

**THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH
IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA**

or

**WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO
HAWLEY MEMORIAL CHURCH?**

by Milton W. Loyer
1991

The Methodist Protestant (MP) church was formed in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1830 by persons who were expelled and/or who withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal (ME) church, which was then the official denominational name of main-stream Methodism. The split was caused by disagreement over church government and not theological issues; the Reformers (as the MP's were called) preferred lay representation equal to that of the clergy, less centralized church authority, and replacing much of the bishop's power with more democratic decision-making practices. E. J. Drinkhouse's two-volume 1899 work¹ remains today as the most authoritative contemporary account of the movement.

Though fairly active in certain parts of the country, particularly around Baltimore and Pittsburgh, the MP denomination was not overly successful within the bounds of the present Central Pennsylvania Conference. In addition, a denominational split further complicated the picture. From 1858 to 1877 many of the northern and western MP churches, comprising about one half of the denomination, formed a separate group known as the Methodist Church.² At the 1877 re-union of the Methodist Church back into the MP denomination, there were three conferences operating within the present Central Pennsylvania Conference (CPC) as follows.³

<u>annual conference</u>	<u>preachers</u>	<u>members</u>	<u>property value</u>
Maryland (MP)	110	13,402	\$785,265
Pennsylvania (MP)	15	707	26,800
Pittsburgh (Meth)	51	7,088	371,000

Always the largest conference in the denomination, the Maryland Conference included churches in Pennsylvania as far north as the Juniata River. Several of these⁴ are now United Methodist congregations within the CPC. The Pittsburgh Conference, on the other hand, extended only into the western fringes of the present conference and established no enduring churches there. While documenting the work of the Maryland and Pittsburgh conferences within the CPC boundaries is somewhat tedious, the task is made easier by the availability of journals, histories and other publications of these two strong conferences.

As shown by the above statistics, however, the Pennsylvania Conference was never very strong. By the time of the 1939 merger to form the Methodist Church, the MP denomination had consolidated the Pennsylvania and other weaker conferences into the Eastern Conference. The weakness of the conference and a strong anti-merger feeling among some of the clergy more or less left each congregation free to decide its own fate. Every such MP congregation within the CPC boundaries either joined the newly-formed and anti-merger Bible Protestant⁵ denomination, became independent or ceased to exist.⁶

The fact that congregations could so easily withdraw from the MP church and/or refuse to participate in denominational mergers may surprise current United Methodists. It was, in fact, this very type of decentralization of power that lay behind the 1830 formation of the denomination. Concerning the ownership of church property, the MP discipline specifically stated: *The trustees shall have power, when authorized by two-thirds of the qualified members of the church at a meeting for the purpose, of which meeting at least four weeks' public notice shall have been given, to purchase, build, repair, lease, sell, rent, mortgage, or otherwise procure or dispose of property.*⁷

Contrast this with the reminder placed in the first journal of the current CPC: *Our connectionalism also stipulates that all property of every local church belongs to The United Methodist Church, **not** to the local congregation even though it has built and maintained it by its own money, prayers, and services. This is known as the "**Trust Clause**" in all United Methodist Church deeds. This is a part of the reason why every local church has a right to demand a pastor as a significant segment of The United Methodist Church.*⁸

Even within stronger and better-documented bodies like the Maryland and Pittsburgh conferences, congregations entered and left the MP denomination to such a degree as to make historical research challenging. The Hawley Memorial MP Church of Monterey (in southern Franklin County, PA) whose name appears in the subtitle of this article is one case in point. This congregation appears in the journal of the Maryland Conference 1922-1929 as follows.

The Committee on Church Extension recommended in 1922, *that Hawley Memorial Congregational Church of Monterey, Pa., having conformed to the requirements of our discipline, be received into the Conference in accordance with the terms of the will of Mrs. Mary B. Hawley, and that it be enrolled in the list of appointments as Hawley Memorial Methodist Protestant Church.*⁹

Elsewhere in the same journal appears an expanded account of the details behind the recommendation. *The Congregation of Hawley Memorial Congregational Church, at Blue Ridge Summit, invited the*

Superintendent of Church Extension to make a visit on February 5th. The purpose of the visit, as expressed by them, was to explain the government and usages of the Methodist protestant Church. This was done, after which they voted to unite with the Methodist Protestant Church. Suitable resolutions were prepared, adopting the Constitution and book of Discipline and means of grace of the Methodist Protestant Church, and asking for recognition on the part of the President of the Conference and the nearest Quarterly Conference. They also arranged to transfer the property at the proper time to a duly constituted Board of trustees. The property consists of an attractive stone church, a comfortable parsonage and a large community hall. This property had recently been deeded by the Home Missionary Society of the Congregational Church to a local Board of Trustees. They will apply for admission to the Conference and ask for pastoral supply. The reason for their action is they could not secure pastoral supply from the Congregational Church and were so far separated from that church that they were not closely identified with the missionary and other general interests of that denomination. We have in no sense taken advantage of our Congregational friends in this matter. It was voluntary on the part of the church. Brother Paul Warner is to be commended for his judgment and discretion in handling this matter.¹⁰

The next several volumes of official minutes of the annual conference supply the following information.

year	died	full members		numb	baptisms		conversions
		disc	recd		adult	child	
1923	0	0	13	86	8	20	9
1924	0	0	5	91	0	7	1
1925	2	0	0	89	0	5	0
1926	0	23	1	67	0	6	12
1927	1	1	32	97	11	10	34
1928	2	0	3	98	0	2	3

The 23 members discontinued in 1926 are balanced by a similar increase in the number of probationary members (not shown above) for 1926 and an even larger increase in the number of full members received in 1927. It appears there was a serious reconsideration of what it meant to be a full member, and a large number were "demoted" to probationary status. This apparently brought about revival and/or recommitment as those persons and more were added to full membership the following year.

Without further explanation, the 1929 official minutes simply report the recommendation of the Board of Survey and Extension that *Hawley Memorial Church be dropped from the list of charges.*¹¹ Why was the church dropped? What is story behind the official minutes? Does any remnant of that church survive today? In the words of this article's subtitle, "What ever happened to Hawley Memorial Church?" The following paragraphs summarize the story of Monterey and Hawley Memorial Church.

Monterey is a resort village sitting on the summit of South Mountain.¹² In 1889, architect and member of the Congregational Church Martin Hawley saw the need for a place of worship in this village near his summer home. He designed a church, in the form of a cross and said to be a replica of a church in Czechoslovakia, to be built of native wood and stone. The Hawleys also created a fund to provide for the maintenance of the church for twenty years; if the church failed to become self-supporting during that time, it was to revert to the Congregational Missionary Society. Upon the death of Mr. Hawley, the church was named the Hawley Memorial Church.

When the Congregational denomination had difficulty supplying such a small congregation so distant from its other churches, Hawley Church began to be served by student pastors from the MP seminary at Westminster. As this experience proved favorable, the church sought full membership in the MP denomination. With low attendance and little income during the winter months, however, the worshippers had difficulty meeting their apportionments. Following a 1929 congregational meeting, the church overtured the presbytery of Carlisle for membership in the Presbyterian Church, USA. The overture was favorably received, and Hawley Memorial Church exists to this day as an active member of the Carlisle Presbytery.¹³

How many other stories are there of such congregations that were once MP churches within the CPC boundaries? Hawley Memorial Church commanded attention because it was a station appointment. Since individual churches on multi-point charges were not specifically identified in the conference minutes, the full extent of MP work in central Pennsylvania may never be known.

FOOTNOTES

1. Edward J. Drinkhouse, History of Methodist Reform and the Methodist Protestant Church (vol. 1-2), Norwood Press: Norwood, MA (1899).

2. There were no doctrinal differences, but a reaction against the MP discipline limiting the right to vote and hold office to white male members. When a resolution to strike the word *white* from the discipline and to make voluntary slave-holding and slave-trading a barrier to membership failed to pass at the 1858 MP General Conference, the competing denomination was formed. During its separate existence, the Methodist Church established its denominational headquarters and a publishing house at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Adrian College at Adrian, Michigan.

3. taken from the 1880 Cyclopedia of Methodism edited by Matthew Simpson.

4. Bethel and Centerville of the Altoona District; Amberson

and Roxbury of the Chambersburg District; Delta, Fawn Grove, Mount Nebo and Mount Olivet of the York District.

5. The spirit and origins of this group are summarized by these introductory remarks from Present Day Methodism and the Bible, by the denomination's first President, Newton C. Conant. *The Bible Protestant Church is not a new denomination, but the continuing body of the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. The Methodist Protestant Church was organized in 1830 upon the Scriptural doctrines and principles set forth by John Wesley. When the proposed union of The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South and The Methodist Protestant Church was about to be consummated in 1939, The Eastern Conference of The Methodist Protestant Church gave notice by a decisive vote that it would not enter. The reason was clear -- the new Methodist Church would be controlled by leaders who did not believe in an inspired, infallible Bible. This determination not to enter Methodist Union later took the form of a definite action. The Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was in session at Atlantic City, N.J., when an attempt was made, inspired by the Bishops who were present, to declare The Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church out of existence and all of its churches to be a part of the new Methodist Church. At this point, on September 28, 1939, the pastors, delegates and friends representing thirty-four churches walked out and continued the sessions at Scullville, N.J. About a year later the name was changed to Bible Protestant. Four 1939 central Pennsylvania MP churches joined this new denomination: Cassville, Reyburn, Koonsville and Bloomingdale (now independent).*

6. The scarcity of journals, histories and other publications from such a small and weak conference has made documenting its work extremely difficult. Pennsylvania Conference MP congregations about which little is known include Burlington, Coles Creek, Covington, Lopez, Muncy, Register and Williamsport. In addition, Maryland Conference circuits of which very little is known include Carlisle, Clearfield (also mentioned in the Pittsburgh Conference), Licking Creek, Perry County, Shippensburg, Union (also mentioned in Pennsylvania Conference). Readers with Pennsylvania Conference MP materials and/or information about these or similar churches are asked to contact THE CHRONICLE.

7. Constitution and Discipline of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1900, p. 138.

8. Official Journal of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1970, p. 130.

9. Official Minutes of the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1922, p. 62.

10. Ibid., 1922, p. 136.

11. Ibid., 1929, p. 72.

12. South Mountain, the easternmost portion of the Alleghenies, comes into Pennsylvania from Virginia, through Harpers Ferry, and abruptly ends near Boiling Springs. It is at Boiling Springs that the Appalachian Trail, which follows South Mountain northward from

Virginia, must cross the Cumberland Valley and rejoin the mountains to continue on to Maine.

13. Beginning in 1984 and for two and one half years, Hawley Memorial Church was pastored by noted evangelical author Dr. Charles Shedd (The Stork is Dead, Letters to Karen, Letters to Philip, etc.). Seizing the opportunity to minister in this special way, Dr. Shedd came out of retirement to revitalize the congregation and build its membership from 25 to 125.