

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 America¹ 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 body² 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.

¹ See Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 926.

² 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
1926								
Total for the group	60,644	8,070,619	56,493	654,736,975	59,483	152,151,978	54,804	6,567,654
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
1916								
Total for the group	65,686	7,166,451	60,982	317,916,402	64,139	70,887,406	59,191	6,473,500
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								
Total for the group	64,255	5,749,838	59,077	229,450,996			55,227	4,472,930
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

REFORMED METHODIST CHURCH

STATISTICS

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

All who give evidence of sins forgiven and heart renewed are, on application, received into the Reformed Methodist Church as members.

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

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations).....	14	4	10		
Members.....	390	112	278	28.7	71.3
Average per church.....	28	28	28		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	157	45	112	28.7	71.3
Female.....	199	67	132	33.7	66.3
Sex not reported.....	34		34		
Males per 100 females ³	78.9		84.8		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....	9	4	5		
13 years and over.....	374	108	266	28.9	71.1
Age not reported.....	7		7		
Per cent under 13 years ⁴	2.3	3.6	1.8		
Church edifices:					
Number.....	13	3	10		
Value—Churches reporting.....	13	3	10		
Amount reported.....	\$26,300	\$9,800	\$16,500	37.3	62.7
Average per church.....	\$2,023	\$3,267	\$1,650		
Debt—Churches reporting.....	3	1	2		
Amount reported.....	\$2,546	\$2,200	\$346	86.4	13.6
Churches reporting "no debt" on church edifice.....	7	2	5		
Parsonages:					
Value—Churches reporting.....	2		2		
Amount reported.....	\$3,000		\$3,000		100.0
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	13	4	9		
Amount reported.....	\$9,176	\$3,478	\$5,698	37.9	62.1
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$6,064	\$1,910	\$4,154	31.5	68.5
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$2,045	\$501	\$1,544	24.5	75.5
Not classified.....	\$1,067	\$1,067		100.0	
Average expenditure per church.....	\$706	\$870	\$633		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	12	4	8		
Officers and teachers.....	82	28	54		
Scholars.....	356	111	245	31.2	68.8

¹ 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.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

³ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

⁴ Based on membership with age classification reported.

The data given for 1926 represent 14 active Reformed Methodist churches, with 390 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by 12 churches and the classification by age was reported by 13 churches, including, however, only 4 which reported any members under 13 years of age.

As this denomination was not reported in previous censuses, no comparative data are available.

State tables.—Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present the statistics for the Reformed Methodist Church by States. Table 2 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 3 gives for New York and Pennsylvania the number and membership of the churches for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 4 shows the value of church property and the debt on such property. Table 5 presents, for 1926, 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 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: REFORMED METHODIST CHURCH

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX			
	Total	Ur- ban	Ru- ral	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Sex not re- ported	Males per 100 females (¹)
United States.....	14	4	10	390	112	278	157	199	34	78.9
Middle Atlantic:										
New York.....	12	4	8	350	112	238	136	180	34	75.6
Pennsylvania.....	2	—	2	40	—	40	21	19	—	—

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, BY STATES, 1926: REFORMED METHODIST CHURCH

STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	MEMBERSHIP BY AGE			
			Under 13 years	13 years and over	Age not reported	Per cent under 13 ¹
United States.....	14	390	9	374	7	2.3
New York.....	12	350	9	334	7	2.6
Pennsylvania.....	2	40	—	40	—	—

¹ Based on membership with age classification reported.

TABLE 4.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH DEBT, BY STATES, 1926: REFORMED METHODIST CHURCH

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		VALUE OF PARSONAGES	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount
United States.....	14	13	13	\$26,300	3	\$2,546	2	\$3,000
New York.....	12	11	11	126,300	3	2,546	2	3,000
Pennsylvania.....	2	2	2					

¹ Amount for Pennsylvania combined with figures for New York, to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

TABLE 5.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:
REFORMED METHODIST CHURCH

STATE	Total number of churches	EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR				SUNDAY SCHOOLS			
		Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Not classified	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	14	13	\$9,176	\$6,064	\$2,045	\$1,067	12	82	356
New York.....	12	13	19,176	16,064	2,045	1,067	11	77	340
Pennsylvania.....	2						1	5	16

¹ Amount for Pennsylvania combined with figures for New York, to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

On January 16, 1814, some members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who had become dissatisfied with the episcopal mode of church government and feared that it was destructive to true Christian humility, met at Readsboro, Vt. They had already petitioned the Methodist Episcopal Church for redress, but unsuccessfully, and though they were only farmers and mechanics with no ordained elders, merely local preachers and exhorters, they organized the Reformed Methodist Church with 14 members. Prominent among these were Elijah Bailey, a local preacher, his brother James Bailey, his brother-in-law Ezra Amadon, Ebenezer Davis, and Caleb Whiting. To this list must be added the name of William Lake, who joined them in their first conference held the following month. At this time their numbers were increased and a discipline was written, defining their doctrinal views and stating their governmental polity.

The next year, with a view to thrusting laborers into the field, a community was established upon a farm of several hundred acres on the State line between Bennington, Vt., and Hoosick, N. Y. Owing to lack of funds and unfavorable seasons for farming, the venture failed and the community was scattered.

With much zeal they evangelized from Cape Cod, Mass., to Ohio, and from Pennsylvania to Canada. Classes were formed, churches built, and conferences organized. Thousands were converted in revival efforts, some of whom joined churches of other denominations. In 1817 or 1818 Elijah Bailey and William Lake planted the church in Canada. The history of the revival there reads like portions of John Wesley's Journals. Hardened sinners fell under the power of God and infidels feared and trembled. Many Reformed Methodist societies were formed and a conference was organized.

Despite many obstacles from within and without the membership increased in less than 30 years from the original 14 to over 3,000, with 6 conferences—Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Ohio, New York Western, and Canada—and more than 75 ordained elders and licensed preachers.

Then they began to merge with other Methodist bodies. About 1840 the Ohio conference went to the Methodist Protestant Church and the Canada conference joined the Methodist Union; even earlier than that a majority of the ministers of the Massachusetts conference and several societies seceded, entering the

¹ This statement was furnished by Rev. Grant L. Munson, district elder, Reformed Methodist Church.

Methodist Protestant Church. In 1843 the Wesleyan Methodist Church took its rise in America; from the first, there was a close relation between it and the Reformed Methodist Church; and after a time nearly all of the latter churches went into the new organization. However, four Reformed Methodist conferences did not lose their identity, namely, Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, and New York Western, though, because of small numbers, the Massachusetts conference merged with the Vermont conference in 1850 and the New York Western joined with the New York conference in 1856. The Vermont conference continued to exist until 1899. Since that time the New York conference has had no official relations with any other conference.

There is documentary evidence to show that there has been a Reformed Methodist conference in the State of Indiana, and that not a few churches elsewhere, which did not go into the Methodist Protestant or Wesleyan Methodist organization, have maintained themselves as independent Reformed Methodist Churches, supposing that all the rest had merged. These churches are not included in the present census.

DOCTRINE

The standard of doctrine is distinctively Methodist, following the teachings of their founder, John Wesley. Emphasis is placed upon entire sanctification as an experience obtainable in this life by faith in the all-atoning blood of Jesus Christ; the return of our Lord and the setting up of His kingdom on earth; and the healing of physical diseases by the prayer of faith. At the organization of the church, the discipline contained articles against human slavery, the legalized liquor traffic, and war, and the church has consistently advocated these doctrines and labored for these reforms.

All who give evidence of sins forgiven and heart renewed are, on application, received into the church as members, and only such are counted in the statistics of the church.

ORGANIZATION

The Reformed Methodists are congregational in polity, each congregation managing its own local affairs. For mutual help the churches are grouped into quarterly and annual conferences and a general conference. The quarterly conference is composed of all preachers, exhorters, and officials of the local churches within the district. The annual and general conferences are delegated bodies, composed respectively of delegates from the churches within the conference limits, according to membership and, from the annual conferences on the same basis. The powers and duties of these conferences are so restricted that no ecclesiastical machine can ever dominate the churches.

WORK

Missionary work is well sustained by the churches and is carried on through two boards—foreign and home. The foreign work is confined to the island of Dominica, British West Indies. The Committee on Education financially helps worthy young men and women to prepare themselves for Christian service in schools that are deemed safe; the church has no school of its own. The Camp Meeting Association, under the fostering care of the conference, owns an improved camp ground at Lily Lake, near Binghamton, N. Y., where successful camp meetings have been held yearly since 1897.