3	
Average membership per church	47	52	51	44
<b>Church edifices:</b>				
Number	22	18	34	17
Value—Churches reporting	21	18	18	
Amount reported	\$23,900	\$14,450	\$27,650	\$3,750
Average per church	\$1,138	\$803	\$838	
<b>Expenditures during year:</b>				
Churches reporting	19	16		
Amount reported	\$1,234	\$1,372		
Current expenses and improvements	\$954	\$1,215		
Benevolences, missions, etc.	\$280	\$157		
Average expenditure per church	\$65	\$86		
<b>Sunday schools:</b>				
Churches reporting	3	6	27	
Officers and teachers	18	29	143	
Scholars	126	302	1,298	

<sup>1</sup> A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.      <sup>2</sup> Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the statistics for the New Congregational Methodist Church by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 5 shows, for 1926 alone, the value of church property and the church expenditures, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Males per 100 females
<b>United States</b> .....	26	1	25	1,229	74	1,155	415	814	51.0
Georgia.....	19	1	18	903	74	829	325	578	56.2
Florida.....	7		7	326		326	90	236	38.1

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926			
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Age not reported	Per cent under 13 <sup>1</sup>
United States.....	26	24	35	1,229	1,256	1,782	14	927	288	1.5
Georgia.....	19	24	28	903	1,256	1,450	14	601	288	2.3
Florida.....	7	7	7	326	326	332		326		

<sup>1</sup>Based on membership with age classification reported.

TABLE 5.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, CHURCH EXPENDITURES, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926: NEW CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR				SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States...	26	22	21	\$23,900	19	\$1,234	\$954	\$280	3	18	126
Georgia.....	19	18	17	15,200	14	814	729	85	1	8	81
Florida.....	7	4	4	8,700	5	420	225	195	2	10	45

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION<sup>1</sup>

In 1881 the Board of Domestic Missions of the Georgia Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, finding itself compelled by financial stringency to cut off some of its work, decided to consolidate several of the smaller churches in the southern part of the State. In protest against this action, taken without consultation with the churches interested, the Waresboro Mission called a conference of such churches, and it was decided to form a new body, on the general plan of the Congregational Methodist Church in the northern part of the State. A committee was appointed to frame a constitution, and in September the New Congregational Methodist Church was organized, adopting as a general basis the congregational polity and the Methodist system of doctrine. The features specially emphasized were: The parity of the ministry; the right of the local church to elect its own officers annually; the rejection of the principle of assessments, all offerings to be absolutely freewill; and permission for those who desired it to observe the ceremony of foot washing in connection with the administration of the Lord's Supper. The general organization included church and district conferences, the latter holding the right of approval or rejection for ordination, of receiving appeals, and of exercising a general supervisory authority. In place of the episcopacy, a general superintendent was appointed, rather for the purpose of securing information as to the needs of the churches than for the exercise of any authority.

<sup>1</sup> This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Rev. W. M. Sumner, Denton, Ga., and approved by him in its present form.

For a time the new organization grew rapidly and embraced a large number of congregations. As, however, it became evident that it required a more liberally educated ministry than was available, a considerable number of the churches withdrew, some joining the Congregational Methodist Church and others the Congregational body, while still others disbanded. Later, through the energetic efforts of one member there was a considerable extension of the organization, particularly in the States of Louisiana and Arkansas, but this work was in the form of evangelistic meetings rather than of organizing regular churches, and with the death of this leader these practically ceased.

To-day the territory of this church is confined principally to the southern part of Georgia and the northern part of Florida. The denomination has lost somewhat in membership; but they have developed an improved financial system, own a considerable amount of property, and are out of debt. They hold a General Conference every four years, presided over by a bishop. The church discipline has been revised and some amendments made.