

Methodism has deep roots in region

Methodism was founded by John Wesley, born in 1703 and an ordained minister of the Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church.

Wesley joined a group formed by his brother, Charles, a student at Oxford, to study the Greek testament.

The group gradually expanded its focus beyond Bible study to include work with the poor and with prisoners. Others called them "Methodists" because of the methodical way in which they worked.

After 1735, both brothers volunteered to come to the American colonies, Charles for one year and John for two, to minister to the colonists and convert the Native inhabitants to Christianity.

John Wesley had a profound spiritual experience, which he called a "heartwarming experience" on May 24, 1738, which convinced him of the existence of Divine love and acceptance and affected the rest of his life and his attempts to reform the Anglican church.

His innovations became the foundations of the Methodist movement:

- Class meetings.
- Begun in 1742, these meet-

ing included "prayer, exhortation, singing, testimony and spiritual interrogation." A class leader reported back to Wesley and collected donations.

Early class leaders at Trucksville were Jacob Rice, William C. Faulkner, Samuel Hess, M. J. Natus and Lewis W. Roushey.

• Lay speakers and lay leaders.

Due to the shortage of ministers, lay speakers and leaders led worship services while the ministers were visiting other churches on their circuit. This practice was instituted around 1740.

• Methodist itinerant ministers and the circuit system.

The shortage of ordained ministers necessitated the creation of a system in which one minister served several congregations, making regular rounds on foot or horseback over extremely rough roads to hold services in private homes, schools and a few churches.

Circuit riders led an often difficult and lonely life - the Rev. George Peck (1797-1876), appointed to the Wyoming Circuit in 1818, made the rounds of 12 congregations including Trucksville on a 136-

mile round trip.

• The annual Methodist Conference.

After the first conference in London in 1744, each area or circuit in England held its own yearly conference to discuss church-related matters.

At the Christmas Conference of 1784 in the United States, all the lay preachers in the new country met to formally organize the Methodist Episcopal Church, adapting John Wesley's Sunday services for use in America and appointing Methodist circuit riders.

The Methodist Episcopal Church underwent further changes in 1816, when black members formed the African Methodist Church.

Another group split off in 1830 to form the Methodist Protestant church, while the Methodist Episcopal Church South was formed in 1845 in response to differing beliefs on slavery.

These three groups reunited in 1939, forming the Methodist Church.

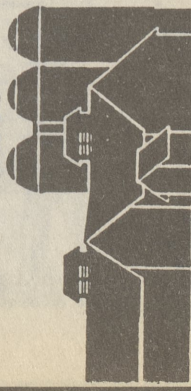
In 1968 the church became the United Methodist Church after merging with the United Brethren Church.

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