

# Indiana United Methodist Historical Society Newsletter

P O Box 331, Greencastle, Indiana 46135

Fall 2016

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## BURIAL SITE COMMEMORATED FOR HELONA DAVISSON, FIRST WOMAN ORDAINED IN A METHODIST CHURCH

By Riley Case

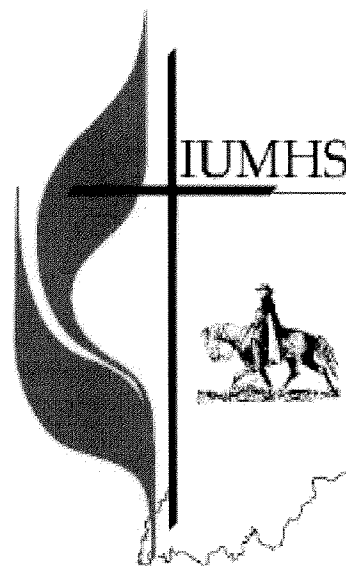
One of the purposes of the Indiana United Methodist Historical Society is to help us remember some of the unusual, gifted, and God-blessed persons who have been a part of our heritage. One of these persons was Helenor Alter Davisson, who, as far as our historical research can determine, in 1866 was the first Methodist woman ordained in the ministry.

On August 24, on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Helona Davison's ordination, a ceremonial wreath was placed on her grave site at the cemetery connected with Brushwood United Methodist Church, an open country church in Jasper County. The wreath was supplied by Chris Shoemaker, the historian who first wrote about Helenor for the *Methodist Magazine of History* some ten years ago. The wreath laying was attended by a group including Don Findlay of the Commission of Archives and History of the Indiana Conference, Doug Davies, president of the Indiana Methodist History Society, and Sue Cardwell, president of the Jasper County Historical Society.

Born in Allegany County, Pennsylvania in 1823, Helenor moved with her family (her mother and father and six younger siblings) to the Jasper County, Indiana, area in 1835. Her father, Rev. John Alter, was a pioneer Methodist Protestant missionary, one of the first to come to Indiana. Her father called Helenor "Little Pest" because she always was asking questions.

Since her father could not support himself as a missionary he purchased a saw-mill on Brandywine Creek. Tragedy struck the family when Helona's mother died when Helenor was only 14 years old. On her death bed the mother entrusted the family to Helenor. Helenor would have to be mother now. This would be especially difficult since Helenor's father was usually gone riding the circuit. This amazing young girl took on the task. But it became even more amazing. Shortly after Typhus fever struck and Helenor's father and Helenor's six siblings became deathly sick. Helenor now became nurse, saw mill operator and mother to the whole family.

She also took on another great challenge: to educate herself. She so much wanted to read so she could study the Bible. Once she could read, the Bible, and the Lord God of the Bible, became her passion.



Indiana United Methodist Historical Society

Soon she was sharing the faith that was sustaining her through her family's trials. As she grew older, she not only exhorted, she became a class leader, and a prayer band leader. Soon she was preaching.

Preaching? Women didn't preach did they? They actually did in the Methodist revivalist wing of the church, although it wasn't usually called preaching. It was exhorting. And even if they preached no woman had ever been ordained.

But that was in the sophisticated East where propriety and tradition ruled. This was the Indiana frontier. This was also during the time of the Second Great Awakening where marvelous things were taking place. The Holy Spirit, in the minds of the Methodist revivalists, often trumped propriety. It was on the western frontier that young men was sometimes converted one week, called to preach the next, and given a preaching assignment the next. In the holiness-revivalist tradition to be called by God was a more important credential than having so much education and being of the right gender.

Furthermore, others had prepared the way. When the Wesleys broke with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 the major issue was slavery, or more specifically, the unwillingness of the M.E. Church to discipline slave holders.

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But a second reason for the division had to do with the place of women in the church (The famous Seneca Falls Conference of 1848, which launched the women's movement was held in a Wesleyan Methodist church).

A few years after that, in 1859, Phoebe Palmer, sometimes known as the most influential woman in the Methodist tradition in the 19th century, wrote her book, *Promise of the Father*, which argued that at Pentecost the Spirit fell on both men and woman to prophesy.

The Spirit had fallen on Helenor to prophesy and so she did, and when she presented herself for preaching credentials in 1863 she was "admitted on trial." Three years later she received ordination. It is quite probable that Helenor did not see herself as a champion for women's rights or as one leading a moral crusade. She was a woman who believed the world needed to be won for Christ and she felt she had the gifts to help accomplish that.

Helenor has been overlooked in most of the United Methodist histories. For one thing the academic historians don't work a lot with Methodist Protestant material. For another, she doesn't fit the image of what the feminists look for in a crusader. But she is a heroine, and she belongs to us, to Indiana, and to the revivalist wing of the church.



## THE MISSING MARKER OF JOHN STRANGE

As was said, one of the purposes of the Indiana Methodist Historical Society is to help us remember some of the unusual, gifted and God-blessed persons who did so much for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for United Methodism in Indiana.

One of those persons was Rev. John Strange (1789 – 1832). Strange became a minister in 1810 and one of his early appointments was the Whitewater Circuit in southeast Indiana (part of the Ohio Conference at that time). The circuit took four weeks and 300 miles to complete. Ferdinand Holliday in *Indiana Methodism* (1877) describes Strange as “a man of slender form, black hair, keen penetrating eyes, a rich musical voice.” He also reported that Strange was known for his punctuality and for always carrying a rifle.

John Strange was such an important figure in Indiana Methodism that in the Indiana Methodist history *Reminiscences of Early Methodism in Indiana* (1879), Rev. J. C. Smith devotes three whole chapters to John Strange and calls him “the greatest of all because he was servant of all.” Strange ministered during the period that many historians identify as the Second Great Awakening. Many of the accounts from Smith’s book center around early Indiana revivals and camp meetings which were the most effective means of evangelism for Methodism during that period. From 1810 to 1830, the years of Strange’s ministry, Methodism in Indiana grew by over 200% (755 to 15,205) while the population of Indiana grew 139% (24,560 to 343,031)

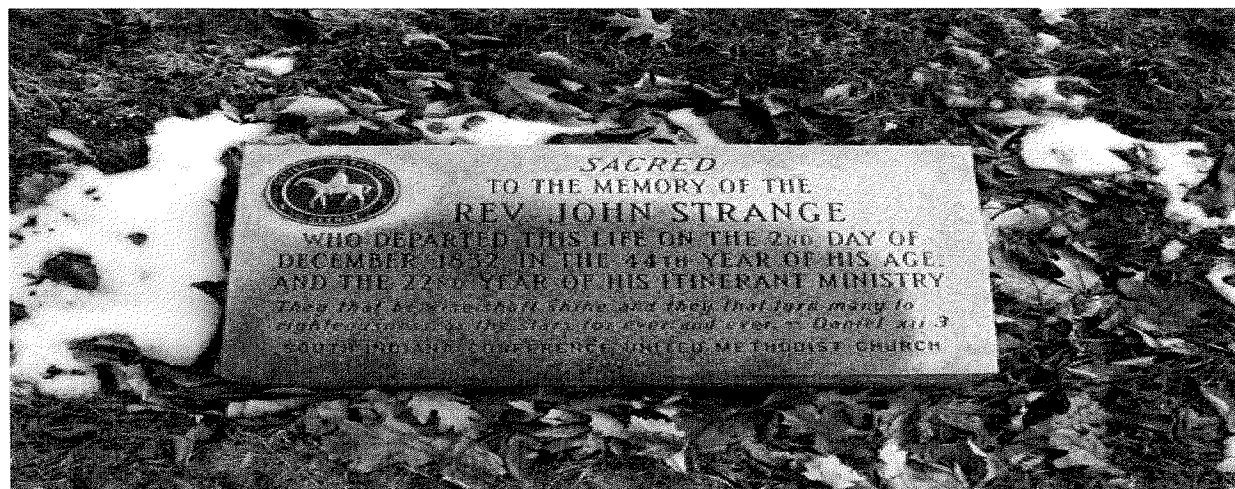
Smith describes Strange thusly:

*His power over an audience was wonderful. In voice and gesture he was faultless. Oratory was native to him....Often in his happiest flights of eloquence, he would lift his audience from their seats, and hundreds would find themselves unconsciously standing on their feet, and gazing intently on the speaker.*

Smith describes Strange’s death and funeral and his burial marker and inscription in old City Cemetery in downtown Indianapolis. However, the cemetery fell in disuse and later in the 1800s the bodies were reinterred elsewhere. Strange’s body was moved to Crown Hill in 1911 and the marker was lost. Anna Nichols book, *The Story of Crown Hill* (1928) mentions John Strange as one of the celebrities buried in Crown Hill but makes no mention of the marker.

Now, however, thanks to Bill Glass of Avon, a former member of the South Indiana United Methodist Historical Society, a marker similar to the original marker has been placed in Crown Hill. Glass petitioned the South Indiana Conference to pay for and erect the marker in 2003. The conference allowed \$1,500 for the marker but that didn’t cover the actual cost. Jack Haskins, president of the society, made up the difference personally and Bill and his wife, Rev. Ann Glass, consecrated it in December of 2003.

Thanks to Bill Glass for providing some of the details for this story.

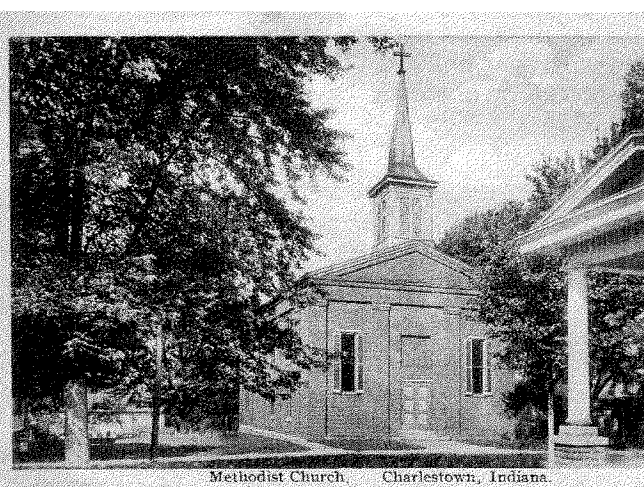


**30 UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES IN INDIANA ARE BI-CENTENNIAL CHURCHES**

2016 is the bi-centennial year for the state of Indiana. In 1816, when Indiana became a state there were approximately 80,000 Hoosiers in the state, of which about 3,000 were Methodists. It is difficult to know how many Methodist “churches” were in the state at that time, because there were several categories of “churches.” There were “preaching appointments” (regular preaching services under supervision of a circuit rider), “classes (preaching appointments organized into Methodist class meetings which would meet even when the preachers was not present), “organized churches” (congregations officially listed as churches but often without a building), and organized churches in buildings (the U.S. census started counting churches in 1850 but often counted only buildings).

Of that number we believe 30 are still functioning today. Thanks to the Methodist archives at DePauw for doing the research on this. If there are corrections to the list please let us know. The following is the honor list of bi-centennial churches.

| Church Name            | Date | County      | District |
|------------------------|------|-------------|----------|
| Boston UMC             | 1810 | Wayne       | East     |
| Brownsville UMC        | 1806 | Union       | East     |
| Deerfield UMC          | 1810 | Randolph    | East     |
| Spartnburg UMC         | 1815 | Randolph    | East     |
| Auora UMC              | 1816 | Dearborn    | SE       |
| Brookville UMC         | 1816 | Franklin    | SE       |
| Dupont UMC             | 1814 | Jefferson   | SE       |
| Lawrenceburg Hamline   | 1806 | Dearborn    | SE       |
| Madison Trinity UMC    | 1811 | Jefferson   | SE       |
| Rising Sun UMC         | 1816 | Ohio        | SE       |
| Ruter Chapel UMC       | 1816 | Switzerland | SE       |
| Vevay Fairview UMC     | 1815 | Switzerland | SE       |
| Charlestown UMC        | 1809 | Clark       | South    |
| Jeffersonville UMC     | 1801 | Clark       | South    |
| Old Capitol UMC        | 1814 | Harrison    | South    |
| Old Salem UMC          | 1801 | Clark       | South    |
| Pfrimmers UMC          | 1812 | Harrison    | South    |
| Salem UMC              | 1816 | Washington  | South    |
| Unity Chapel UMC       | 1815 | Harrison    | South    |
| Utica UMC              | 1803 | Clark       | South    |
| Wall Street UMC        | 1807 | Clark       | South    |
| Hillside UMC           | 1815 | Gibson      | SW       |
| Mt Vernon First UMC    | 1815 | Posey       | SW       |
| Potoka UMC             | 1811 | Gibson      | SW       |
| Poseyville St Paul UMC | 1815 | Posey       | SW       |
| Vincennes First UMC    | 1809 | Knox        | SW       |
| Washington Bethel      | 1815 | Daviess     | SW       |
| Washington Christ      | 1816 | Daviess     | SW       |
| New Lebanon            | 1813 | Sullivan    | West     |



Also, as a part of the bi-centennial the Historical Society has submitted 465 postcards of Methodist, United Evangelical, United Brethren, and Methodist Protestant Indiana churches for scanning and inclusion in the *Indiana Album*, a state non-profit bicentennial project that scans, catalogs and shares historic photographs of Indiana.

## LOCAL CHURCH HISTORIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Commission on Archives and History of the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church presented the following local church historians with this award at the Annual Conference Session June 9-10-11, 2016.

Rita Barnett  
Trinity UMC  
Rensselaer, Indiana

Anita Massey  
Rising Sun UMC  
Rising Sun, Indiana

Nancy Darr  
Coalbush UMC  
Mishawaka, Indiana

Betty Ballard  
Coalbush UMC  
Mishawaka, Indiana

Loretta Piggee  
Christ UMC  
Gary, Indiana

Jim Hensley  
Sunnycrest UMC  
Marion, Indiana

Richard Gotshall  
Grace UMC  
Franklin, Indiana

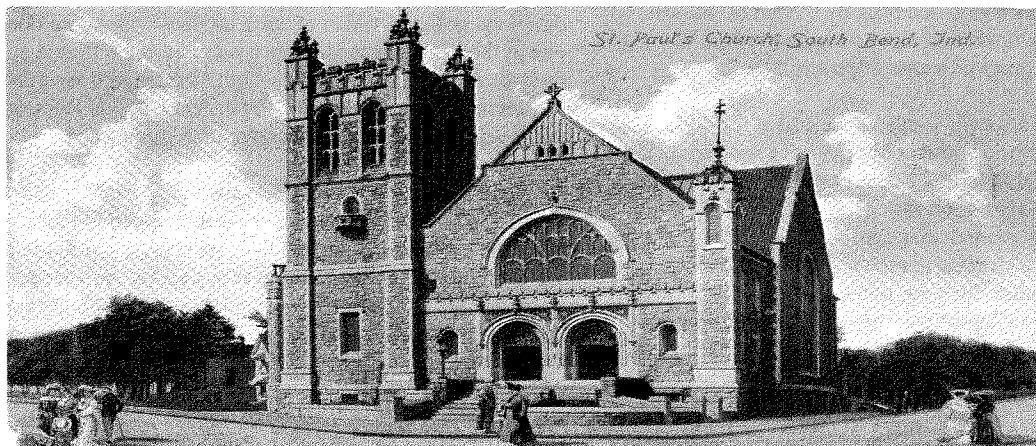
Harold Morgan  
First UMC  
Mt Vernon, Indiana

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## 2017 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL BE HELD AT SOUTH BEND APRIL 1

St. Paul's United Methodist Church, South Bend, will be the host for the Indiana Historical Annual Meeting which will be held April 1, 2017. This historic landmark church is known for its exceptional architecture, including its Bavarian stained glass windows which date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also known as the "Studebaker Church" because it is where the Studebakers of Studebaker automobile fame were active members. Part of the program will cover not only the history of the church but the relationship of the Studebakers to the church.

For those who like to come to South Bend on Friday there will be opportunity to explore the historic district of South Bend including the Studebaker mansion and the Studebaker museum. There are some well-known bed and breakfast inns, plus other motels, that can accommodate those who might like to come early.





## EARLY METHODIST CIRCUIT RIDER' STORIES

By Riley Case

The story of Indiana United Methodism is much bigger than how many churches there were, who were the leaders, and what were the issues. Early preachers were known as story tellers. Unfortunately, most of their stories have long since been forgotten. But we come across a few now and then. The following is an excerpt from a much longer account of the ministry of Rev. T. H. Rucker, who put his story in writing in the *Indiana Christian Advocate* of 1887 in a number of installments. This is part of the installment of 9-22-87). Rucker is relating circuit-riding adventures of the 1830s.

In my sixth round of the Mooresville circuit, having been persistently importuned to visit and stay overnight with a local preacher in the extreme southeast of the circuit, I determined to do so at my next appointment in his neighborhood. His general appearance impressed me with the idea of a veritable relic of a past century. I found his cabin after a diligent hunt through devious bypaths, a quarter of a mile from any public road, in the middle of a partly cleared cornfield, whose scattering stalks were permitted to take care of themselves. The only accessible approach to the hut was through this field, at present in such a state of mortar, crusted over by a thin crust of frozen mud, that my horse being young and even more inexperienced than his master, after attempting a rod of its treacherous surface, refused all persuasion to venture further in that direction, until at length my dull perception caught the hint from the instinct of a yellow cur, which, having scented the approach of a stranger, chose to reconnoiter the premises by following the zigzag panels of a five railed worm fence... I determined to confront the dog, and with a piece of a fence rail for a club, with which I drove Juke back to the house and persuaded by four-footed companion to follow his trail... Arrived at the cabin, I left my horse standing near the cow shed and started to brave the dog at the cabin door, but was three times called back by the almost human snicker of my horse Salim, who seemed to say, "Do you forget me in this wild waste of poverty?"

At that point a stately woman appeared at the door. I asked "Is the man of the house at home?" She answered, "Naw, what's wanted of him?" I then gave her my name and business and my reason for calling, adding that I was a total stranger and as it was getting late in the afternoon I would have to trespass upon her for a night's lodging. "Well," she said, "he's not home and won't be to-night, but as you are the preacher the gals can double up and we'll try and get along together."

Then I asked for a place to put my horse. She pointed me to the cow shed, and showed me where the fodder was, a very meagre supply, which I nearly exhausted in screening my horse from the inhospitable heavens, and a craving stomach.

. When I returned to the house, a little pork, burnt coffee and corn bread was on a box that served as a table, and I asked to "take a bite."

I made a dashing pretence at the food but consumed little; my chief supply was water.

. When the family were gathered in, there were two daughters grown and three children. How we were to bestow ourselves for the night was a marvel to me, but we did it, and no explanation necessary where the occupants of a single room in a country hut are all honest people. The room, by eye measurement, was 16X12 feet, with a five foot mud chimney at one end, a four foot rail bedstead in each nether corner, extending in length five feet, with some kind of feathers in a sack to soften the rails, a bench five feet long, a goods box for a table, three wooden stools, three-legged at that, a bucket bench in one corner near the fire-place and a pot and skillet in the other corner. Three feet of one of the side logs cut out for a window, with no shutter, and a wooden hinged door, in a crippled state, completed the out and in fit of my present habitation.

Time for repose but how was I to prepare: I was fully clothed and did not wish to sleep that way. All eyes were fastened upon me. I was tired and sleepy and mad to exhaustion; praying would not relieve me, faith in the abstract was of no avail. Pure religion in this case was impracticable; my hitherto unspotted life was imperiled. Was I to give up all modesty? Who was to blame? What was I to do? I must face the emergency bravely. In utter desperation I drew off my coat, pulled off my boots, went to a corner bed, sat on the side rail, turned down the cover, and looked at the girls who were watching all my movements. I asked for a pan or a bowl or but in which to wash my feet. They had none, but one of the girls proposed to pour water on them from a gourd. I thought of declining the service, but, it came into my mind, the Master let a young woman wash His feet with her tears, and why not accept the poured water? Of course I consented

I then thought I would lay down with my pants on, but they were my only decent ones and I was loath to spoil them, nevertheless I turned in and attempted to cover myself and found the bed too short and the cover not long enough. The girls were still watching me, and seeing my feet sticking out at the foot of the bed, laughed at me, proposing to take them in with them to keep them warm. I said: "Lord, save me. Though a host should encamp against me, yes I will not feare" I fell asleep wondering if the girls would appropriate my feet before morning.

## ANNUAL MEETING OF SOCIETY FEATURES DR. DUNCAN STROIK OF NOTRE DAME ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE



About 50 persons attended the annual meeting of the Indiana United Methodist Historical Society held April 2 at North Church, Indianapolis. The theme of the day was church architecture and the featured speaker was none less than the renowned architect professor Dr. Duncan Stroik of Notre Dame.

United Methodists, it seems, would have a lot to learn from Roman Catholics and some of the more liturgical churches. Prof Stroik offered insight into such things as the meaning of "holy," and the arrangement of the church itself based on the Old Testament temple.

Professor Stroik also dealt with symbols and how church design is intended to lift the soul upward toward God. The "upward" or "going up" sense follows such Biblical events and locations as Moses going up Mt. Sinai, pilgrims going up to Jerusalem ("I lift my eyes to the hills"), Jesus going up Mt. Golgatha. Indeed, Mt. Zion is a symbol for the church. In architecture this is inspired by high arches and ceilings, and steeples.

United Methodists traditionally have been much more practical and modest in designing their church buildings. The Methodist-inspired Akron Plan was introduced to serve the Sunday School. In early days Methodist suspicion of ostentatious fashion was also reflected in the criticism of ostentatious churches.

North United Methodist Church, host for the meeting, is an exception to much of United Methodist plainness. Board member Joseph Wood was able to give a tour of the church and explain the architectural features of one of the outstanding buildings of Indiana United Methodism.

In the business session, Rev. Doug Davies was elected as new president for the Historical Society. Appreciation was expressed to Mrs. Susan Traux for her two years of service as president.

## **RICHARD STOWE RECOGNIZED FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE AS CONFERENCE HISTORIAN**

Richard Stowe, who is retiring as Conference Historian, was recognized by the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church meeting in Indianapolis, June 10, 2016.

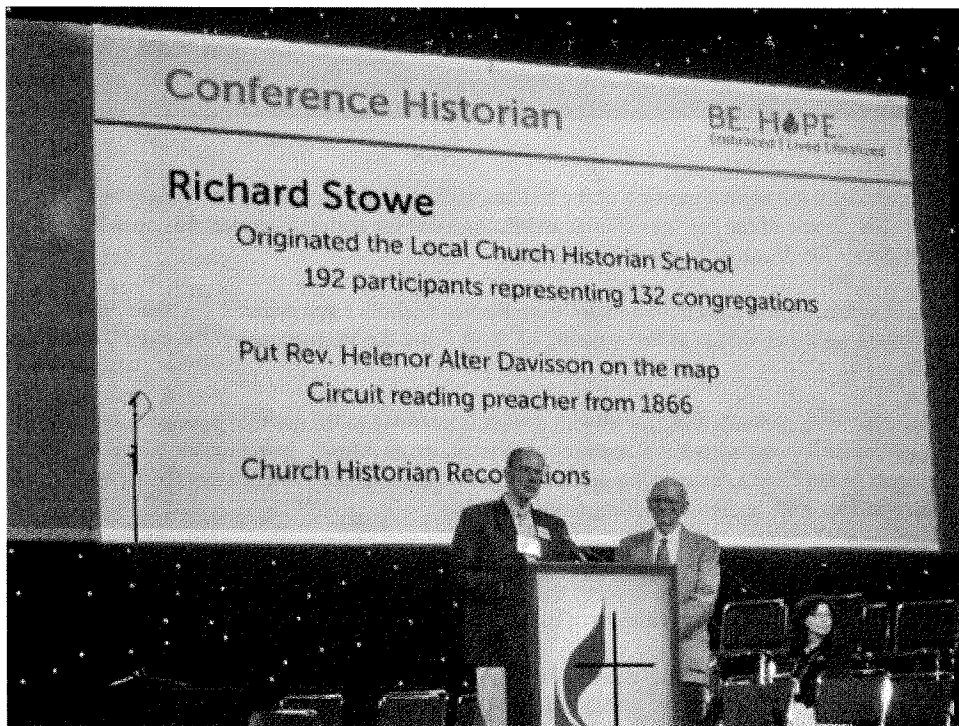
About half of United Methodism's conferences have a conference historian and Indiana did not have one until after the merger of the North and South Conferences. At that time Richard Stowe was named to the responsibility by the Conference Commission on History and Archives.

Richard set a high standard for the position, being available to local churches as they record and display their church histories, being available for workshops, and generally encouraging churches to research and write their histories.

Perhaps he is best known, however, for his leadership in the Local Church Historian's School 191 persons representing 161 churches enrolled in the school which was held on-line in the fall of 2015. Since then a number of other conferences have shown interest in conducting a similar school.

Richard lives in Muncie and is a member of High Street Church there. Before retirement he taught at Ball State University.

As of the moment a new conference historian has not yet been named.





## HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBER SUSAN YODER REVIEWS BOOK ON THE FAMILY TREE OF CHURCHES

*Susan Yoder was recently intrigued by the book *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy* by Andrew Damack and shares her thoughts plus Damack's chart on the Family of Churches.*

Hamick's comparison and contrast among religions does not claim to be exhaustive. However, I found it instructive, non-judgmental, and delightfully illuminating.

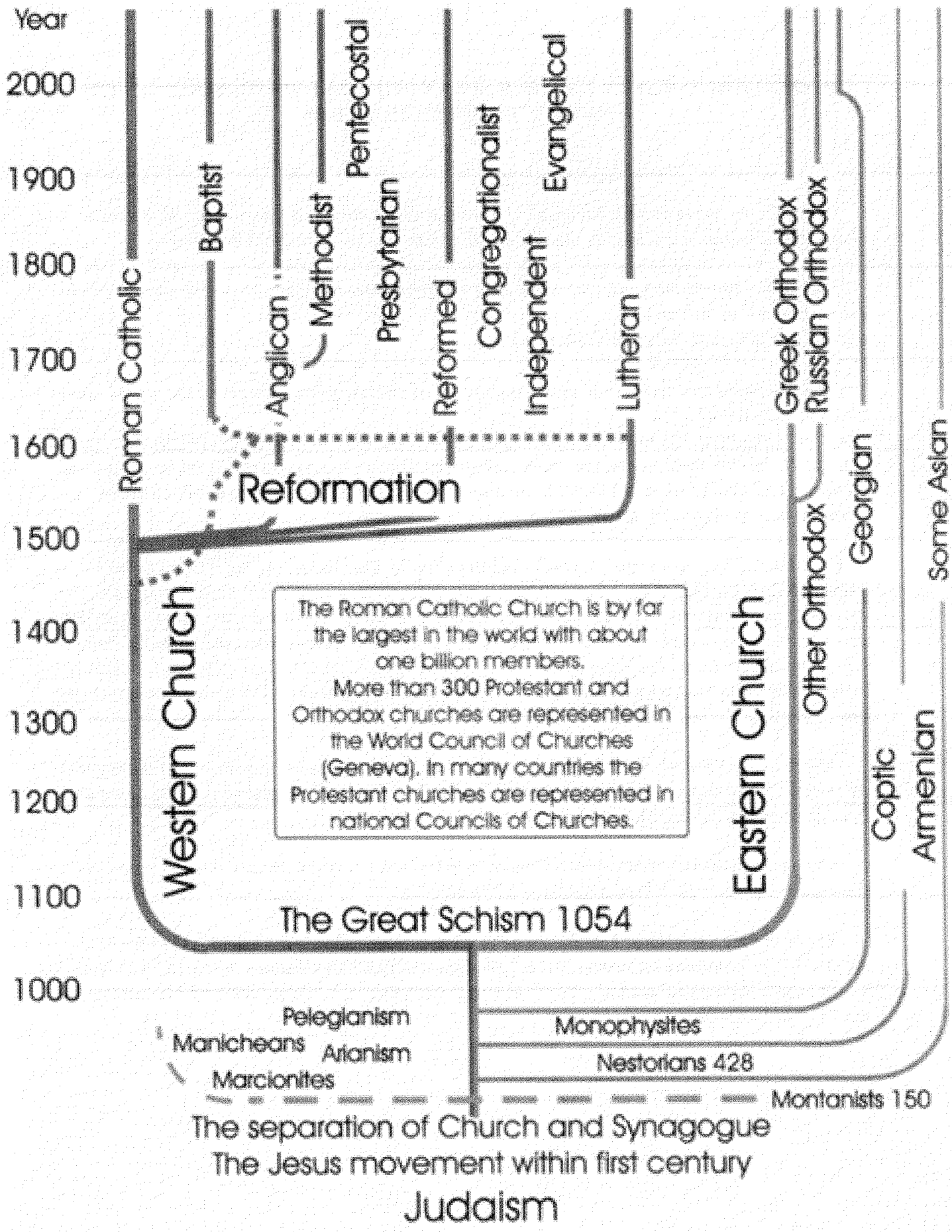
From around age 5, a typical age that children of church-going families in the 1950s found they could recite the Apostles' Creed (pg 512 in the black hymnal) by rote, we were instructed by the minister in organized Methodist fashion that the "holy catholic church" in the Apostles' Creed referred to the universal church, before exponential branching from the family tree began, not the Roman Catholic branch across the street.

Only later did I grasp what "the holy catholic church" was about. Andrew Damack was helpful in my understanding. Damack offers a helpful overview of the historical origins of the diverse denominations or confessions of the Christian Church. The three main branches are Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. By no stretch of the imagination are Damack's compilation and observations deep enough for theologians, but it is an excellent resource for church history buffs who are curious about the similarities and differences between denominations and their arrival on the spiritual scene.

I especially appreciate the added perspective provided by Damack's inclusion of the number of worldwide followers of a particular sect, despite the inherent difficulty in pinning down data in an ever-changing religious landscape.

Damack wades into murkier waters and includes non-Christian groups as well, including the rapidly growing divisions, atheism and agnosticism.

The realization how little I know about faiths around me makes me eager to read the updated (2015) *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy 2.0* edition, which include more observation as well as a new section on Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, the Word of Faith Movement and the Prosperity Gospel.



**Tuesday, November 1, 2016**

*All Saints' Day*

**Celebrating a forward-looking legacy:  
The EUB church**

Join the University of Indianapolis and  
University Heights United Methodist Church

*(4002 Otterbein Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46227)*

in celebrating the heritage of the Evangelical United Brethren Church



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**Schedule**

**11:15-11:45 a.m. Registration**

**11:45-1 p.m. Lunch**

“Reflections on a Forward-Looking Church”

Dr. Gene Sease, President Emeritus,  
University of Indianapolis

**1:15 p.m. Keynote Address**

Dr. D. Stephen Long, Cary Maguire University  
Professor of Ethics, Southern Methodist University

**2:30-4 p.m. Storytelling Opportunities**

**4:15 p.m. Closing Worship**

Pastors Andrew Kinsey and C. Archibald Hawkins

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To register contact Michael G. Cartwright at  
317-788-3233 or [mcartwright@uindy.edu](mailto:mcartwright@uindy.edu).

Persons who wish to attend the luncheon must RSVP with payment  
of \$25 per person before October 22.

# Indiana United Methodist Historical Society

## 2017 MEMBERSHIP

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL (please--very helpful) \_\_\_\_\_  Check if Church Historian

Church you attend \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Check if:  (1) Individual                       (3) You are a life member of IUMHS  
 (2) Congregation                       (4) This congregation is a life member

*Please Note: If you are not a life member, your annual membership fee is now due and should accompany this form. Thank you.*

| TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:                      | How many? | Amount          |
|--|-----------|-----------------|
| New or Renewal                           |           |                 |
| 0 0 \$20 Individual, for one year        | _____     | @ \$20 \$ _____ |
| 0 0 \$30 family, for one year            | _____     | @ \$30 \$ _____ |
| 0 0 \$50 congregation, for one year \$50 |           | \$ _____        |
| Subtotal for Membership                  |           | \$ _____        |

Mail to: Rev Donald Brenneman,  
 410 Starkey Drive  
 Marion IN 46953

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Do you have a story or a suggestion for a story for this newsletter. If so contact Riley Case, 4663 S 600 E, Kokomo, IN 46902, rbcase@hoosierbroadband.com We would be interested in unusual stories of local churches. Did your church send 15 persons in the ministry? Was it started by someone famous like Lorenzo Dow? Did it receive 500 members in one year?