

the  
evangelical  
united  
brethren  
and  
methodism.

*their heritage and history*



*an elective unit for adults by Charles Parlin  
with a leader's guide by Curtis A. Chambers  
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# 1. origin

*How can an understanding of the origin of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church help us prepare for a united church?*

## Common Heritage

The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church share a common heritage and a common history. Both were born out of the great religious revival that swept the colonies in the last half of the eighteenth century and out of the American Revolution.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church dates from the 1946 union of the United Brethren, formerly known as *Die Vereinigten Brüder*, and the Evangelical Association, formerly known as the *Evangelische Gemeinschaft*. Both groups had started as German language churches, but long before the time of union they had predominantly changed to English speaking.

When we speak of our common heritage and our common history, six great souls emerge, which are here named in order of their birth: John Wesley (1703-1791); Martin Boehm (1725-1812); Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813); Francis Asbury (1745-1816); Christian Newcomer (1749-1830); and Jacob Albright (1759-1808). As seen by the dates, these men were contemporaries and greatly influenced each other. Each was a pietist; each believed the Christian faith demanded a personal conviction to Christ; each rebelled against the formalism of his established church of the Old World.

For a study of these men and their working together in the great religious revival of their day there is an abundance of historical material. Wesley, Asbury, and Newcomer left detailed diaries and journals; Boehm was written up in detail by his son Henry; Albright has been covered in detail by one of his scholarly descendants. These men were co-workers in a great spiritual revival movement, and it was only later that their work began to take the form of organized churches as we know them today.

## Influence on Each Other

A brief survey of the lives of these men will show their close working relationships and how they influenced each other.

All except Wesley were residents and citizens of this country. Wesley, the son of a Church of England minister, went to Oxford and followed his father into the church's priesthood. As a student at Oxford his leaning toward pietism was manifest because he and his brother organized groups of students who pledged themselves to arise at 4 A.M. and so methodically organize the hours of their day as to give time for Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. In ridicule the other students called them "methodists" and their groups "methodist societies." The boys accepted and adopted the name. These societies were within the framework of the Church of England.

It is clear that Wesley, in his rebellion against the formalism of his established church, was influenced by the German pietistic movement. His

record leads one to believe that perhaps the three events most affecting his life were the "heart-warming" experience at Aldersgate as he listened to a reading of Luther's "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans," the sea crossing when he observed a group of German Moravians worship with complete serenity during a storm that brought panic to other passengers, and his conversations with Peter Böhler who had been ordained by Count Zinzendorf.

On this side of the Atlantic, Philip William Otterbein was to be an important factor in this movement of revival among the German speaking. Educated in the best Calvinist schools of Germany and ordained by the Reformed Church, he came in 1752, at age twenty-seven, to work among the Germans in Pennsylvania. In the New World he became restless under the formalities of his Old World church. A Reformed congregation at Baltimore was also restless. Circumventing church authority, the Baltimore congregation called Otterbein to its pulpit. Otterbein consulted, among others, Francis Asbury, who was then twenty-nine years of age.

Asbury, a member of the Church of England and a lay preacher in the Methodist societies, also was restless with the rigidity of his Old World church. In accord with advice received from Asbury, Otterbein in 1774 took the separatist congregation under the name "The German Evangelical Reformed Church." Ten years later Asbury was to follow Otterbein's example—and his own advice—and make a break with his Church of England.

Martin Boehm was from a stanch Pennsylvania Mennonite family. Selected in 1756 by lot to be a pastor of the church, as was the practice of the Mennonites, he sank into utter despair at the calling; but out of his

agony came an awakening to a new life and faith and a desire to communicate. His evangelistic sallies and revival meetings brought him into contact and common work with the lay preachers of the Methodist societies, but they did not endear him to his church. In 1780 he was expelled by the Mennonites. Otterbein and Boehm were out of their respective churches and on their own in the great movement of the spiritual awakening. Asbury was working in the movement but was still within the membership of the Church of England.

Jacob Albright, born in Pennsylvania of German Lutheran stock, was proprietor of a prosperous farm and also a tile factory. The loss of two beloved children in a dysentery epidemic suddenly shattered his smug security and cast him into an agony of

*Philip Otterbein participated in the ordination of Francis Asbury as Bishop, December 27, 1784. Otterbein is the man wearing a white robe standing behind the kneeling Asbury.*



the soul. Attending a Methodist class meeting at a neighbor's home, he became reconciled to God, felt release from his burdens, and experienced the joy and assurance of the transforming power of the Christian fellowship. Not long thereafter the class meeting granted this thirty-two-year-old man an exhorter's license.

Christian Newcomer, born on a Pennsylvania farm of Mennonite stock, was by early trade a carpenter. He was searching. In his quest he heard Otterbein preach on the necessity of genuine repentance and pardon of sin. Of Otterbein and his colleagues, Newcomer says in his autobiography: "These men preached the same doctrine which I had experienced, . . . I therefore associated with them and joined their Society." Newcomer is important because his powerful personality and genius for organization stabilized and gave a continuity to the movement commenced by Otterbein and Boehm.

### The Asbury Group

At the close of the Revolutionary War, Boehm, Otterbein, Asbury, Newcomer, and Albright were all co-workers in a great revival movement; there was still no organization.

First to organize was the Asbury group—the Methodist societies that were still within the framework of the Church of England. In the colonies the Church of England was practically without clergy. Their priests, in connection with their ordination, had taken an oath of allegiance to the king and had therefore for the most part either remained loyal and fled to the homeland or renounced their oath and clergy orders and borne arms against their sovereign. With the close of the war, the thought of congregations—and in particular the Method-

ist societies—in America without benefit of clergy and the sacraments sorely distressed Wesley, although he personally had strongly opposed the rebellion of the colonies. But his entreaties to the Anglican bishops to send ordained men to America were unheeded.

Meanwhile Wesley and Thomas Coke of the Oxford faculty convinced themselves that Wesley, though only a priest, was a presbyter with power of ordination. They rejected the Anglican theory that ordination can be only by a bishop who has been consecrated, in the Anglican form, by the laying on of hands of three Anglican bishops. So in a deeply religious ceremony in Bristol, Wesley commissioned Coke to come to America and ordain, and set aside as General Superintendent of the work, Francis Asbury, a young lay preacher.

When Coke arrived and announced his mission, Asbury refused to accept ordination unless it was the judgment of the other lay leaders of the "Methodist Societies" that he comply. So they called a conference in Baltimore at Christmastime, 1784. By unanimous action Asbury was requested to accept ordination; and in a series of services he was ordained a deacon, then an elder, and then consecrated for the work of a General Superintendent. A decision was made to continue with the episcopal form of government, and Asbury was designated a bishop. The entire procedure was promptly repudiated by the bishops in London, and the Methodist Episcopal Church was born.

This bit of Methodist history is background for this important point: when Asbury agreed, he specifically requested that Otterbein participate in the ordination and consecration. Otterbein responded and participated with the laying on of his hands.

## United Brethren in Christ

Next in order to achieve organization was the United Brethren in Christ at the Frederick County (Maryland) Conference of 1800, at which an episcopal form of government was adopted. Otterbein and Boehm were elected bishops.

(The name, United Brethren, stems from an earlier meeting at Long's barn, outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, at Pentecost time, 1766. It is one of the dramatic moments of church history. In imagination one can see the untutored Martin Boehm, his heart glowing with spiritual fervor, preaching in German to his local community of Mennonites and others. In the group was the scholarly Reformed Church preacher Philip William Otterbein, well schooled in theology and master of Hebrew and Greek, who listened intently, gradually realizing that this simple, peasant speaker was proclaiming the same great burning truths that he himself proclaimed. At the end of the service, Otterbein arose and embraced Boehm with the exclamation, *Wir sind Brüder!* ["We are brothers!"] No wonder the name of the fellowship!)

### The Albright Group

Longest to continue as a movement and last to organize was the Albright group. Under his Methodist Exhorter's License, Albright carried the gospel message to his fellow Germans. Relationship to the Methodists was close, and the transition to a separate denomination appears to have been gradual.

Paul H. Eller in his book, *These Evangelical United Brethren*, says "the first intimation of organization became apparent in 1800."<sup>1</sup> The 1803

meeting certified Albright as "a truly evangelical minister in every sense of the word," but the movement had no name or body until November 1807 when they named themselves "The Newly-Formed Methodist Conference." There are in existence authorizations to preach issued by Albright under the name of this "Methodist Conference." But technically they were not part of Bishop Asbury's organization, so in the 1809 annual meeting they changed the name to "The So-Called Albright People"—a term that had been applied to them in derision. *Evangelische Gemeinschaft* (Evangelical Association) was not adopted until the conference of 1816.

### A Revival Movement

During these formative periods there are references to Asbury's group as "English Methodists" and to the Otterbein-Boehm-Albright groups as "German Methodists." These saints on horseback represented a revival movement in America—not organizations as we know them today. They attended each other's meetings and often traveled and preached together.

That our beginnings were in closest association cannot be denied. The participation of Otterbein in the ordination of Asbury has been mentioned. It is interesting also to note that when Otterbein, an old man with less than two months to live, undertook to ordain Christian Newcomer who would be his successor, he requested that a Methodist participate. William Ryland responded and joined Otterbein in the laying on of hands. For those who find a certain mystic significance of the ordination, there is ample support for belief that the two churches today jointly share the rich traditions and blessings of both these founders.

<sup>1</sup> *These Evangelical United Brethren* (The Otterbein Press, 1963), p. 45.



## 2. growth

*In what ways has The Evangelical United Brethren Church participated in mission work throughout the years?*

### Part of Pioneering Effort

As the early colonists began to push their new nation's frontiers out into the west and south, Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren became a part of the great pioneering effort. Neither group had fine churches nor suitable parsonages for their preachers because the church property had been retained by the established churches when they rejected the revival movements. Because these revival movements were without buildings or resources, it was natural for their preachers to join the adventure into the wilderness and assist in the building of new communities—particularly schools and churches. These early pioneers and circuit riders carried in their saddlebags not only Bibles but elementary school books.

The men of the great religious revival continued to work together—the Methodist group among the English speaking and the Evangelical United Brethren among the German speaking. As it developed, there were many more English-speaking than there were German-speaking people, and this is reflected in the statistics of the organizations. The Methodists with a membership of over 10,000,000 and the Evangelical United Brethren with a membership of about 748,000 means a ratio of about 14 to 1.

It has been noted that the Evangelical United Brethren could not continue exclusively in German; by the same token, Methodists could not re-

main exclusively in English. Asbury and the early leaders who resisted German work had failed to visualize the massive migrations and the tenacity of the German mother tongue. Belatedly, the Methodists started organized work when the Ohio Conference on August 19, 1835, appointed Wilhelm Nast as "German Missionary" to work in the territory of Ohio.

This missionary, who was to become the father of the German work within The Methodist Church, had immigrated to America at age twenty-one. At twenty-two he was librarian and German instructor at West Point. While at West Point he was stirred by Methodist preaching—primarily that of President Fiske of Wesleyan College—and decided to dedicate his life through the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under Nast's dynamic leadership German language work rapidly developed.

From 1835 on, the United Brethren in Christ, the Evangelical Association, and the German Conference of The Methodist Church were all in the field—with the Methodists running a poor third. The Methodists reached the high water mark in 1915 when they had in the United States ten German annual conferences with 644 preachers and 63,260 members.

### A Rewarding Field

During this period our churches had a rewarding field in which to work. German immigrants pouring into our land brought respect for the law, a fine sense of honesty and promptness in the discharge of business obligations, dogged persistence, a

devotion to industry, and an ethic of economy. The German paid his debts promptly, loved his work, had an in-born sense of duty, exemplified simple home life, agitated for personal liberty, and expressed everywhere a strong individualism. They were a gregarious people; and everywhere they organized *Vereins*—societies for social, philanthropic, religious, and cultural purposes.

In general the Lutheran groups tended to stay aloof and parochial, maintaining their ties with the fatherland. Not so our churches. Why should they? They were born of the American Revolution and were part of the proud founding of the new nation.

Furthermore, our three groups put an emphasis on piety. They were against the *Gemütlichkeit* (coziness) of the beer hall and the gambling table. As Bishop Nuelsen said: "These people learned to know Christ as their personal Saviour and Master and His magic touch changed their German hymns and Bible verses and definitions of the catechism into the pure gold of the Kingdom."

In our three groups there was little fear of emotionalism in religion, and the German constituencies took to the camp meeting with enthusiasm. Families and their relatives and individual congregations pitched their own tents, covered the floors with straw, gathered fuel from the forests, and cooked outside their canvas homes on old-fashioned stoves. Here for a sustained period, in Ohio and Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the work of our three churches ran parallel, with much interchange of exhorters and preachers.

### Work Among the Germans

We shared in a unique phenomena—American based churches sent mis-

sionaries back to Germany. The reasons were the same. Germans who had found joy in the spiritual revival wrote such enthusiastic letters home that their relatives began to ask that preachers be sent over to them. For the Methodists, Wilhelm Nast made a survey trip to Germany in 1844; and as a result preachers were sent. In the records one finds outstanding names such as Jacoby, Wunderlich, Nuelsen. The United Brethren sent men like Christian Bischof and Flickinger and Sick. The Evangelical Association sent Kurz in 1845 and later Johann Link.

Here on a common front we faced troubles and discriminations. Our preachers were called "troublemakers" and "revolutionaries." Pamphlets published at the time contained such statements as: "They should stay in America, the land of rowdies, slaveholders, and dollar chasers" and "their wild, excited preaching is spiritual whiskey." But their work was blessed, and these men were not daunted. How could they be—these spiritual descendants of Otterbein, Asbury, and Albright! In 1905 the United Brethren merged their work with the Methodists; the German conferences of the former Evangelical Association continue as part of The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

In America work among German groups continued to spread rapidly. What the camp meetings were for the rural sections, the "class meetings" and "cottage prayer meetings" were for the villages and cities. Then came the devastating shock of World War I. Suddenly Germans became our enemies, and atrocity stories were eagerly accepted. The sorrows of this tragic era our churches bore in common.

From the beginning both branches of the Evangelical United Brethren were mission-minded and pushed out



*The missionary efforts of the Evangelical United Brethren and of the Methodists have circled the globe.*

beyond the borders of the United States. In the year 1838 both the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association organized mission societies, and women's societies were organized to support the work of missions.

### **Mission Work in Canada**

While today the most extensive work outside the United States borders is in Europe, in point of history the first missionary venture outside the country was across the border to the north into Canada. As early as 1816 one of their preachers crossed the Niagara River and preached in the German settlements just north of it. Eventually both branches, the United Brethren and the Evangelicals organized work there. The former group in 1856 organized their work into an Ontario Annual Conference that continued until 1905 when this conference joined the Canadian Congregationalists which, in turn, joined in the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

The latter group, the Evangelicals, organized in 1863 their Canadian Annual Conference that continues as an annual conference of The Evangeli-

cal United Brethren Church with 62 organized congregations and a membership of about 10,170. In the west the Dakota Conference sent workers north across the border, and in 1927 the Northwest Canada Annual Conference was organized. This conference continues with 52 organized congregations and a membership of about 3,623. The relationship of these two Canadian Annual Conferences to the union of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodists is discussed in lesson four of this study series.

### **Europe**

In Europe The Evangelical United Brethren Church maintains four annual conferences: South Germany, West Germany, East Germany, and Switzerland. This last conference, while known as the "Switzerland Conference," actually carries on work across the borders in Lichtenstein and in France. The East Germany Conference has borne with other Christian bodies the pressures from and antagonisms of the East German communist regime but to date has been able to continue and in reasonable degree to remain in communication with their brother workers on the other side of the wall.

In these European Annual Conferences there are 288 active ministers. Membership is currently reported at about 31,109 with an additional 39,402 classified as "Friends of the Church." There are 17,002 enrolled in their Sunday schools.

### **Africa**

The United Brethren Board of Missions voted in 1854 to "establish a mission station on the Big Boom River in the interior of Africa at an early period." In the following year



the first missionaries set sail for their hazardous undertaking in Sierra Leone. Tropical diseases had not yet been mastered, and there was a heavy toll of death and broken health. Several times the church reconsidered the project, but each time the decision was to continue; and there were always new volunteers eager to go. Besides the difficulties of health, the work was apparently not very rewarding. The reports indicate that at the end of the first seven years there had been only two converts.

The turning point came in 1870 when the board sent out Joseph Gomer and his wife, who were Negroes and members of the church in Dayton, Ohio. They served in Sierra Leone for a fruitful twenty-two years, and it was their work that brought the first major successes. The year 1898 brought disaster to the mission, with the native uprising against the British Colonial Government caused by its pressures against slavery, cannibalism, and witchcraft. In the mob madness properties were wantonly destroyed; and more than a thousand white persons died, including seven missionaries from the United Brethren mission.

But true to their Christian faith, new volunteers promptly presented themselves; and the membership back home responded liberally and sacrificially to the rebuilding of the work. In this period schools, hospitals, and dispensaries were established with signal results.

As early as 1918 the Evangelicals started work in Nigeria, West Africa, in what is known as the Sudan Mission. For the most part this work is in the interior where life is still primitive. The major cities of today in Nigeria, such as Lagos, Enugu, and Port Harcourt, have modern schools, air-conditioned hotels, and the hustle and

bustle of a modern industrial city; but the evangelists and medical personnel sent out by the Evangelical United Brethren are not in these centers but out "in the bush."

### Asia

In China the work of the Evangelical United Brethren closely paralleled the Methodist. Both branches sent missionaries and had effective work in preaching stations and also through educational and medical institutions.

In Japan their work in 1940 became part of the Church of Christ in Japan, and in the Philippines it subsequently became part of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. In Hong Kong and in Indonesia work is carried on through united churches. Their 1967 yearbook shows eighteen missionaries working in Japan, fifteen working in the Philippines, four in Hong Kong, and four in Indonesia.

### Latin America

At the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, the United Brethren heeded the call for sending missionaries to Puerto Rico; and by comity [courtesy] arrangement they were awarded an area in the southern part of the island. Later this work was merged with denominations working under The United Evangelical Church of Puerto Rico. Work started in Ecuador in 1945 was merged with that of other denominations in The United Andean Indian Mission. In Brazil the Evangelical United Brethren established Bible schools, a high school, and agricultural schools. Today their work is carried on cooperatively with other denominations. The 1967 yearbook shows five missionaries assigned to Puerto Rico, four to Ecuador, and fourteen to Brazil.

# 3. witness

*In what ways have The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church been similar?*

## Doctrine of the Church

In its literature, The Evangelical United Brethren Church says of itself

... it traces its spiritual heritage to the rich background of the early Christian church with such great leaders as Peter and Paul;

TO the protestant Reformers, Luther and Calvin and Zwingli;

TO the witnesses to a warm personal experience of God and His salvation,

Wesley, Otterbein and Albright, Seybert and Newcomer

IT is not a "split" from another church ... but arose as a part of the *Great Awakening*, the spiritual upsurge which followed closely after the Revolutionary War.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church cooperates with other churches in all that can be done effectively together ... through the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the Canadian Council and the World Council of Churches ... and actively participates in the mission and work of indigenous and united churches in many countries on the five continents and the islands of the seas.

The doctrine of the church is stated in a Confession of Faith adopted by its General Conference of 1962 after fourteen years of study. At the time of the 1946 union the United Brethren had a "Confession of Faith" consisting of thirteen articles, and the Evangelicals had "Articles of Faith" consisting of nineteen articles and "Doctrines of Regeneration, Sanctifi-

cation, and Christian Perfection" consisting of twelve numbered paragraphs. It was agreed that the statements of both churches would be carried after union and until such time as agreement might be reached on a single formulation. These separate statements are, for example, carried in full in the Evangelical United Brethren Discipline of 1959, paragraphs 1-44; but the 1963 Discipline carries only the new "Confession of Faith."

The original statements of "Confession of Faith" and of "Articles of Faith" were closely tied to Methodist doctrine. Wesley had sent over to America "The Sunday Service," a simplified form of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer with twenty-four Articles of Religion rather than the full thirty-nine composing the Anglican creed. This proposal of Wesley had been accepted by the Methodist Conference except that they added one article, recognizing the independence of the new nation, reading as follows:

XXIII. Of the Rulers of the United States of America. The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state *as the delegates of the people*, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

These "Articles of Faith" as adopted by the first Methodist General Conference of 1784 were, as previously indicated, translated into German and in

substance became the basis for the doctrines of the United Brethren and the Evangelicals.

To date, all suggestions for restating or rephrasing the Methodist Articles of Religion have been rejected. Some have pointed out that in rituals and services we have come to use the term *Holy Spirit* whereas the Articles of Religion still use the older term *Holy Ghost*. Others have pointed out that the article dealing specifically with the United States of America is hardly appropriate for a world church in which, today, the United States of America is only one unit. If the United States is to be mentioned specifically, should there not also be mention of the Argentine and of India and of Germany, to list only a few of the places where the church operates through Central Conferences?

An important question arises as to whether the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren is in any respect contrary to Methodist doctrine. . . . Theologians who have studied the matter appear to be agreed that there is no conflict. Comparison of the two statements shows their similarity. The first of the Methodist Articles of Faith reads:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The first article of the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith is:

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver

of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

### Similar Form of Government

Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren share not only a common history and heritage but also a similar form of government. The reason is clear. In the formative days the Methodist Discipline was translated into German and later translated back into English. It is, therefore, no surprise that we find ourselves with almost identical forms of government.

Both churches have annual conferences with authority to elect delegates to a General Conference. Each General Conference meets quadrennially. Both churches recognize the principle of 50-50 lay and clergy representation in the annual conference and in the General Conference. Both churches have bishops who, in their administration of the annual conferences under their charge, have the help of superintendents, called by the Methodists district superintendents, and by the Evangelical United Brethren conference superintendents. Work of both churches is carried on through boards. For example, The Evangelical United Brethren Church has a Board of Christian Education, a Board of Evangelism, a Board of Missions, a Board of Pensions, a Board of Publications, and so forth. They do not have jurisdictions, and their structure of boards and commissions is less complex than the Methodists. This can be accounted for by the size of the two churches.

## Similarity in Sense of Mission

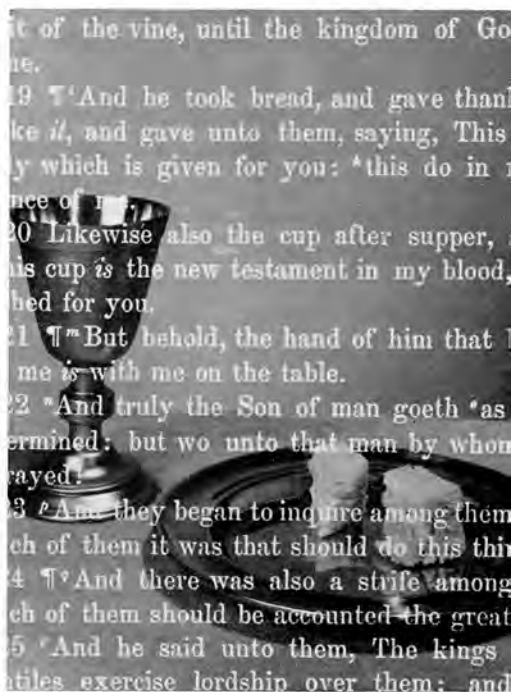
More important than form of structure has been the similarity in sense of mission. Both groups started as movements of religious awakening and revival and took on organizational forms as necessary means of making their work effective. Throughout their respective histories, both have put stress upon conversion—the personal experience of salvation through reconciliation with God. Neither church has developed any special or unique theology. Both lay stress upon the sacraments as a means of grace, and both recognize and respect a wide variety of modes of worship, ranging from the more liturgical and formal to the more informal and spontaneous forms in use during the earlier periods. Both churches tend toward the pietistic. When churches in America tend to differ in connection with stands on such social issues as gambling and the use of alcohol, Evangelical United Brethren and Methodists always find themselves standing together.

The two churches are leaders in the ecumenical movement. Both were founding members of the National Council of Churches in the United States of America and of the World Council of Churches and have given leadership to both organizations.

Like The Methodist Church, The Evangelical United Brethren Church is a world church. Its membership of about 748,000 members is in 4,156 organized congregations grouped into thirty annual conferences in this country and two annual conferences in Canada. In addition, as seen in the preceding session, it carries on work in Germany, Switzerland, France, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone and works in interdenominational programs in Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Ecuador, and Brazil.

## Theological Seminaries and Colleges

The Evangelical United Brethren Church maintains two theological seminaries, although in addition it has students training currently in many of the Methodist and interdenominational schools. In the early days of the church there was substantial objection to formal theological training. The great revival speakers had been, for the most part, men without formal education; and there



*Both the Methodists and the Evangelical United Brethren lay stress upon the sacraments as a means of grace.*

was a fear that too much schooling would quench the fire and spirit and substitute a perfunctory and formalistic type of worship. One man arguing against the perils of theological educa-



tion maintained: "There is danger that the 'feed' will be placed so high the lambs can't get it."

But logic and the trends of the times prevailed, and in the post-Civil War period both branches undertook work in higher education and theological training. Evangelical Theological Seminary at Naperville, Illinois, developed within the Evangelical branch and dates its founding from 1873. It has currently enrolled about 104 seminarians and numbers among its active alumni about 1,600. The United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, came from the work of the United Brethren and dates its founding from 1871. It has currently enrolled about 183 seminarians and numbers among its active alumni about 2,100. Theological Seminary for Europe, located at Reutlingen, South Germany, was founded in 1877. Currently it has enrolled about 23 full-time seminarians, but it does extensive work in refresher courses and special studies.

Once started in the field the Evangelical United Brethren, like the Methodists, put an emphasis on higher education. The church supports eight colleges: Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania; Indiana Central College, Indianapolis, Indiana; Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pennsylvania; North Central College, Naperville, Illinois; Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio; Shenandoah College, Winchester, Virginia; Westmar College, Le Mars, Iowa; and Hillcrest Christian College, Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada.

### Other Properties

The Evangelical United Brethren have a net investment in homes and orphanages in excess of \$12,000,000. There are ten institutions in the

United States: Haven Hubbard Memorial Old People's Home, New Carlisle, Indiana; Western Home, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Colonel R. M. Baker Home for Retired Ministers, La Puente, California; Flat Rock Children's Home, Flat Rock, Ohio; Pacific Evangelical United Brethren Home, Burbank, California; The Evangelical Home, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania; The Evangelical Manor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; The Friendly Acres, Newton, Kansas; the Otterbein Home, Lebanon, Ohio; and Quincy Orphanage and Home, Quincy, Pennsylvania.

In Europe, the church maintains: an aged people's home in Eberswalde, Germany East Zone; a camp for youth in West Berlin, Germany; an aged people's home in Honau, Germany; a youth vacation home in Loffenau, Germany; a youth center at Pfullingen, Germany; a camp for youth at Muhle, Germany, and another at Clausthal, Germany; an old people's home at Interlaken, Switzerland; and another at Thurgau, Switzerland; a camp for youth at Adelboden, Switzerland; and a camp for youth at Landersheim, Haut-Rhin, France.

The Evangelical Press, at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and the Otterbein Press at Dayton, Ohio, provide the church with inspirational and educational materials for church, church school, and home. Originally separate publishing houses of the respective branches, they now operate as a unit.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church has local church properties having a net value of approximately \$356,139,140 and other properties, including schools, hospitals, homes, and publishing interests of \$64,489,000. When union is consummated, the Evangelical United Brethren will bring to the united church properties a net value of over \$400,000,000.



## 4. the plan of union

*What issues are involved in the approved Plan of Union?*

### Two Difficulties

From the founding of the two churches there have been conversations regarding union, but historians are not agreed as to why union has not been accomplished before this time.

It is difficult to conceive of two churches having fewer points of difference than these two. In 1960 the Joint Commissions set up twenty *ad hoc* study committees, each assigned to study a particular phase of the church's work and problems that a union might entail. Without exception, no problem was discovered that would be a bar to union.

Basically two difficulties confronted the Joint Commissions as they worked out the details of a Plan of Union—one substantive and one procedural.

The substantive one involved the relative size of membership, a disproportion of about fourteen to one. From the beginning it was understood that the plan must be a union and not a mere absorption or swallowing up of the EUB church by the Methodists; but how could assurance best be given of reasonable representation to the minority group? It is understandable that if their properties and work were to go into the united church and they were prepared to accept a minority position, still they wanted the assurance of at least a voice in the policy-making bodies.

The other question was one of procedure resulting from the fact that the two General Conferences met alter-

nately two years apart. A tentative Plan of Union was brought to the Methodist General Conference of 1964 but was not voted upon because if it had been adopted the Evangelical United Brethren General Conference of 1966 would have been faced with a frozen or "take it or leave it" choice. To avoid this unfair situation, the Methodist Conference affirmed its desire for union and called a special session of its General Conference to meet at the time and place of the 1966 regular session of the Evangelical United Brethren Conference.

This meant that the two General Conferences simultaneously considered and acted upon the Plan of Union proposed by their Joint Commissions on Church Union. Meeting at the same time and place meant that any detailed problems or differences that arose in the course of the review could be discussed by joint committees and decisions reported back to the two General Conferences in much the same manner as congressional legislative joint committees iron out differences in text between bills of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The following are some of the specific problems that had to be faced in connection with the union.

### Statement of Faith

The Joint Commissions proposed that the united church carry as part of the Discipline both the Methodist Articles of Religion and the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith.

The Methodist Constitution pro-

vides a special safeguard for the Articles of Religion. It provides in Restrictive Rule Number One that

The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine (Division Two, Section II, Article I).

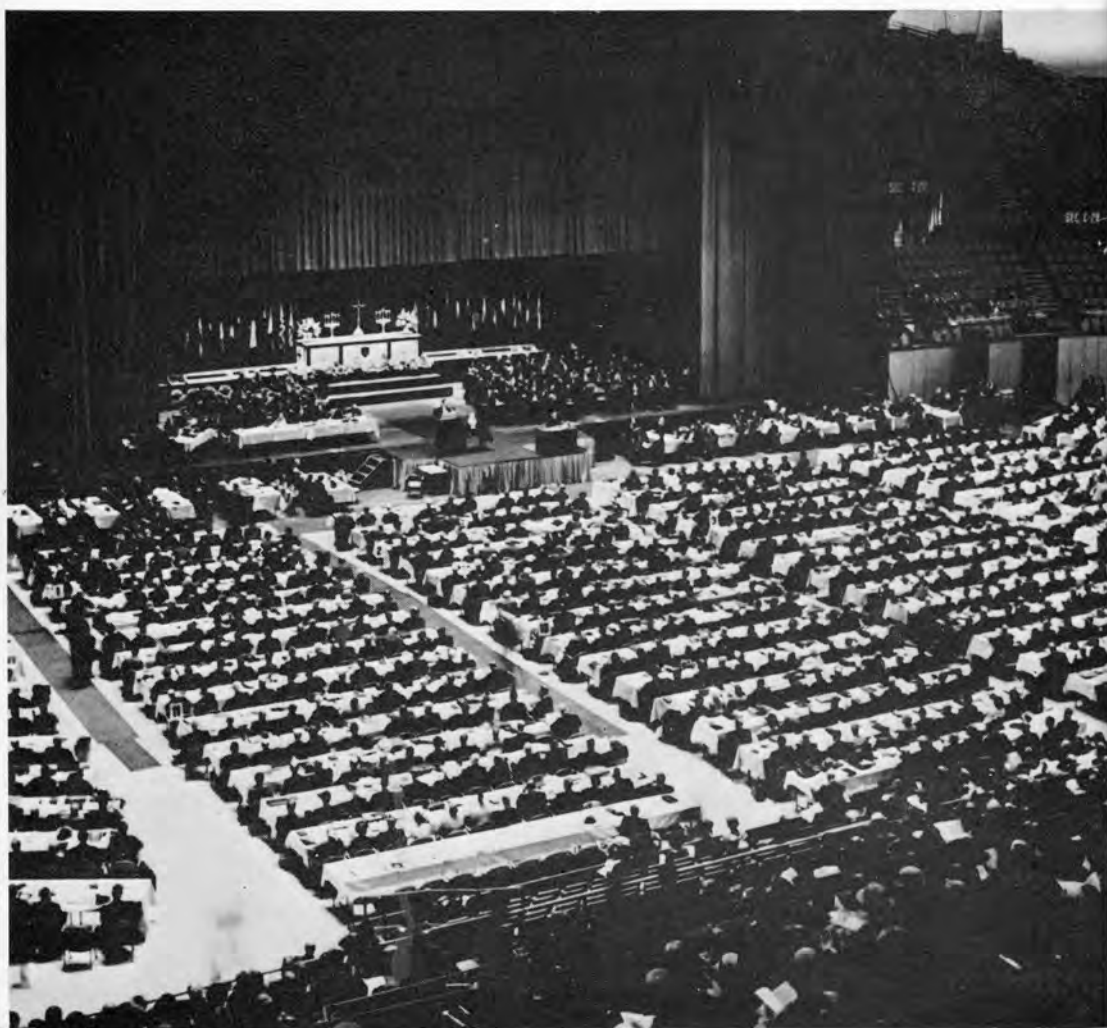
The normal procedure for constitutional amendment is by vote of a two-thirds majority of the General

Conference present and voting and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the several annual conferences present and voting, but there is the proviso:

. . . except in the case of the first Restrictive Rule, which shall require a three-fourths majority of all the members of the Annual Conferences present and voting.

This meant that if there was no conflict between the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith, as the Commissions believed, union could go

*In November, 1966, the Plan of Union was approved in simultaneous meetings of the General Conferences of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and of The Methodist Church.*



through on a two-thirds vote in the annual conferences; on the other hand, should it have been ruled that the Confession of Faith does establish new standards of rules of doctrine contrary to existing and established standards of doctrine, union would have required a three-fourths vote.

### **The Name**

Most Methodists probably would have preferred to retain the name—"The Methodist Church." It was adopted at the time of the 1939 unification and has the advantage of simplicity and brevity. There were some problems, however. For many, particularly those ecumenically minded, the name seemed unreasonably arrogant against the fact that there are about sixty churches in the world carrying the title or the name "Methodist," twenty of them in the United States. If either of the Canadian Conferences of the Evangelical United Brethren joined in the union, there would be a legal problem because, by the Deed of Union of 1925, the United Church of Canada was granted exclusive rights, within Canada, of the name "The Methodist Church." And lastly, the membership of the Evangelical United Brethren were looking for a sign that the proposal was for a union and not a mere absorption.

"The United Methodist Church," which has been chosen, takes cognizance of the union of our two denominations; it relieves from the charge of inaccuracy and overinclusiveness that the name The Methodist Church involves; it is a name which our history and our prospects justify.

### **Tenure of Bishops**

In The Methodist Church the jurisdictions elect bishops for life, and the

central conferences elect bishops for such term as they shall determine. Some central conferences have determined to elect for a term of four years, some for a term of eight years, and others for other periods.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church elects for only a four-year term, all bishops being up for reconsideration and re-election at each General Conference. In practice, however, they have only once failed to re-elect a bishop who was under retirement age.

Fears by the Evangelical United Brethren that the Methodist system of life tenure would lead to autocratic and arrogant action of bishops was allayed with the exposition of the system of quadrennial review in each jurisdiction by its Committee on Episcopacy. The new constitution affirms the Methodist system, incorporating Methodist Discipline ¶ 526 for quadrennial review.

### **Delegates and District Superintendents**

The Methodist annual conferences elect delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences by the clergy electing the lay delegates. The Evangelical United Brethren Church annual conferences elect clergy and lay delegates by voting as a whole. There were arguments both ways. In most cases the clergy know more about the lay representatives than do the laymen, as evidenced by the fact that in many conferences the laymen have to ask the persons nominated to stand so they will know on whom they are balloting. On the other hand, laymen tend to be more conservative than the clergy and in some instances might prevent the election of a liberal clergyman whom the clergy might send. Both churches have the rule of 50-50 representation, clergy and lay.

The Methodist Church has district superintendents appointed annually by the bishop and entitled to serve for a maximum of six years out of any nine-year period. The Evangelical United Brethren Church has conference superintendents elected by the annual conference for a four-year term and entitled to election for consecutive terms without limitation.

Both points in the conversations proved troublesome, particularly the latter one. Several compromises were considered. In the end the plan provides for the accepting of the Methodist system, except that each Evangelical United Brethren annual conference coming into the union will have the right to maintain its identity as an annual conference up to a maximum of twelve years after union, and during such period to maintain its method of electing its delegates and selecting its superintendents. Normally the jurisdiction has full power to change the number, names, and boundaries of its annual conferences, and this power will come into effect at the end of the twelve-year period. The Commissioners, however, believe that long before the completion of the period most, and probably all, of the annual conferences formerly of The Evangelical United Brethren Church will have been unified in one form or another with the annual conferences formerly of The Methodist Church.

### **Unification of Boards and Agencies**

The Plan of Union provides for unifying corresponding boards and agencies of the two churches at the time of union where feasible but makes permissive the continuing of the separate units, pending unification, up to a maximum of twelve years. This follows a pattern followed by The Methodist Church in its three-

way union of 1939 and by The Evangelical United Brethren Church in its two-way union of 1946. It is hoped and believed that unification of all boards and agencies can be accomplished substantially before the end of the prescribed period.

### **Minority Representation**

In practically, and perhaps literally, all situations, The Evangelical United Brethren Church membership will find itself in a minority position; in most instances in a small minority.

On the other hand, as shown in the previous session, the denomination brings to the union very substantial properties and institutions accumulated and developed over the years by the members through sacrificial giving. The question was raised as to whether in good conscience all work and properties could be turned over to Methodist ownership and management without some assurance of voice in the policy-making bodies, even though the voice would be a minority. The Methodist Commission accepted as fair and reasonable the request for some representation over a limited period in the legislative and policy-making bodies of the united church and in the Plan of Union have made provisions that will achieve the desired result.

Most will concede that vested interests in titles or positions of leadership are not valid excuses for maintaining church divisions today. Most will concede that personal attachments to established units or groups tend toward an ingrowing church rather than one ever reaching out toward new horizons. The Joint Commissions worked on the Plan of Union with the conviction that in union there is strength and that as a united church we can better serve the Kingdom.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

In light of the union between The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church many adults will have more than casual interest in this unit. Some of them will know little or nothing about Evangelical United Brethren, and others will need more information about the Methodists.

This unit of four lessons has therefore been planned to help adults (1) to learn something of the common historical background of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church, (2) to discover similarities and differences between the two denominations in doctrine and church polity, (3) to examine the life and ministry of these churches in today's world, and (4) to develop informed attitudes toward union between The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

You will need first to get an overview of the unit. In order to do this, read quickly the four lessons by Charles Parlin. Then read the Leader's Guide for all four sessions.

The purpose of the first session of this unit is to help class members learn about the common historical roots Evangelical United Brethren and Methodism had in America in the late 1700's and early 1800's and to relate the meaning of this common history to church union.

Consult the list of recommended resources on the inside back cover. Perhaps your minister, your church library, or a neighboring Evangelical United Brethren Church (or Meth-

odist Church) will have some of these. If not, place your order as soon as possible for any you wish to purchase.

Numbers of articles dealing with Methodist-EUB union have appeared in church periodicals such as *Together*, *Christian Advocate*, and *Church and Home*. See also the Adult Fellowship Series unit for March, 1965 in *Adult Student*.

The filmstrip, *Of Many Threads* (see inside back cover), presents a brief history of The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

You may wish to use it in its entirety as general background for the unit. However, an alternate procedure is to project only those parts of the filmstrip appropriate to a particular session. In that case, for the first lesson you would show only frames 1 to 38, which relate to the early historical period of the church.

Although the filmstrip, *Francis Asbury: Bishop on Horseback*, was designed for use with children, you may adapt it for adults by studying the script ahead of the session. In your presentation you may then use your own words instead of the script. You will probably want to limit your screening of the filmstrip to frames 1 to 32. It is advisable not to use both filmstrips in the same session.

One way to plan your first session would be to develop it around the personalities listed in the student's material. You might like to proceed this way:

- I. Historical background
- II. John Wesley
- III. Martin Boehm
- IV. Philip William Otterbein



- V. Francis Asbury
- VI. Christian Newcomer
- VII. Jacob Albright

#### INVOLVING THE GROUP

Your intention should be not only to cover certain historical content but also to help people sense the struggle of the church today to discover its unity. Therefore you will try to help the members understand the union of Evangelical United Brethren and Methodists as a natural attempt of two similar denominations to express their Christian unity in a common, contemporary fellowship.

Make your plans in advance; and watch for suggestions for group and individual participation, including such methods as group discussion, panel discussion, projects or field trips, reports on books, magazine articles, leaflets, resource persons, and such visual aids as filmstrips, maps, and charts.

#### HOW TO PROCEED

You may want to begin by asking the group what they know concerning the uniting of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church. You may add to whatever information is contributed by referring to any recent articles appearing in Methodist or EUB publications.

You may involve your members by asking them to divide into two listening teams. One team can listen for similarities between early Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren. The second team can listen for distinct differences between these two groups in early American history.

The primary presentation may be made in one of a number of ways. First of all, you may verbally present basic facts about John Wesley and

Francis Asbury, then show the filmstrip, *Of Many Threads*.

A second approach would be to give a historical lecture.

A third approach would involve making advance assignments to several persons in the class and requesting each one to report on one of the six personalities featured in this session.

You might wish to use the filmstrip, *Francis Asbury: Bishop on Horseback*, with one of the above approaches.

Following the presentation you may request persons from each of the listening teams to report similarities and differences between early Methodists and EUB's. These may be recorded on a chalkboard or flip chart, and the group then may discuss their significance.

#### I. Historical background

When independence from England was won, the main settlements were found along the Atlantic shore. In 1790 the population was less than 4 million. The land was sparsely settled, and conditions encouraged westward migrations.

Life was rough and backward. Transportation was expensive and slow. Public morals were low. Gambling in public lotteries was prevalent. Drunkenness was common.

Political passions continually roused the populace. Interests of traders and farmers clashed and were reflected in government. International tensions erupted in the War of 1812 with the British.

What was the ministry of the churches in such trying times? At that time they were relatively weak. Many of the Church of England priests had returned to England or, having largely been loyal to the crown, were in disfavor with the new independent Americans.

In 1800 less than 7 per cent of the people were members of any organized religious group. Furthermore, there was a drastic shortage of ministers.

In the Bill of Rights in 1791 a new principle of separation of church and state was affirmed. Thus some state churches were deprived of their preferred status as the established religion. People were free to choose their own forms for religious faith and worship. This provided a congenial climate in which new churches might grow in America.

Eller writes about religion in this early American period: "The religious situation in the new nation in general and in Pennsylvania in particular brought anxiety to those sincerely concerned. It was not a hopeless picture for the churches were there: sermons were preached, the sacraments were administered and offerings were received. Nevertheless all was not well, for the great masses of people were outside and indifferent to the churches. Within the churches, tradition, discipline and organization superseded spiritual life. People made terms with the Gospel without surrendering to it, satisfying themselves by observing the outward forms of religion while they evaded the disciplines of discipleship. The capacity to transmute faith and creed into life and action was wanting."<sup>1</sup>

German-speaking people who came to Pennsylvania in great numbers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were especially bereft of religious leadership.

It was among these Pennsylvania Germans that Otterbein and Albright were to win many of their converts and the nucleus would form of what

later was to become the Evangelical and the United Brethren churches.

## II. John Wesley

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had sailed for America in 1735 as a priest of the Church of England and missionary to the Indians. He became disillusioned by his lack of success in converting any Indians and his inability to break through the religious indifference of many of his parishioners. In 1738 Wesley returned to England sadly observing, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh! who shall convert me?"

Soon after his return to England Wesley had a life-transforming experience that resulted in an evangelical fervor in his preaching. "Methodist Societies" were formed in many places where Wesley ministered, but there was no attempt to separate from the Church of England at first. This was regarded as a movement for spiritual renewal within the organized church.

Methodist preachers from England sailed for America with Wesley's blessing. Between 1769 and 1774 twelve British Methodist preachers arrived, including Francis Asbury. Methodism spread rapidly under the dedicated preaching of these men, who traveled extensively throughout the colonies.

After the Revolutionary War it became evident that American Methodists needed to develop their own organization to carry on their ministry efficiently. In 1784 Wesley appointed Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as superintendents of the Methodist work in North America. Accordingly at a "Christmas Conference" in Baltimore in 1784 Asbury was ordained and recognized as bishop of the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

## III. Martin Boehm

Martin Boehm was a member of a

<sup>1</sup> From *These Evangelical United Brethren*, by Paul H. Eller (The Otterbein Press, 1963), p. 20.

strong Mennonite family that had migrated to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, from Switzerland by way of Holland. He was not a theologian or trained minister, but he experienced a "conversion" which caused him to travel throughout his part of the country proclaiming an evangelistic message. Because of his revivalistic preaching the Mennonites expelled him in 1780.

Boehm, however, could not be silenced. He continued to travel and preach.

Note the dramatic moment in Boehm's life, which Parlin describes on the occasion of a "big meeting" in Isaac Long's barn near Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

In 1800 Martin Boehm was elected a bishop of "The United Brethren in Christ" along with Otterbein. At the same time he was a member of a Methodist Society. Evidently he felt there was no conflict in maintaining both Methodist and United Brethren relationships.

Martin Boehm continued his evangelistic ministry until his death in 1812.

#### IV. Philip William Otterbein

Philip William Otterbein was the son of a Reformed Church pastor in Dillenberg, Germany. The pietism of Spener (1635-1705) was quite influential at Herborn, where Otterbein received his theological education. The emphasis upon the importance of life committed to God rather than a mechanistic assent to a creed was not lost upon young Otterbein.

In 1752 he arrived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as the pastor of the German Reformed Church there. In 1754 he had a heart-warming experience similar to that of Wesley in Aldersgate Street. After that his ministry possessed more evangelistic fervor.

In 1774, following the advice of his friend Francis Asbury, he responded to an invitation to become pastor of an independent Reformed church in Baltimore. There he served as pastor for nearly forty years, until death terminated his ministry.

While Otterbein was in Baltimore, he called groups of ministers together from time to time in informal conferences. Out of them eventually came the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, although it is doubtful that Otterbein was thinking of a new denomination.

#### V. Francis Asbury

Francis Asbury was born near Birmingham, England, in 1745. His conversion took place when he was fifteen; at seventeen he was preaching in public meetings. He was a member of the Wesleyan Conference in England until 1771 when he embarked for America.

*The History of American Methodism* states: "Asbury was destined never to leave America. He was to understand the land of his adoption and its new dynamic life more thoroughly than any other of Wesley's missionaries. He was to become a loyal American and to pour the power of his religious experience and leadership into the widening stream of American affairs. By the vigor of his preaching and the glow of his friendship he would present the claims of his living Lord to multiplied thousands of people of all classes."<sup>2</sup>

Asbury's organizational ability was soon recognized after his arrival in America. In 1772 he was appointed Wesley's assistant, and he carried out his work with indefatigable devotion. At the Christmas Conference of 1784, when the Methodist Episcopal Church

<sup>2</sup> Arthur B. Moss in *The History of American Methodism*, Emory S. Bucke, general editor (Abingdon Press, 1964), Vol. 1, p. 97.

came into being and Asbury was ordained, Otterbein was present. W. W. Sweet states:

"Asbury requested that his friend, Philip William Otterbein, a pietistic German Reformed minister in Baltimore, later to become the co-founder of the United Brethren Church, should assist in his ordination, and the famous picture of the ordination shows Otterbein in a white gown standing in the foreground."<sup>3</sup>

#### VI. *Christian Newcomer*

Christian Newcomer, like Boehm, came from a staunch Mennonite background. However, he was caught up in the evangelical movement of his day and became an itinerant preacher, associating himself with the group of ministers around Otterbein and Boehm. He became a strong advocate among them of a *Discipline* and rule book but with little success at first.

Asbury was concerned about the lack of order among these German preachers and their followers, but he approved their ministry. He and the Baltimore Conference in 1809 set up plans for union with the Germans. Eller states, "So close became the relationships between the groups that in 1811 the Methodists assumed a union had been consummated, but that was not to be."<sup>4</sup>

About this time Newcomer was organizing classes like the Methodists. In 1813 Otterbein, assisted by William Ryland, a Methodist minister, ordained Newcomer (who had been preaching for better than thirty years) and two others to the ministry. At the same meeting Newcomer was named a bishop. What had been a rather loose association of preachers was now beginning to take on some of the prerogatives of a church.

Newcomer continued to press for better organization. He was rewarded by the adoption of a *Discipline* at the second General Conference in 1817.

#### VII. *Jacob Albright*

See the student's material for a brief description of Jacob Albright's career. Parlin discusses the relation of his followers to the Methodist groups. It was not until 1816 that "The Evangelical Association" was officially adopted as the name for the church that was then slowly evolving.

Both the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association had a close association with Methodism in their early days. Further, while The Evangelical United Brethren Church union did not take place until 1946, as early as 1817 the two groups named a number of their ministers to explore the possibility of uniting their organization and ministry to German-speaking Americans.

#### IN CLOSING

The last section of Parlin's lesson emphasizes the common heritage that The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren enjoy. It leads us on to a consideration next session of the growth of the work of these churches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In looking forward to the next session, encourage your class members to read the student's material. Suggest that if they know any Evangelical United Brethren members (or Methodists), they might talk with them about the history and the present work and ministry of their church. Suggest that such conversations might be reported in class next Sunday. Make any other assignments you are planning.

Close with a prayer of thankfulness for the heritage of Christian faith.

<sup>3</sup> From *Methodism in American History*, by W. W. Sweet (Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *These Evangelical United Brethren*, p. 43.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

In the first session of this unit we considered the historical background of the relationship of The Evangelical United Brethren Church to The Methodist Church. Early leaders of each religious movement were studied.

In this session our purpose might be: to lead adults to a better understanding of how The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church grew in size, in geographical scope, in their sense of mission, and in their organization to carry out their mission.

You will do well to refer to the list of suggested resources on the inside back cover. Of particular value in your preparation for this session is *These Evangelical United Brethren*, by Eller, and a history of American Methodism. The map *Our Church at Work Around the World* would be helpful in showing the locations of Evangelical United Brethren missionary endeavor. A similar map of Methodist missionary activity, *World Mission Map of The Methodist Church* will be available.

If you did not use the sound filmstrip *Of Many Threads* in the first session, you may wish to use it at the outset of this session in order to review the beginnings of The Evangelical United Brethren Church. If you did use frames 1 to 38, you may wish to show the rest of the filmstrip (frames 39 to 73) in this session.

As recommended in the previous session, be sure to read carefully Parlin's material.

This is a suggested outline for developing the session:

- I. Growth in the nineteenth century
- II. Growth in the twentieth century
- III. The church ministers overseas

### INVOLVING THE GROUP

At some time during the unit you may wish to make a field trip to a neighboring Evangelical United Brethren church (or Methodist church). Or you might invite a minister or knowledgeable layman from that denomination to visit your class and to act as a resource person. The latter plan might be more effective for the third or fourth session, but you should do your planning well in advance.

If you asked class members to talk informally with Evangelical United Brethren (or Methodists) with whom they are acquainted, there may be a number of persons who are eager to share what they have learned from these personal contacts. If class members have clipped articles from current magazines about Methodist-EUB church union and have brought them to the class session, these may provide a basis for a consideration of the lesson material.

If there are any members of your Woman's Society of Christian Service (or Women's Society of World Service) in your class, perhaps they may be willing to make a brief presentation of Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist mission work throughout the world. Charts and maps would be helpful in such a presentation.

### HOW TO PROCEED

You may begin the class session by



asking for any reports that class members may want to give, whether of personal contacts, or of a field trip, or of individual reading.

Another way to begin the session is for you to summarize very briefly the content of last week's lesson and then project the frames you have selected from *Of Many Threads*.

Following the showing of the film-strip you might ask questions such as these: How did the church grow after the death of its early leaders? What was the geographical outreach of Evangelicals and United Brethren? What significant social changes took place late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century? What did The Evangelical United Brethren Church do about missions, education, lay participation, ecumenical relations? What is meant by "a church of adaptability, aware of social change and spiritual need"? What similarities are seen in the development of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and in The Methodist Church?

For your major presentation, you may wish to follow the general development Parlin uses. The major attention in the student's material and here is given to the development of The Evangelical United Brethren Church. You would do well to offer also some basic information about Methodist growth.

### *I. Growth in the nineteenth century*

The Methodist movement spread earlier and more rapidly than did the work of Evangelicals and United Brethren in the early 1800's. Much of this was related to the fact that the latter groups were ministering almost exclusively to German-speaking Americans. While the Germans joined the westward migration with other Americans, they often tended to settle

together and to form German communities.

The Methodists were not thus restricted in their movement. They ranged throughout the country preaching and establishing classes everywhere. Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishop, did more than encourage Methodists to move west; he also did his utmost to help the frontier preachers who labored under extremely difficult circumstances. He was of the strong conviction that the great hope for Methodism—indeed, the hope of the nation—lay in its westward thrust.

Asbury found it advisable to organize the societies into annual conferences; and in 1784 the first General Conference was held to pass on matters that governed the life and work of the entire movement, which was fast taking on the appearance of an organized church. At that General Conference a crucial decision was made (in Otterbein's church where some of the meetings were held) that bishops would have full authority to appoint preachers to their circuits without appeal. This characteristic "itinerant ministry" upon appointment of the bishop still exists among Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren.

It is no accident that The Evangelical United Brethren Church closely resembled The Methodist Church in structure. The Germans lagged somewhat behind the English in developing organizational forms; but when they did begin to organize their life and work, they followed the Methodist pattern. Their common historical associations also led to a similar concern for a world mission.

The histories of the United Brethren, the Evangelicals, and the Methodists make clear that revivals and camp meetings were methods they of-

ten employed to win converts and to assail the irreligion of frontier life.

In the first session several outstanding leaders of the church were mentioned.

Among United Brethren, Christian Newcomer was regarded as "the Saint Paul" of the church, crossing the Allegheny Mountains on horseback forty-eight times. His last trip was made in 1829 when he was an eighty-year-old bishop of his church.

In the Evangelical Church John Seybert, "The prophet of the lonely road," was Newcomer's counterpart. A bishop from 1839 to 1860, Seybert made numerous trips on horseback and in his wagon from Pennsylvania to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada.

Among Methodists, in the tradition of Bishop Asbury, Bishop William McKendree traveled tirelessly in establishing the church. Colorful frontier preachers such as Peter Cartwright won countless numbers of converts.

In the nineteenth century both Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren founded many of their significant institutions. Colleges were begun; theological schools for the training of ministers were established.

In the field of publishing, Methodists started the first denominational publishing house in America when the Conference of 1789 established the Methodist Book Concern. The Evangelicals named a book agent in their first General Conference of 1816. Both they and the United Brethren saw the necessity to enter the publishing field soon after they began to take on formal organization. In an English-speaking nation it was important for German-speaking people to have a literature—religious and otherwise—in their mother tongue. Thus came about the beginnings of the consider-

able publishing enterprises in which these denominations are now engaged.

In The Methodist Church the Methodist Sunday School Union was organized in 1827 for the purpose of religious instruction in the churches. While Sunday schools were in existence in Evangelical and in United Brethren churches as early as 1820, they encountered a great deal of opposition from a German-speaking people who were influenced by a catechetical tradition. It was not until 1835 (Evangelical) and 1849 (United Brethren) that General Conferences authorized the establishment of Sunday schools as a regular practice of the churches. From that time this educational work of the church grew in influence and effectiveness.

The nineteenth century was a difficult time for many churches in America. Divisions took place in denominations because of various doctrinal controversies and social crises. The Methodist Protestant Church was formed in 1830 as an attempt to secure a more congregational type of church government. The burning slavery issue divided the Methodist General Conference of 1844 and led to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Among United Brethren there was dissension concerning membership in secret societies and controversy about the possibility of amending the constitution. In 1888 the denomination voted overwhelmingly to revise the constitution, and opponents of revision organized a separate denomination. The Evangelicals also had their problems. Between 1887 and 1891 they slowly disintegrated into two factions largely as a result of personality clashes and disagreement about the extent of episcopal authority.

Fortunately, in most instances, future reunions brought together the

separated parties but not until years had passed and the light of Christian witness had been dimmed by the sin of divisiveness.

## II. *Growth in the twentieth century*

One of the problems that plagued the Evangelical United Brethren for many years was the problem of language. Both denominations had originated with German-speaking people, and it was hard for them to make room for English-speaking members.

About the middle 1800's some status was reluctantly given to English work by the Evangelicals. However, among the United Brethren there was somewhat more tolerance. Actually their first church periodical was printed in English. Nevertheless, prejudice against the use of English in many places died a hard death. Unfortunately this often limited the effectiveness of these denominations by precluding a ministry to the English-speaking people. It took the frenzied pro-American and anti-German patriotism of World War I to force the transition from German to English in many places and especially in the Evangelical Church.

Growth within the churches in the twentieth century largely has been a matter of extending the work of the church within geographical boundaries already penetrated, carrying forward and refining the institutional ministries (schools, hospitals, benevolent homes, and so on) previously founded, developing progressively better methods of work in Christian education and allied fields, and perfecting organization to serve the world-wide concerns of a church facing the revolutionary changes of this century.

United Brethren and Evangelicals have historically associated with co-operative and ecumenical efforts.

Both adopted the uniform Sunday school lesson plan in 1872, one of the first inclusive projects of Protestant denominations. Both joined overseas and home missions organizations when they were founded. Both churches participated in the Inter-Church Conference on Federation in 1905, out of which came the constitution of the Federal Council of Churches.

Both churches joined the International Council of Religious Education when organized in 1922. Bishop John Stamm of The Evangelical United Brethren Church served as president of the Federal Council of Churches, leading it and other cooperative groups in 1950 into the formation of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

The denomination has also been identified with the world-wide ecumenical movement, sending delegates to all the significant meetings of this nature. The Evangelical United Brethren Church was a charter member of the World Council of Churches.

Early in this century the often-discussed union of Evangelical and United Brethren was once more formally proposed. Since at that time the Evangelical Church was seeking to become reunited following the divisions of the late nineteenth century, it was decided to defer union talks until Evangelical union was consolidated. The process took some time, but in 1933 the two churches began active negotiations for union.

After eight years of work on a plan, a formal basis of union was submitted to a General Conference of the Evangelical Church in 1942 and to a United Brethren General Conference in 1945. Both churches strongly approved the plan. On November 16,

1946, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, these two denominations with such a common heritage officially became The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

### III. *The church ministers overseas*

Although the mission work had earlier beginnings, the real impetus to overseas missionary activity occurred shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century both in The Methodist Church and in The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

#### A. *Europe*

Interestingly enough the first overseas mission of Evangelicals was in Germany. Native Germans in the states became concerned about their relatives at home. The European church has grown in more than one hundred years so that there are now four conferences. Evangelical United Brethren in Europe have a publishing house, a theological seminary, seven hospitals, many rest homes, clinics, orphanages, and several homes for the aged.

#### B. *Africa*

In Sierra Leone United Brethren began mission work in 1855. Today there are 160 churches, 100 elementary schools, a hospital, dispensaries, and community development programs. The church has been very influential, with many of its members in high government posts in this new nation.

Since 1914, when Evangelicals began support of mission work in Nigeria, the denomination has cooperated with other churches in evangelistic, educational, and medical missionary work.

#### C. *Asia*

The Evangelical Association began its work in Japan in 1876 and the United Brethren entered the field some twenty years later. The denomi-

nation now works through the United Church of Christ in Japan.

Two missions were started in China about the turn of the century. Both programs were affiliated with the Church of Christ in China, a union of denominational missionary work. Today this field is limited to Hong Kong.

In 1901 the United Brethren started mission work in the Philippines. Soon it became the most rapidly growing missionary endeavor the denomination supported. Today all denominational missionaries serve in the program of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

#### D. *Latin America*

Evangelical United Brethren, in Puerto Rico since 1899, now serve there as part of the United Evangelical Church of Puerto Rico.

In the Dominican Republic, Evangelical United Brethren work as part of the Dominican Evangelical Church which involves four denominations.

In Ecuador work among Andean Indians was begun in 1945. Involving four cooperating denominations, it is a mission project under the United Andean Indian Mission Board.

A sizeable mission work in Brazil was established by Evangelical United Brethren in 1949. The mission there is administered in cooperation with several autonomous churches.

### IN CONCLUSION

Do not be upset if you have not covered all the suggested material. If you have been able to stimulate interest in the growth of The Methodist Church and of The Evangelical United Brethren Church, you may find that individual class members will want to work on their own.

Make necessary assignments for the next session. Look at next week's Leader's Guide for suggestions.



### PREPARING TO TEACH

Quickly skim through the materials for the first two sessions of this unit to become aware of the relation of this session to those preceding it.

You might state your purpose for this session something on this order: to lead adults to an understanding of the positions Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren take in matters of Christian faith, church polity, and institutional ministries and to guide adults to accept personal responsibility to support the witness of the church in these areas of its witness to the world.

Some of the resources that may be of particular help for this session are *Discipline of The Methodist Church* (1964), *Discipline of The Evangelical United Brethren Church* (1963); *These Evangelical United Brethren*, by Paul H. Eller; *Our Church*, by C. L. Allen and Millard J. Miller; and *This We Believe*, edited by J. Gordon Howard.

As was suggested in previous sessions, you will want to read carefully the material written by Parlin.

In the Leader's Guide for the second session I suggested that in the third or fourth session you might use a resource person who could give your group firsthand information concerning The Evangelical United Brethren Church (or The Methodist Church). If you plan to call upon such a resource person, you will need to contact him (or her) well in advance of your session.

Here are some issues you might consider asking him to be prepared to deal with: general characteristics of

The Evangelical United Brethren Church (or The Methodist Church), doctrinal beliefs of the denomination, church government and polity, manner of planning church program, ecumenical involvements, areas of prime denominational concern, institutions of the church. You may also think of additional issues that would be of special interest for your group.

If a resource person is not available, you might ask your pastor to share with you whatever information he may have about The Evangelical United Brethren Church (or The Methodist Church). Be sure that he has access to this unit as well as any other resources mentioned above.

An alternate approach would be to request one or more of your group to give a report on some selected phase of the content for this session. For example, he might do a bit of research and compare the Methodist Articles of Religion with the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith (found in the *Disciplines* for each denomination). Or he might make a general comparison of the basic content of the *Disciplines*. *This We Believe* is an exposition of the doctrines in the EUB Confession of Faith.

A general outline is indicated below. It is suggestive only and may be adapted to your needs.

- I. A definition of discipline
- II. Our Christian faith
- III. Size and structure
- IV. Mission and ecumenical relations
- V. Areas and institutions

The question for consideration is this: How does the church express its faith and organize its life so that it may bear its witness to the world?



## INVOLVING THE GROUP

Once again you are faced with the problem of dealing with certain factual information in a way that will do more than merely cover content. You may do this by helping adults discern the effort the church has expended to discover meaningful ways to order its life, mobilize its manpower, and structure its action so that an effective witness might be given in the world.

If group members have been gathering any clippings concerning church union, let them present their information to the class. These clippings may be posted on the bulletin board.

## HOW TO PROCEED

You may begin the session by presenting the resource person, by listening to any reports, or by presenting any current news items concerning Methodist-EUB church union.

A discussion might follow any one of these presentations. You may be particularly responsible to see that some of the following content is included in the discussion.

If it has not been possible to begin with reports or with a resource person, you may decide to present the basic content. You may use a chalkboard or a flip chart to list the outline you have chosen to follow, leaving room for comments.

### I. *A definition of Discipline*

One of the important tasks of the Joint Commissions on Church Union of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church has been the preparation of a *Discipline* for the united church. At a meeting of the Joint Commissions on March 23, 1965, Paul A. Washburn, executive director of the Evangelical United Brethren commission, made a report in which he pointed out the

importance of understanding what the *Discipline* is:

"The labors of the seventeen committees force an important question into the open. What are the two *Disciplines*? Or, what will the new *Discipline* be?

"If the two *Disciplines* are defined in terms of their root systems, they are clearly both ancient and modern. They contain significant portions of Scripture as ancient as Exodus. A creed, dating from the fourth century, is included. Articles of faith, traceable to apostolic faith, are in the *Disciplines*.

"On the modern side, the *Disciplines* contain sentences written in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1962 or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1964. The centuries between the ancient and the modern have their representations in these books also. Consequently, the *Disciplines* are treasuries of materials, trans-century, trans-cultural, trans-theological, trans-continental, trans-denominational and trans-institutional in character.

"If the two *Disciplines* are defined in terms of their growth, they are clearly a processional phenomenon. During the process, Wesley, Otterbein, and Albright borrowed extensively from traditions which predate our churches by many centuries. They made additions to what they borrowed. For instance, the General Rules of The Methodist Church were written by Wesley toward the end of 1739 in response to appeals for guidance from members of the United Societies.

"Another characteristic of this growing process is what may be called refinement. At many General Conferences of the two churches, the *Disciplines* have been refined. . . .

"What do these refinements represent? They bear witness to the con-

tinuous interaction between living churches and the written covenants under which such churches live. . . .

"If we are granted the high privilege of writing covenants under which our two churches will be willing to live as one church, we must deny ourselves the prideful luxury of thinking that we have accomplished a final refinement of the covenants. We must hope that our work will be refined and refined again because the new church will sing and act under the order of Earl Marlatt's lines,

*Spirit of Life, in this new dawn,  
Give us the faith that follows on,  
Letting Thine all-pervading power  
Fulfill the dream of this high hour.*<sup>1</sup>

"Finally, if the two *Disciplines* are defined in terms of their function, they are clearly the covenants under which the people of God called Methodists, and the people of God called Evangelical United Brethren, live together in order, not disorder. They are the covenants by which such people live together in love and justice. They function as covenants of orderly life for communities of persons who desire to worship and witness together under God.

"In both of our churches individuals who become members of our churches are expected to enter such covenant relationships. Upon being received into membership they are asked a question like this, 'Will you be loyal to The Methodist Church and uphold it by your prayers, your presence, your gifts and your service?' They reply, 'I will.' They come, presumably at least, into the covenants of church order.

"In both of our churches we call persons to ordination (literally to 'ordering'). We ask them, through our

bishops, 'Will you loyally maintain the doctrines and polity of The Evangelical United Brethren Church?' They reply, individually, 'By the help of God, I will.' They enter thus, even more deeply, into the covenants of order."<sup>2</sup>

## II. *Our Christian faith*

In The Methodist Church twenty-five Articles of Religion have stood since Wesley's time as the basic doctrinal statement of the denomination. These articles were Wesley's abridgment of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England.

The Twenty-five Articles of Religion were not the only doctrinal standards of early Methodism. Added to them were Wesley's "Model Deed," his *Notes upon the New Testament*, and his four volumes of *Sermons*.

The primary focus of Methodism, however, has been upon Christian experience rather than upon adherence to doctrine. Thus the test of faith has tended to be more in terms of the personal experience of the individual than adherence to creedal statements. This emphasis has been also largely characteristic of The Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Philip William Otterbein led his church in the adoption of some official rules and a confession of faith in 1785, some eleven years after he came to Baltimore. The second General Conference of the United Brethren Church in 1817 authorized a *Discipline* containing a Confession of Faith. The confession was based upon the Apostles' Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. The *Discipline* remarkably resembled that which the Methodists had adopted.

<sup>1</sup> *The Methodist Hymnal*, No. 462. Used by permission of Earl Marlatt.

<sup>2</sup> From "Moving Toward Union," by Paul Washburn, an unpublished address to the Joint Commissions on Church Union of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church, March 23, 1965.

The first annual conference of the Evangelical Church was held in 1807 (called "The Newly-Formed Methodist Conference"). The Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglicans were followed and a *Discipline* was authorized. In 1809 it appeared with twenty-six Articles of Faith. In later years several more articles were deleted. At the time of union in 1946 Evangelicals had nineteen articles plus an extensive statement concerning "The Doctrines of Regeneration, Sanctification, and Christian Perfection" that reflected strong Methodist influence in its contents.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church retained both confessions until the General Conference of 1962 when a new Confession of Faith was adopted. A full discussion of the new confession may be found in *This We Believe*.

### III. Size and structure

The Evangelical United Brethren Church has a membership in North America of approximately 748,000. Currently Methodist membership in America is over 10 million. This represents a disproportion of approximately 14 to 1. Certainly this represented one of the greatest difficulties in developing a basis for union that properly recognizes the much larger numerical strength of The Methodist Church and yet preserves the contribution of the smaller group so that a true union takes place, not an absorption.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church has ministered effectively in urban centers, but the majority of its membership traditionally has been in rural areas of the country. This has worked against growth of the denomination in the last decade when a veritable social revolution has been taking place in rural America.

Furthermore, the pattern of nineteenth-century German migration across the nation, in which the German-speaking Evangelical United Brethren were involved, bypassed great geographical areas. Evangelical United Brethren today are very strong in Pennsylvania and have significant numbers throughout the Midwest, lesser numbers in the Far West. But few Pennsylvania Germans migrated into the South.

The result is that there are significant parts of America where there are few if any Evangelical United Brethren congregations. In a mobile society such as ours, when many families are on the move, a denomination without nationwide spread is bound to lose many more members than it gains through such population mobility.

Needless to say, in almost any community Methodists on the move have little difficulty in finding a church home. In a sense, union is already in progress, because there is an interchange of denominational memberships to an extent never before in the history of the church. In many cases Evangelical United Brethren families moving into new communities where there is no congregation of their denomination have found a congenial Christian fellowship in joining the local Methodist church.

The debt Evangelical United Brethren owe to Methodists is especially clear when one makes a study of the structures of the two churches. Here are things that are held in common: annual conferences, quadrennial General Conferences, bishops as episcopal supervisors, superintendents in annual conferences, general boards and agencies in fields such as Christian education, missions, pensions, publications, stewardship, social action, and communication.

#### IV. Mission and ecumenical relations

Parlin's first paragraph under "Similarity in Sense of Mission" is worthy of special attention. You may want to have it read in class, noting its main ideas.

Indicate that both denominations have a keen sense of social involvement and responsibility. *The History of American Methodism* states:

"Neither the reconstructionism with which American historians have begun to treat the abolitionists nor the tragicomic interpretation of prohibition in current American writing must be permitted to obscure the Christian zeal and idealism of the Methodist crusaders who believed that it was possible for man to progress morally and to do something about his condition on earth. The Methodist Social Creed of 1908, which was so decisive in the whole history of social Christianity in America, came from such zeal and idealism."<sup>3</sup>

The Evangelical United Brethren Church has shared this keen social concern of Methodism.

In ecumenical affairs both churches have been actively involved. Both are members of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Bishop Gerald F. Ensley in *The History of American Methodism* sees ecumenicity as the future of Methodism. "What of the future? What is the next stage in the Methodist pilgrimage? The future is hidden, but the most assured prediction would be that Methodism will become increasingly involved in the Ecumenical Movement. For this is the growing edge of Christianity in our time."<sup>4</sup>

Again Ensley says, "The secular

piety of Methodism, it is to be hoped, will keep the church faced toward its world. Granted, as we have seen, that Methodism's encounter with the world has not been an unbroken success, still, it has not retreated into an irrelevant pietism. Its conscience has been troubled by the problems of world peace, economic justice, racial fair play, even though its achievements have fallen below its pronouncements. Methodism will help to insure that the 'faith and order' of the Ecumenical Church do not swallow up 'life and work' in the world."<sup>5</sup> We would not be amiss in saying that Ensley also speaks here for Evangelical United Brethren.

#### V. Areas and institutions

Parlin lists the areas of the world in which Evangelical United Brethren are at work. The seven episcopal areas in the United States are subdivisions of the church geographically, but not administratively. These areas are under the leadership of appointed bishops, but they do not hold conferences, elect officials, or carry on other business in the way jurisdictions do in The Methodist Church.

The student's material also lists various church-operated institutions. The list gives some indication of the ministry of The Evangelical United Brethren Church through its educational institutions, benevolent ministries, and publishing enterprises.

#### IN CONCLUSION

You may want to test the group to see if any progress has been made toward the objective for this session through a brief period of sharing insights.

Make assignments for the final session. Close with a prayer.

<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav K. Pelikan in *The History of American Methodism*, Vol. 3, p. 607.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 627.



### PREPARING TO TEACH

This final session deals with the movement toward union of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church. Your purpose for this session might be stated in these terms: to provide adults with accurate information and reasons concerning union between these denominations and to help adults become concerned participants in the exploration of the meaning of the union within the framework of the local church.

Be sure to read Parlin's material for this session. He has been quite active in the negotiations for church union and his material is an authoritative statement concerning it.

Resources that might be of use for this session are *Discipline of The Methodist Church* (1964) and *Discipline of The Evangelical United Brethren Church*.

You will also want to find information for this session concerning the current status of church union. Check your news magazines and religious periodicals. Such news is also carried in annual conference publications, in *Together*, in *Christian Advocate*, in *Church and Home* (published by Evangelical Press), and in various other denominational periodicals.

You may wish to ask your pastor if he has any up-to-date news about church union. Be sure also to make use of any clippings that members may bring.

A simple outline is given below. Use it only if it will meet the needs of your own group.

#### I. History of church union

A. Early attempts at union

B. More recent developments

#### II. Key considerations in Methodist-EUB union

#### III. Future course of church union

A key question for this lesson is this: What issues are involved in church union between Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren, and how can I meaningfully participate in the search for Christian unity?

### INVOLVING THE GROUP

If you did not have a resource person for your third session and you plan for one this time, be sure to review the suggestions given for the last session.

Another possibility for this session is the enlistment of a panel for discussion purposes. The panel could be chosen from members of the group. Their function might be to react to your presentation, particularly the part that deals with problems encountered in the union discussions. This could lead into group discussion of the significant issues.

An alternative approach would be to select a panel and ask each person to make a brief presentation upon one particular point from the material about the church union discussions. Following the reports, the panel might discuss the issues among themselves for ten minutes, then the entire group might enter into the discussion.

Another technique would be to use two persons, one to represent the Methodist position and the other to represent the Evangelical United Brethren position in the various points of divergence. Reasons for each



position would be presented; and the class would be given opportunity to raise questions, make observations, and participate in discussion. Persons chosen to do this should clearly understand that basic similarities are more important than the differences, which really are not major. In this approach a chalkboard or flip chart listing of the items would be helpful.

You may wish to review with your group the unit goal and ask them to give a brief description of the explorations of each previous session.

You may share with your class members the outline you propose to use for the session. Explore each item in the plan fully, giving adequate time for questions and discussion.

Try to involve each member of the group so that church union may become more than an abstraction.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### I. *History of church union*

It is significant to note the kindred spirit of Francis Asbury and Philip William Otterbein. Asbury recorded these sentiments in his diary in June, 1776: "Spent some time with Mr. Otterbein. There seems to be few with whom I can find so much unity and freedom in conversation as with him."<sup>1</sup> The association of these men was so close that Asbury requested Otterbein to participate in the service that set him apart for the office of bishop. Newcomer considered proposing union of the United Brethren with the Methodists as early as 1803 but did not carry out his purpose.

Eller writes of Asbury's overtures toward union: "Consequently in 1809 he and the Baltimore Conference initiated a correspondence which sought

fraternity, unity, and ultimately union. So close became the relationships between the groups that in 1811 the Methodists assumed a union had been consummated, but that was not to be."<sup>2</sup>

Evangelicals in their early years under the ministry of Albright called themselves "The Newly-Formed Methodist Conference." Following their leader's death, however, they recognized him by adopting for a time the designation, "The So-Called Albright People." Shortly after this the name again was changed to "The Evangelical Association." If it had not been for the German language barrier, it is probable that union with the Methodists would have taken place early in the movement.

Methodists frequently figured in discussions of union with Evangelicals and United Brethren. Eller writes of this as follows:

"Over the years both churches have entered conversations with other denominations which had as their goal church union. From 1809 to 1811 the United Brethren were in negotiations with the Methodists. From 1813 through 1817 Evangelicals and United Brethren were conferring periodically on the matter of union. In 1829 and 1833 the Methodist Protestant Church initiated conversations with the United Brethren, and in 1855 a Wesleyan Methodist-United Brethren union was considered. Beginning in 1865 and carrying through 1871 there was a strong sentiment among Evangelicals to join with the Methodists: in fact the Evangelical general conference in 1871 approved such a union by one vote, but the slight majority convinced all of the unwisdom of effecting a union under the circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Journal of Reverend Francis Asbury*, transcribed by F. Hollingsworth (1821), p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> From *These Evangelical United Brethren*, by Paul H. Eller, p. 43.

"In 1902 a Cumberland Presbyterian Christian Methodist Protestant Congregational United Brethren union was proposed to the latter's general conference. Soon thereafter the Cumberland Presbyterians joined the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. and the Christian Churches dropped out of the negotiations. Congregationalists dropped out in 1907. In 1909 at a general conference a name, articles of faith and a constitution for the united Methodist Protestant United Brethren church were adopted. However, the popular referendum on the union was negative, and in 1917 General Conference halted the discussion.

"In 1929 the plan to unite the Reformed Church in the United States, the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ received enthusiastic support in general conference. The first two of these denominations united to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1934. Meanwhile in 1933 the United Brethren and Evangelicals entered upon the active negotiations which resulted in the happy union of the two at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, November 16, 1946."<sup>3</sup>

At that uniting General Conference Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam made a major address in which he called attention to the common heritage of Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren and invited conversations concerning the possibility of union. Commissions on union in the two denominations later were authorized to explore possibilities in this direction and have continued to work at this task until the present day.

## II. *Key considerations in Methodist-EUB Union*

A news release from the Methodist

General Conference at Pittsburgh in 1964 read:

"Pittsburgh, Pa., May 5—The General Conference of The Methodist Church voted here today that it wants to merge with the Evangelical United Brethren Church but that it would not determine details until 1966.

"The delegates instructed their Commission on Union to perfect a plan of union in time for a special session of General Conference in 1966. They specified that the segregated structure of the Central (Negro) Jurisdiction not be a part of the merged church.

"The conference also voted to keep the doors open to the possibility of mergers with other denominations.

"The 858 delegates voted overwhelmingly that the church 'record its desire for union' with the EUB Church. But, with the agreement of the Commission on Church Union, which presented the merger proposal, they delayed action on the details.

"They voted to call for a special session of the General Conference in 1966, to be held simultaneously with one already planned by the EUB denomination, with both to act on the plan of union. If both adopted it, the plan would go to the annual (regional) conferences of both churches for their approval. The actual merger would take place in the spring of 1968."

As a result of the action of the General Conference, Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Commissions on Church Union continued to meet and to work jointly on the development of a proposed 1968 *Discipline* for the united church. Voting upon the provisions of the proposed *Discipline* took place in the 1966 General Conferences of both denominations held simultaneously in Chicago, Illinois, in November, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.

One important consideration in church union relates to the statements of faith of the two denominations. Since the historical foundations of the two churches are common, it is not surprising that no indication was found of any doctrinal disparity between the two. Thus the Joint Commissions on Church Union proposed that both statements be carried as part of the 1968 *Discipline*.

Both The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church have bishops. Their duties, as indicated in their respective *Disciplines*, are similar in most respects.

In the union discussions, the tenure of bishops was somewhat of a problem. While in The Methodist Church the jurisdictions elect bishops for life, the Evangelical United Brethren elect bishops to terms of four years.

In the negotiations, agreement was reached to affirm the Methodist system for election of bishops.

In another area of great interest, the manner of selecting superintendents, it was agreed that the Methodist system be adopted. Parlin gives some of the details of the plan.

"The twelve year rule" allows former Evangelical United Brethren annual conferences a maximum of twelve years to maintain their system of electing superintendents and to continue their boundaries. However, it is thought that few if any conferences will take this long to become completely integrated into the new church. Twelve years are also allowed for boards and agencies to become unified. If past history of Evangelical United Brethren union is any indication, boards will merge much more quickly than that.

When a substantially larger church enters into a union with a much smaller church, inevitably there is a problem of representation. Some des-

ignated minority representation in the policy-making bodies of the united church is indicated over a limited period of time for the Evangelical United Brethren. Here, as in other areas, the ideal of speedy and total integration is highly desirable.

In one of the documents of the Joint Commission on Church Union, the following statement was recorded: "The Plan of Union proposes to bring together two churches similar in history, in belief, in practice, and in form of government. Had it not been for the language differentiation in the early days, the Methodists working in English and the Evangelical United Brethren in German, they might, from the beginning, have been one. Today the language barrier is gone and the uniting of forces for our common task and calling seems appropriate and timely."<sup>4</sup>

In a preamble to a proposed constitution for a united church in this same document the following rationale was given for the union of the two denominations: "The prayers and intentions of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church have been and are for obedience to the will of our Lord that His people be one, in humility for the present brokenness of the church and in gratitude that opportunities for reunion have been given. In harmony with these prayers and intentions these churches do now propose to unite, in the confident assurance that this act is an expression of the oneness of Christ's people.

"Conversations concerning union between the two churches and their constituent members have taken place

<sup>4</sup> From *Plan of Union of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church*: A proposed plan of union which was published but not presented as originally scheduled to the General Conferences of The Methodist Church (1964) and The Evangelical United Brethren Church (1966); p. 1.

over a long period of years and the churches have a long and impressive history of fellowship and cooperation.

"Therefore, we, the Commissions on Church Union of The Methodist Church, and of The Evangelical United Brethren Church, holding that these churches are essentially one in origin, in belief, in spirit, and in purpose, and desiring that this essential unity be made actual in organization and administration in the United States of America and throughout the world, do hereby propose and transmit to our respective General Conferences the following Plan of Union and recommend to the two churches its adoption by the process which they respectively require."<sup>5</sup>

The 1964 Methodist General Conference decided to defer action on the plan. However, this preamble effectively presents the concern of the commissions for the creation of a united church and the theological, spiritual, and practical reasons for working to that end.

### III. *Future course of church union*

A news story (March 1, 1965) in the *Dayton Journal Herald* quoted Charles C. Parlin, executive director of the Methodist Commission on Church Union, as outlining nine reasons for unity: "1. A course forward for Methodism; 2. Common heritage; 3. Strength; 4. Efficiency; 5. Elimination of competition; 6. Closer supervision for isolated churches; 7. Strengthening of work in Germany; 8. More imaginative and creative work; 9. Pre-existing EUB influence felt in The Methodist Church.

"Union seems the normal and right course forward for Methodism," said Mr. Parlin. "That the Holy Spirit is leading to renewal within individual churches and also to a new spirit of

unity and union among themselves cannot be denied.

"Vested interests in titles, or positions of leadership, or personal attachments to form or to established units or groups which are so congenial that they tend to become ingrown, are a drain on the church and not valid excuses for separate existence.

"Problems of size and mere terminology should be negotiable. The approach should be that churches within a given family or tradition should be one unless there are clearly identifiable reasons to the contrary."

In the same news story, Paul Washburn, executive director of the Evangelical United Brethren Commission on Church Union, stated, "By uniting with The Methodist Church we can do something about the most severe pain in the body of Christ.

"The church which is the body of Christ, is suffering because of its dividedness. There is little prospect that this pain will soon be relieved totally.

"However, a union between two churches as similar as ours will do at least a bit to relieve this pain which is both the scandal of Christendom and the reason for much indifference to the church by those who are outside the church."

### IN CONCLUSION

You may wish to recall the objectives for the unit listed in the Leader's Guide for session one. You may give them to the group and ask them to evaluate the degree of success you have achieved together in realizing your objectives.

You may wish to ask the group if there are any projects they would like to undertake as a result of this study.

Close with a prayer that emphasizes the unity of Christ's church.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

### Resources Recommended for This Study \*

*These Evangelical United Brethren*, by Paul H. Eller; Board of Publications, The Evangelical United Brethren Church (Otterbein Press)

*Our Church*, by Millard J. Miller; Board of Publications, The Evangelical United Brethren Church

*This We Believe*, edited by J. Gordon Howard; Board of Publications, The Evangelical United Brethren Church

*The Discipline of The Evangelical United Brethren Church*; Board of Publications, The Evangelical United Brethren Church

*Discipline of The Methodist Church, 1964*; The Methodist Publishing House

*Our Methodist Heritage*, by Mack B. Stokes; Graded Press

*The History of American Methodism* (3 volumes), edited by Emory Stevens Bucke; Abingdon Press

### AUDIOVISUALS

*Of Many Threads*. 35mm color filmstrip, 73 frames, 33 1/3 rpm record. Board of Christian Education of The Evangelical United Brethren Church

*Francis Asbury, Bishop on Horseback* (GIP). 35mm color filmstrip, 53 frames, script. Ask for leader's guide.

"Our Church at Work Around the World" (wall map). Women's Society of World Service of The Evangelical United Brethren Church

"World Mission Map of The Methodist Church." Map, 72 inches x 42 inches

\* Available from Cokesbury unless otherwise indicated.