

Conference History

HISTORY OF THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Western North Carolina Conference was formed in 1890 from portions of the Holston Conference and the North Carolina Conference. However, the history of the Western North Carolina Conference is complex involving several denominations, jurisdictions, and numerous annual conferences.

Methodism in western North Carolina predates the founding of both the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, which occurred in 1784, and the establishment of Conferences, which occurred between 1795 and 1800. The Yadkin Circuit, formed in 1780 covered the valley of the Yadkin River in North Carolina. The first preacher appointed to the Yadkin Circuit was Andrew Yeargen. In 1783 the Guilford Circuit and the Salisbury Circuit were formed.

When Conferences in the Methodist Episcopal Church were formed around 1800, the state of North Carolina was divided between the South Carolina Conference and the Virginia Conference. In 1800 the Western Conference was formed, which included Tennessee and the mountains in North Carolina west of the Blue Ridge. In 1812 the Tennessee Conference was formed out of the Western Conference and included the area in western North Carolina. In 1824 the Holston Conference was formed, which included the mountains of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina.

In 1837 the North Carolina Conference was formed from most of the area in North Carolina that had been in the Virginia Conference. A small corner of eastern North Carolina remained in the Virginia Conference until 1894. The South Carolina Conference and the Holston Conference retained their areas in North Carolina.

In 1828 a new denomination was formed, the Methodist Protestant Church. A North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was formed in 1828.

In 1845 all the Methodist Episcopal Churches in North Carolina became a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1850 the South Carolina Conference gave up its land in the eastern part of North Carolina to the North Carolina Conference, but retained its territory from Charlotte west to the mountains until 1870.

In 1890, all of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South churches in western North Carolina were put into the Western North Carolina Conference. Areas that had been in the Holston Conference and the North Carolina Conference were combined into the new Western North Carolina Conference.

After the Civil War, some Methodist Protestant churches left the North Carolina Methodist Protestant Conference and joined a northern-based branch of the Methodist Protestant Church, called simply the Methodist Church. All these Methodist Protestant churches had returned to the North Carolina Methodist Protestant conference by 1880.

Also, after the Civil War the northern-based Methodist Episcopal Church began to establish churches in North Carolina. These churches were established in areas where there had been many Union sympathizers. In addition, the Methodist Episcopal Church began to establish African American churches in the South.

The white northern Methodist churches established several small conferences that evolved into the Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference by 1911. The African American Churches were placed in the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which lasted from 1869 to 1939.

Before 1939, therefore, there were three Methodist denominations in western North Carolina, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Methodist Episcopal Church (northern church), and the Methodist Protestant Church.

In 1939, these three branches united to become The Methodist Church, and all of them became a part of the Western North Carolina Conference. The Methodist Church was organized geographically by jurisdictions, with the white churches in North Carolina being in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. However, the black churches were put into one jurisdiction that covered the entire country, the Central Jurisdiction. Within the Central Jurisdiction, the black churches were originally in the North Carolina Conference, and later in the North Carolina-Virginia Conference.

In 1968, The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren to become The United Methodist Church. While there were no congregations of the Evangelical United Brethren within the bounds of the Western North Carolina Conference, the union provided for the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction. In June 1968 the Western North Carolina Conference of The Methodist Church merged with the Central and Western Districts of the North Carolina-Virginia Conference of the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church to form the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

In 2011, members of the Western North Carolina Conference voted to enlarge the size of the districts by reducing their number from 15 to eight.

UMC HISTORY

On April 23, 1968, The United Methodist Church was created when Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, representing The Evangelical United Brethren Church, and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke of The Methodist Church joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas. With the words, "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church," the new denomination was given birth by two churches that had distinguished histories and influential ministries in various parts of the world.

Theological traditions steeped in the Protestant Reformation and Wesleyanism, similar ecclesiastical structures, and relationships that dated back almost two hundred years facilitated the union. In the Evangelical United Brethren heritage, for example, Philip William Otterbein, the principal founder of the

United Brethren in Christ, assisted in the ordination of Francis Asbury to the superintendency of American Methodist work. Jacob Albright, through whose religious experience and leadership the Evangelical Association was begun, was nurtured in a Methodist class meeting following his conversion.