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editor

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

On behalf of the Historical Society of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church, I present volume XXXII of *The Chronicle*. For over thirty years, the society has produced a mix of scholarly, entertaining, informative and inspiring stories of United Methodism – all united by a common theme. This volume continues that tradition with the uniting theme of **unexpected disruptions**.

The lead article was inspired by last year's COVID-19 pandemic. At least one person is known to have remarked that "one of my life's biggest wastes of money was the purchase of a 2020 planner." Indeed, the disruptions in normal routines caused by the pandemic have been described as "unique" and "unprecedented" – but were they? This article examines, from a United Methodist perspective, similar **unexpected disruptions** experienced over the centuries – and documents for future researchers the specific ways in which our denomination, our Susquehanna Conference and our local congregations dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The article on Harrisburg and the Methodist Episcopal Church was inspired by a 2019 **unexpected disruption** in Harrisburg United Methodism that left only one former Methodist Episcopal congregation within the city limits of Harrisburg. While the presence of mainstream denominations in urban areas has been decreasing for decades, the possibility that Harrisburg's once numerous ten Methodist Episcopal congregations would one day be reduced to the original "mother" congregation had never been taken seriously – and that particular congregation, Harrisburg Grace, experienced a major **unexpected disruption** itself in 1897 when its edifice became the temporary state capitol building for two years – as depicted on the cover of this issue. This article examines the expansion and contraction of the Methodist Episcopal Church within the city of Harrisburg.

While the once numerous Methodist Episcopal churches in Harrisburg have been reduced to a single congregation, the last development being a major unexpected disruption, the once numerous former Methodist Protestant churches in southern Bedford County have now completely disappeared due to a series of **unexpected disruptions** that, while occurring not totally without warning, have combined to inspire the article on Centreville and the Methodist Protestant Church in southern Bedford County.

This issue concludes with articles on how **unexpected disruptions** can affect the lives of individuals and couples in ministry. A pair of articles on Rev. Thomas S. McNeil and a trio of articles on Women and Ministry will be introduced, along with comments on the guest authors of two of the papers, by separate editor's prefaces.