

NEW MEXICO CONFERENCE  
UNITED METHODIST  
HISTORICAL JOURNAL



**James Joshua Stewart**  
1905 – 1974

**Published by the NM Conference Historical Society**  
**Volume 1 2020**  
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Willard L Steinsiek—editor  
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## **CONTENTS**

Page

- 3 "I Was a Methodist Preacher"  
By James J Stewart
- 20 "Letter From the Bishop, Nov 8, 1956"  
By W Angie Smith
- 21 "Origins of the NM Conference Archives"  
By John Carpenter
- 25 "Some Data on Rev. Juan C Chavez"  
By Johnny F Chavez
- 28 "How We Have Been Connected Through  
the Years" by Will Steinsiek
- 34 "The Tolby Assassination and Trial  
of O P McMains By Ruth Speer
- 38 "Inez Methodist Church

”

## **A&HS Pages**

- 42 "Archives and Historical Society"
- 44 "Last Word—James J. Stewart"



## **I Was a Methodist Preacher**

by James J. Stewart

On an October evening in 1944, a small group of candidates for the Methodist itineracy presented themselves before the resident bishop at the altar in Trinity Methodist Church, El Paso, Texas. That was a high moment in our lives...

While the bishop was speaking, I thought of the years in school, of the long nights in the coal mines to pay for my school expenses, and of the many months in the hospital that came soon after graduation from seminary. I had burned the candle at both ends to get through the university, and had become ill after having been in my first church only two weeks...

On a dreary day in February almost two years be-

fore, the doctor came into my room in the New England Deaconess Hospital in Boston and told me that I had TB. He said that I would have to go to the sanitarium for several months, then come back for an operation, and then return to the sanitarium until recovery was complete. He assured me that I would not be out of bed for another year at least. I had already been in bed many months. Another year would be too much. I turned toward the wall and cried for two hours. That did no good. Then suddenly something happened inside. As though by magic my attitude changed and my tears stopped. I promised myself then and there that I would be out of bed in less than a year, and that I would go out onto the desert and get well without an operation...I began to feel better and improve rapidly. After my improvement had progressed to the point where her remark would have no adverse psychological effect on me, a nurse said, "When I first read your chart, I said to the nurse beside me, 'Isn't it too bad that Mr. Stewart doesn't know that he is going to die?'" Within two months I was out of the hospital and walking. An operation was not necessary...

In the fall of 1943, after I had recovered enough to go on my own, I went to Denver and took a light schedule in the Iliff School of Theology while making further recovery, and while looking for a place in a dry climate to locate. My wife remained in Pennsylvania and taught school to make the money to send me west.

The district superintendent from Albuquerque came to Iliff and asked me to start a new Methodist Church in that city at the end of the school year. He

said that "It is a good opportunity." Breathes there the Methodist preacher who has not heard that enticement from a bishop of a District Superintendent? It was a good opportunity. The Salary would be \$1800, and no living quarters. I wrote my wife for her opinion. Like the biblical Ruth for whom she was named, her answer had the ring of Ruth's reply to Naomi. "Where you go, I will go."

The following June I met her in Albuquerque with all our earthly possessions in the back seat of an old car that she had managed to drive from Pittsburgh to Albuquerque. The war was still on. Albuquerque was a military center. Rent for a place large enough to cook and sleep in was \$100 a month, if it could be found. That would leave \$600 per year for food, clothes, car expense, payments on my school debt, etc. Obviously, our faith was ahead of our arithmetic... Ruth, who would rather teach children to read than do anything else, took care of the arithmetic problem by getting a teaching position in the city schools, a position she still holds.

Death once so near, now seemed far, far away... For the first time in my life, I had everything. After 20 years of working, studying, praying, I was now a Methodist Preacher.

Twelve years later in the dimly-lighted basement of First Methodist Church, El Paso and only a few blocks from Trinity Church, I stood before the same bishop and a Methodist court of his choosing to be tried on charges of "unministerial conduct."

...The years that passed between my appearance at the altar in Trinity Church for admission and my appearance before the bar in First Church for expul-

sion had been happy ones. With the help of a few consecrated lay men and women, my wife and I started two new congregations and had built two new Methodist churches in Albuquerque, NM – Trinity and St John's. We had no congregation, no parsonage, and no lots at either place. Our assets consisted of faith, the above-mentioned lay men and women, scores of doorbells to be pushed, and considerable open mesa on which we hoped there would be door bells. Our liabilities consisted of the other Methodist preachers in the city who were afraid of losing a few members.

...By 1949 Trinity had a modest parsonage, the first unit of a lovely church, and a thriving congregation...

All was well in the pew but not in the cloth. I had knowingly antagonized the bishop and the District Superintendent by not complying with all the necessary do's and don'ts. Frequent demands were made of the preachers and their congregations for money and other gifts for the bishop and/or his wife. These gifts



are given the pious name “love-offering” by their politically minded sponsors. Actually, they are subtle forms of buying appointments, not unlike the sale of church benefices before the Reformation...

I never contributed, and neither did my congregations. The Methodist Discipline provides the bishops a salary of \$12,500, travel and office expenses, an upper-class residence with all the trimmings, and forbids them to accept honoraria from any Methodist Church, institution or agency of the Methodist Church. But the Discipline is not always obeyed when disobeying it is more profitable. There is plenty of gold in the Methodist Church that the right people can get merely by hinting. And there are plenty of Methodist preachers quick to catch a hint. Most of the preachers are not sponsors. They merely go along because they do not want somebody else to tell the bishop what they have not done.

\$25 from a small church, \$50 from a medium sized church, and \$100 from a large church, plus a personal contribution from the preacher, multiplied by 700 churches in an area during two or three years soon adds up to a fair-sized fortune. No record of these gifts is made in the annual Conference Journal; nor are they allowed to be presented on the Annual Conference floor. They are collected quietly and presented secretly. All this while the consecrated Methodist missionaries work for \$100 per month or less.

What to do? I could have relented and allowed the bishop to get a few dollars each time the request was made. A generous personal gift in addition would have been proof that I was sorry for having been so stingy, and had repented, but that kind of repentance



comes hard with me. In fact, it doesn't come. Clearly the preachers and their congregations were being solicited for money and other gifts not sanctioned by the Methodist Discipline or by the standards of everyday business ethics. Other alternatives for me were to expose the dishonesty, leave the Methodist Church, or leave the area. Ruth and I talked it over many times, and decided against making any fuss. To leave the area seemed to be the best way out. She suggested that I take a year off and go to graduate school. Other bishops would come to the school looking for preachers, and we could quietly transfer out. So off to graduate school I went, while Ruth remained in Albuquerque and taught school. Frankly I was running away from evil because it was above me instead of in front of me, and I was too timid to face it.

It had not occurred to me that this practice extended to any other area. There is some rascality in

every enterprise, and it was our belief that we had located in the only area of the Methodist Church where it existed...

The bull sessions in graduate school soon convinced me that one cannot run away from evil. Other bishops were getting easy money too, and in the same way. One of the topics of conversation was that of a bishop who a year previously had sponsored a gift for himself. The preacher could not find out how much the bishop had asked for or how much he received. It took me three years to find a man who knew the incident in detail and who would put it on paper. He said that the committee chosen by the bishop to collect the money had made an agreement among themselves that no one should ever know how much the bishop asked for or how much he received. The amount asked by the bishop, according to my informer, was \$10,000. Neither the committee nor the preachers liked the bishop's doings, but they had to go along, or else. Four years later another Bishop got a gift of \$20,000 in one check.

Ruth and I considered leaving the Methodist Church, but that was not easy to do. No one can be affiliated with the Methodist Church as member and pastor for 30 years without acquiring more than a passing interest. Besides, we have no quarrel with the Methodist Church or any other church. The churches are all good.

Down inside myself I knew I had run away because I was afraid to strike at evil on the throne. I was a coward, and no amount of rationalizing could make me anything else. To leave the Methodist Church because a few unworthy men had managed to



get themselves into positions of power and influence would be to add cowardice to cowardice. It would be like leaving a dear friend in the lurch when he needed my help most. Mine was not a well-integrated personality during this time of struggle...I could neither leave the Methodist Church nor remain in it and keep silence. That meant trouble ahead.

I returned to Albuquerque for the Annual Conference in 1950. The bishop offered me an appointment starting and building another new church in the city. I asked for time to talk with Ruth. Had I told the bishop what we talked about, there would doubtless have been some last-minute change in the appointments. We accepted the appointment because the setup was perfect to give me time to collect data on the love offering game and an opportunity to force it into the open where the laymen could see what was going on when the time was right.

This time the starting salary was to be \$3000

plus a residence. But the bishop never got around to providing the residence. His mental slip was neither a surprise, a disappointment, nor an inconvenience to us...

We had accepted the appointment in the belief that it would be our last Methodist Church. For if I could get enough data in writing on the misuse of the love offering, I would force the matter out into the open. Things would begin to happen to somebody, and most likely to me. The little man on the bottom of the ecclesiastical totem pole does not criticize the big man on the top without getting into trouble.

Therefore, it seemed prudent on our part to buy a home. Besides the enjoyment we got from knowing it was ours, we would not have to move on the bishop's 24-hour notice when the climax came.

Starting St John's was every bit as exciting as starting Trinity had been... St John's has the location and the potential to make it the leading Methodist Church in the city, and the laymen are making good use of their opportunities.

Settled now in our new home, I began to push door bells to find members to start St John's, to collect data on the misuse of the love offering, and to take some work in the University of New Mexico for the purpose of getting a teaching certificate. Though the Methodist Church needs 2800 preachers annually, and is receiving fewer than 1000, I had a hunch that the ranks would be reduced by one more when I started to expose the evils of the love offering. My hunch was right.

The chairman of the official board at St John's helped me collect information. Data was hard to get



because preachers were afraid to put that kind of information on paper. A retired pastor, who had observed the evils of love offering for many years, said to me, "A Methodist preacher's soul is not his own."

I interviewed many Methodist preachers and asked why they tolerate this dishonesty. The usual answer was, "I have a family." One capable young minister who had objected to the bishop's wife getting money from the treasury for a junket around the

world said to me, "Very soon the district superintendent's wife hinted to my wife that we had better go along if we want to get along. I have a family, so I put on the soft pedal."

Another minister wrote me, "I tried for years to stop this practice, with disastrous results for myself and family. Please don't quote me as having endorsed your stand. I can't take it." Men will endure a good bit to stand by their convictions as long as the consequences affect only themselves. But if their families may have to suffer, even morally strong men are open to compromise. Laymen are not so timid. Their bread and families are beyond the episcopal reach.

After enough documented data had come to me to make my charges stick in the event that somebody took me into court on libel charges, I began to criticize the evils of the love offering in church publications and in the newspapers. The official board at St John's sent a memorial to the 1956 General Conference asking that specific legislation be adopted to prohibit this practice...but the memorial did not reach the floor of General Conference of the Methodist Church. It was now clear that nothing could be done within the channels prescribed by the law of the Methodist Church. Either the matter would have to be dropped or taken to the Methodist courts.

Much as I disliked to do it, I filed charges consisting of 10 counts against the resident bishop of my area, in accordance with the documented proof I had accumulated during the preceding six years.

One count charged him with drawing money from the church for two residences, one of which was non-existent.

Another count charged him with conspiring with two of his sons to put an insurance deal through annual Conference. One son was in the insurance business, but was not licensed to write insurance in that state. The other son was not in the insurance business, but was a resident of the state. So the son who was a resident of the state got a license to write insurance for the small company recommended by the Annual Conference committee on Insurance. Some layman versed in insurance business uncovered the plot, and were going to expose it. After a 40-minute temper tantrum, the bishop called off the plan. Had the scheme gone through, the minimum commission to the "agent" would have been \$24,000 and the maximum \$32,000, while the cost to the preachers would have been \$14,500 more for the same coverage than what some of the old-line companies bid.

The charges and photocopies of the evidence were filed with the Committee of Investigation of the Annual Conference where the bishop resided. The Committee, nominated by the bishop and depending upon him for their church assignment, cleared him and attacked me. It reported to the press that I had not submitted any evidence to support even one charge, and that I was either trying to deceive or was suffering from a greatly confused mind. According to the Methodist Discipline, the Committee's report should have been made to the secretary of the Annual Conference, and not to the press.

The committee's actions gave me grounds for requesting a church trial. This I did for the sole purpose of getting an open hearing where the sordid love offering evils could be brought out into the open.

El Paso Herald-Post 4-29-1957

## Methodist Pastor Goes On Trial for Accusing Bishop of Taking Gifts

Albuquerque Man  
Charged With  
Improper Conduct

The Rev. James J. Stewart, Albuquerque Methodist minister, went on trial today at the First Methodist Church, before a jury of ministers on charges of "unministerial conduct."

The charges grew out of charges by Mr. Stewart that Bishop W. Angie Smith of New Mexico and Oklahoma, and other church leaders, were accepting "love gifts."

Mr. Stewart acted as his own counsel. He brought 14 witnesses from Albuquerque to discuss his claims. He has been pastor of St.



Rev. James J. Stewart

Taking the trial to El Paso, 300 miles from home, is an old, old trick long used by strong men with a weak case... The purpose was to make it difficult for me to get witnesses to attend, and to add to the expense. Nevertheless 14 Methodist men and women from Albuquerque went to stand with me.

The Methodist Discipline allowed me to have commissioners appointed by the church to get depositions from witnesses too far away or too busy to attend. My formal petition for commissioners was denied.

The bishop appointed the judge, who was a preacher dependent upon the bishop for his church

assignment. The district superintendent chose the jury, all of whom were preachers dependent upon the bishop for their church assignments, and the bishop chose the district superintendents, who were likewise dependent upon the bishop for their appointments. Everyone connected with the church court was under the bishop's control. He could promote or demote them at his own good pleasure. The bishop and his district superintendents had no moral or legal right to attend the trial, but they came and sat through it.

Searching people's property is a prerogative of the state, and then only with a search warrant, but before the trial began, the judge appointed three guards to search my witnesses. The guards went through the men's pockets, and even took the women's purses from their hands and looked inside. They seized a stenotype machine from my court reporter's hands and locked it in the office. The news reporters were turned away at the door, but waited on the sidewalk till the trial ended.

The embarrassment and humiliation of the guards were touching. They didn't want to search anybody, but the Annual Conference was only two weeks away. The guards had families. The bishop and his district superintendents were watching...

The men on the jury were equally embarrassed and humiliated. Some of them had been my friends for several years. We had discussed the love offering game, and they too, wanted it stopped, but because they had families, they said nothing openly. Now they had to sit in judgement against me when I was fighting for the principles, they believed in. To acquit me was equal to convicting the bishop, and to convict

the bishop would mean only crumbs from the bishop's table hereafter. Not one of the guards would look me squarely in the face. Each time my eyes met theirs, they turned away... Only the bishop and his district superintendents were out for blood. While waiting for the trial to begin, I looked at them sitting at their table at the judge's right hand. Never have I seen more hatred in human faces...

When the trial began, I made a motion that it be open to the public. My action was denied. Whereupon, I told the court that I was ready to stand trial before anybody in any *open* court, but that I would not stand trial behind locked doors, before a judge and jury chosen by the bishop and his district superintendents. My witnesses and I walked out, and they tried me in absentia. The doors to the court room were locked behind us when we entered and locked behind us when we left, and all entrances to the church were locked and guarded throughout the trial.

At 12:30 the next morning, the locked doors opened. The court, led by the same bishop who had ordained me, now president of the Council of Bishops, emerged from the dimly lighted basement, scampered to their cars to escape the waiting reporters, and sped away in the darkness. A young lady reporter who had sat with me on the curb stone through the long afternoon and night, caught one of the fast-moving preachers before he got away, and brought me the verdict. Her voice filled with emotion, she said, "They have defrocked you and expelled you from the Methodist Church. I'm terribly, terribly sorry! I wouldn't have believed that such a thing could happen in the Methodist Church and under the stars

and stripes.”

I was no longer a Methodist preacher, nor a Methodist.

The one incident that moved me most deeply happened when I was standing at the door in Albuquerque saying goodbye to Ruth, on my way to El Paso for the trial. Tears were in her eyes, but no resentment. There is too much stoicism in her to whimper when the going is rough. After all, I had been working for 6 years to get the love offering evils out into the open. There was a chance now that they would be aired. Our phone rang. The caller was a prominent Catholic



woman whom I had never met. This is what she said to me. "I couldn't let you go to El Paso without telling you that when your trial begins tomorrow at one o'clock, I'll be praying for you." Nothing disturbed me after that call.

Her prayer was not answered as we had wished. Prayers seldom are answered the way we would like to have them answered. But I believe that in His own good time and way, it will be answered. For I believe that the Church and the Synagogue are ordained of God, and that the powers of death, bad men inside and out. shall not prevail against it.

## **RESOURCES**

Stewart, James J. I Was a Methodist Preacher. NM Conference Archives.

**NOTES:** *The typed manuscript from which I worked was heavily edited and clearly still a work in progress. I have used only his words, but I have rearranged some parts of the manuscript to better tell the story and left out some anecdotal material as well, as noted by the presence of ellipses. I have also, on occasion, restored some words that were crossed out on this manuscript. A version of this manuscript may have been published later.. - WS*

## Letter from the Bishop

November 8, 1956  
Rev, James J. Stewart  
Albuquerque, NM

Dear Brother Stewart,

I understand a committee of Albuquerque Methodist Ministers made a call on you and discussed matters pertaining to the methods

you have followed. I want you to know that I have no right or authority to request or prevent Ministers from talking with anyone, but I also want you to know that they went without my knowledge and if I had known such a ridiculous thing was to be done, I would have tried to prevent it. I do not agree that you have hurt Methodism in Albuquerque in the least, and I certainly know that you have not caused me the slightest trouble nor have you hurt my influence.

I hope beyond expression that you will avail yourself of the opportunity to ask that the Oklahoma Investigating Committee be called and have the courage to face me with all the so called documented evidence you claim to have. It will give me the first opportunity to brand you for what you are and then send it to the public. I have no apology to make to either to you or any man or God for any of my acts and you will please me very greatly to have the chance to face you as you have never had the courage to face me any time and have always gone behind my back

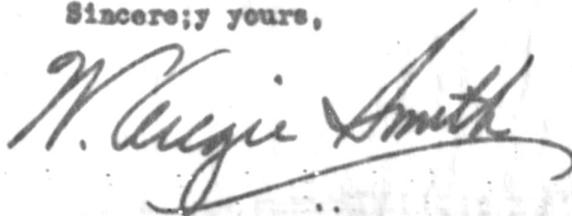


on everything you have done.

There is in the Discipline a limitation on the time things can be used against a person but I want you to know that I am requesting the Committee to forget that and permit you to go back to December 21, 1894, which is the date of my birth and I will be responsible for anything you can provide against me.

As one of your former members said to me that you thought you were to be the Martin Luther of the Methodist Church, I will give you the chance to show that you are and the public will have the information. I will not mention this matter to any member of the Investigating Committee so you need have no fear as I will see that you are accorded every courtesy, something you have never been courageous enough to do for me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "W. Eugie Smith". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

## RESOURCE

Lay Movement for Democracy in Methodism Scrapbook. NM Conference Archives. Accession # 2015.27

## **Origins of the NM Conference Archives**

By John Carpenter, 1990

...So, now I have consulted the Journals:

1971: Bryan Hall was Chm.; Joyce Laumbach was a member. Ray J. was not a member.

1972: The officers are not named. Ministerial members were Hall, Shaw, Crenshaw, Spurlin, Carpenter. Lay members were Casey, Handfield, Greathouse, Lofton.

1973: Carpenter is Chm.

1974: Carpenter is Chm., Hall V- Chm.

1975: same

1976: Shaw is Chm., Carpenter Sec'y

I have not traced it any farther, but will pick up the story in general terms.

About that time David Shaw and I did a lot of travel together, around the Conference and to Jurisdictional meetings. During this time, in our travels and conversations, we reached this conclusion: that we would never really have a Conference Archives program until we had two things (1) a person, at least part-time, as paid staff on a regular basis, and (2) a place to keep things.

Up until that time, there actually was never an Archives as such. Down through the years, one person had done this and that, and had complete charge of all records, recollections and files.

Way back when, it was A. C. Douglas, then Bryan Hall, then David Shaw. Obviously, there were some things in some Annual Conference headquarters... but you have to remember, that up until a certain year (that would take more research), there was no Conference office. There was a Conference Secretary,

an Exec.Sec'y of the Board of Education, Chairman of Trustees, etc., etc.

So, as stated above, the idea of a Conference Archives grew out of a lot of travel and conversation, and in meeting up with Dr. John Ness, Gen'l Sec'y of the General Commission on Archives and History.



David and I got it lined up, to bring Dr. Ness for a round of Archives and History workshops, all around the Conference. I don't remember all the places, but some that come to mind are Alpine, where Dr. Casey lived; First, Albuquerque; First, Carlsbad; Trinity, El Paso; Deming. Through our contacts with Dr. Ness, we learned about the work of the General Commission, and the General Archives in Lake Junaluska. Dr. Ness wanted to send somebody for training in Archival Science.

At that time, we had a member of the Commission (a lay person), by the name of John Grassham. He was a personal friend of David Shaw, and David seemed to think that he would get John professionally involved. (He was doing a degree in Archival Science.) The only problem, we hardly ever saw John Grassham. He only came to a few Commission meetings, and was never able to get to any of the workshops. He was too busy with his own agenda; and there was no money to make it worth his while.

I always felt that David really did not want me to become the Archivist. He always wanted John Grassham to become involved, and he more or less

kept everything under his control. Meanwhile we were keeping in contact with Dr. Ness, and he wanted someone from the N. M. Conference to go to Junaluska for training under Dr. Bill Beal. David was too occupied with being a pastor, and it was becoming apparent that the thing with John Grassham was not going to work out.

About this time, I moved from Hobbs to First Church, El Paso, where I saw that I was going to have more time for such things. So we (David more than I) got the World Service Commission to O. K. sending me to Lake Junaluska. The expense involved was for travel, board and room.

Then, I saw that at First Church we had more space than we could effectively use. I propositioned the First Church Administrative Board on offering a room downstairs to the Archives Commission.

So now we had the two necessary requirements: a person, and a place. Needless to say, this required a lot of cooperation and a little arm-twisting by David, Bishop Carleton, and the World Service Commission. (I guess that by now it was called Council on Finance and Administration.) I don't remember what the figures were for rent at First Church and for my salary. But I seem to remember there was never a budget for such things, until after the fact.

After the merger of First Church and Trinity, I continued to serve as Archivist, and the Archives material was still at First Church, until moved to Albuquerque.... so you know the rest of the story.

## **Resources**

*Carpenter, John. Letter to Twila Roller dated July 5, 1990. NM Conference Archives UMC.*



## **Some Data on Rev. Juan C Chavez**

By Johnny F Chavez

My Father, a dedicated Spanish Methodist minister for some 54 years was a hard-working man in his chosen field of ministry. His first wife, my mother, aided him with what she could in church, but, having tuberculosis, she died in 1929. Sometime later (1 year?) he married Estanislada Lamar, a mother of 3, during his ministry in Douglas, Arizona. Dr. Charles Ponts had been minister in Douglas, Arizona, retiring due to ill health there, and my father probably replaced him. I believe he served in Douglas for about 4 years, and then moved to Las Cruces, NM.

His ministerial duties carried him to different parsonages, and also as a circuit rider from the northern border of Mexico to Socorro, New Mexico. He was a “rider to ranchers” along the way, thereby necessitating careful trip planning so that he wouldn’t have to sleep out in the prairie, but instead in a bed in one of the ranches that he was to hold services in.

His duties as a minister did not possibly give him enough time to devote to his family. Such was his dedication. This latter statement I make as my own outlook later in life.

During the depression I recall that my father was

not paid by the Board of Missions for a period of three months. Father proceeded to install a grist mill to grind corn for local people, thus augmenting his non-salary, and my stepmother aided him by making corn tortillas and selling them to a restaurant.

It seems nothing deterred father from his preaching, and not wanting to waste time he appointed me as a non-paid church custodian janitor in those days.

I also served as a bad example (of sin) as well because I enjoyed going to movies. One of my benefactors in this was my aunt, who was also the mother of former New Mexico Supreme Court Justice, Dan Sosa, a former member of the Las Cruces Methodist Church.

Father found a way to counter my moves to cancel prayer night. I found out that by connecting to wires to a lamp in a side room of the church I would blow the fuses, thereby causing a power outage in the church. But father wised up and when this happened, he would hold the prayer meetings in our home next to the church.

After he got sick, there were times when various visiting ministers would come and be guest speakers, none of whose names I can recall.

I never knew how close to death he was until I visited him in El Paso. During my first night there my now deceased sister Ruthie called to say that she thought dad had passed away. I immediately went over and confirmed it. My wife and I stayed and I made the funeral arrangements as well as calling my brothers and sisters,

My only regret is that I did not get to know my father well enough later in life to discuss ever so many

things that do matter later in life, such as his family history, special events, hopes and aspirations. Our family lived in what was possibly an 80% Roman Catholic state if not more. I am awed at the perseverance that these early missionaries had, and the accomplishments they made during these adverse times.

## **RESOURCES**

Chavez, Juan C. Some Data on Rev. Juan C. Chavez. NM Conference Archives UMC, 10 Oct. 1992. (edited for grammar)

*When Juan C Chavez was born in Peralta, NM in 1877, Rev. John Steele would have been the MEC pastor there. He is listed as part of the 1898 Harwood School of Theology graduating class (Ministros que Graduaron de High School y Teologia en Albuquerque), and as a pastor in the Spanish Mission of the NM Conference of the MEC. He served 54 years as a pastor, including at Socorro, NM in 1924, Douglas, AZ from 1928-29, Las Cruces, NM from 1929-1929, Pecos, TX from 1944-45, Tucumcari, NM in 1951, Sanderson, TX in 1952, Ft Stockton, TX in 1957, as well as Deming, NM (date unclear) , and Flagstaff, AZ (date unclear).*

*When he retired in 1958 from the Western District they noted "Mr. Chavez began his ministerial career in 1900 after completion of his studies in Albuquerque. His ministry has taken him into most of the Spanish churches in New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Arizona. Mr. Chavez has baptized 1100 children, organized 20 churches, received 3289 conversions, and performed 500 marriages." He died in El Paso, TX in 1964 at the age of 87. - WS*

**How We Have Been Connected  
Through the Years  
By Will Steinsiek**

**\*The Methodist Episcopal Church\***

**The New York/ Oregon Connection  
MEC 1849-1856**

In 1849 William Roberts formally organized the Oregon and California Mission Conference that included the present states of Oregon, Idaho, Washington, California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and part of Montana! Though this vast territory included many Methodist “preaching places” most of the churches were in the Willamette Valley — Salem Circuit, Oregon City, Portland, Yamhill Circuit, Marys River Circuit and Astoria and Clatsop, a few in northern California, and one in Santa Fe. The gold rush to California soon changed everything as more preaching places arose in California than in all the rest of the Conference combined. It also caused a huge migration of men out of the Willamette Valley.

In 1852 the Oregon and California Mission Conference was divided; the northern part became The Oregon Conference. At its first session in 1853 there were twenty-one traveling preachers who along with Superintendent William Roberts and Bishop Edward Ames organized the conference.

In 1850, the Methodist missionary, Enoch George Nicholson was sent to New Mexico by the Missionary Society. He was originally from the Pittsburgh Conference, but for this purpose he agreed to be transferred to the newly created New Mexico District of the Ore-

gon California Conference. His job was to first establish a foothold among the English speaking population and then to see what might be done among the Spanish speaking population.

### **The Wisconsin Connection**

Just before the Civil War began John Dyer came to the Colorado Conference from the Wisconsin Conference. He subsequently recruited Thomas and Emily Harwood from the Wisconsin Conference. Thomas in turn recruited others such as John Steele to come from Wisconsin and join the newly created NM Mission.

### **The Colorado Connection**

#### **Colorado Conference MEC 1865-1875**

The Colorado Conference became the Rocky Mountain Conference in 1863. Methodist Episcopal work in New Mexico began again officially in 1865 as an extension of the South Park District of the Colorado Conference, but actually Ambrosio Gonzales' class in Peralta, established in 1856, had never ended.

### **\*\*\*The New Mexico Mission\*\*\***

### **Methodist Episcopal Church South**

**1876 - 1939**

In 1876, the New Mexico Mission held its first Annual Conference meeting. It combined both English and Spanish Mission work. In 1885, it became the New Mexico English Mission and the Spanish Mission Conference. In 1915 it was combined as the New Mexico Conference again. In 1929 it became the combined New Mexico Mission again, until the union with

the Methodist Episcopal Church, South took place in 1939.

### **The Pacific/Kansas Connection** **MECS 1854 – 1865**

The 1854 General Conference split the NM Conference area, placing that part of New Mexico west of the Continental Divide in the Pacific Conference. The portion east of the Divide was placed in the Kansas Mission Conference. In 1855 the Kansas Mission Conference listed Santa Fe in the Lecompton District, but no appointment was made. Santa Fe is not mentioned again until 1858, when it was "to be supplied."

### **The West Texas Connection** **\*\*\*Rio Grande Mission Conference\*\*\*** **MECS 1859-1861**

On November 14, 1859, Bishop George F. Pierce, presiding over the Rio Grande Mission Conference, meeting at Goliad, TX included El Paso in the San Antonio District (Rev. Ivy H. Cox, presiding elder), and appointed Rev. John L. Harper as pastor at El Paso. He did not make a report to the Annual Conference of 1860.

From 1881 through 1889, three different conferences were active in the area: (1) The Denver Conference in the territory of New Mexico; (2) the West Texas Conference, in the Texas portion; and (3) the Mexican Border Mission Conference, taking over from the West Texas Conference for two years. After that there is a parade of name changes bringing together different ever broader areas for the Mexican Mission, including the NW Methodist Mission MECS 1890 –

1913, the Texas Mexican Mission MECS 1915-1917, and the Western Mexican Mission MECS 1918-1929.

### **The Missouri Connection**

#### **St Louis Conference MECS 1866-1869**

In 1866, for a period of three years, New Mexico was placed in the St Louis Conference.

### **Kansas Nebraska Connection**

#### **Kansas Nebraska Conference MECS 1870-1873**

In 1870, for a period of three years, NM was placed in the Kansas-Nebraska Conference.

### **The Denver Connection**

#### **Denver Conference MECS 1874-1929**

Although the NM Conference was created in 1890, the churches in San Juan County of New Mexico remained in the Denver Conference through 1929.

### **\*\*\*New Mexico Conference MECS\*\*\***

**1890-1938**

### **United Brethren**

#### **Evangelical United Brethren**

The UB/EUB work in New Mexico has also been linked to other Conferences in a variety of ways as follows.

**North Texas Conference UB 1908-1913**

**New Mexico Mission UB 1914-1928**

**Colorado-New Mexico Conference UB 1929-1946**

**Colorado-New Mexico Conference EUB 1947-1951**

**Rocky Mountain Conference EUB 1951-1968**

## **Methodist Church**

**1939-1968**

### **\*\*\*New Mexico Conference\*\*\***

This union of the MEC and the MECS brought all the Methodist churches together in NM and that part of Texas west of the Pecos river.

### **The Oklahoma Connection**

The New Mexico Conference is first linked with the Oklahoma Conference when Angie Smith became the bishop of both in 1944. During his years many pastors were moved freely from one conference to another whether they wanted to be or not. For some it was an advancement in their career and for some it was seemingly a means of punishment. Either way, more often than not, being sent to New Mexico was meant to encourage a pastor to do better.

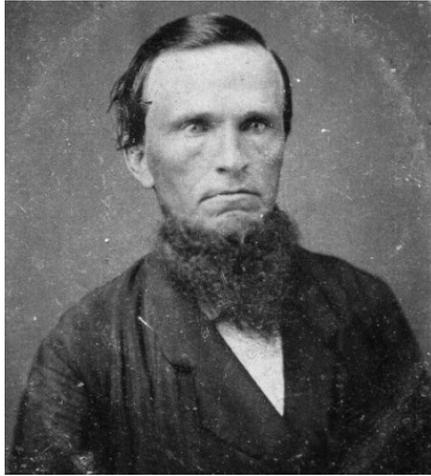
### **\*\*\*New Mexico Conference UMC\*\*\***

**1969- present**

### **North West Texas Connection**

The 1866 General Conference first created a NorthWest Texas Conference. The area was sparsely populated until the railroad arrived. Whenever a community then sprang into existence, a Methodist church soon followed. One circuit rider, R F Dunn appointed to this area in 1881, noted that his circuit included "all the territory west of Abilene to New Mexico and north to no man's land. In all he could find 17 Methodists in his area. By 1900 however it had grown to have 60 pastoral charges in three districts. By 1909 there were 16 districts and the area was divided





## **The Tolby Assassination and Trial of O P McMains**

By Ruth Speer, 1987

Reverend F. J. Tolby had witnessed a pistol fight in which a Mexican had shot and tried to kill an American. The American fell wounded and when the Mexican rushed upon him Rev. Tolby interfered. Tolby went before the Grand Jury at the next meeting of the court to have the Mexican indicted. Tolby was the only witness to the shooting so it was not surprising that his life was in danger. The Mexican is said to have been a captain of a band of Penitentes. He arranged to have a friend, a nephew, who carried mail by horseback between Cimarron and Elizabethtown, kill Mr. Tolby, who had to travel the same road on his appointments.

The murder took place about 8 miles below Elizabethtown on September 11, 1875. A Mexican from Taos, supposedly the mail carrier returning from Elizabethtown, related that a Protestant heretic had been killed.

Rev. Harwood heard of the incident while in Chicago. He immediately returned home and with a young student preacher, a Mr. Roberts from the school at Elizabethtown, traveled by way of Cimarron to Taos. They spent a few days searching for the man who had spread the news of the murder before it had become known generally. The man was not found at that time, but later was found, tried, and was shot in the dark while being taken from the court room at Cimarron to the jail.

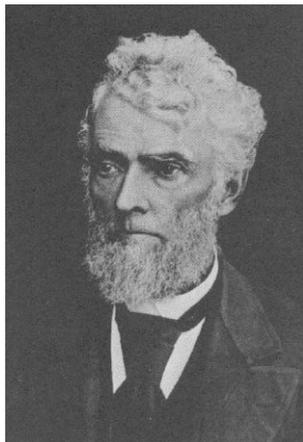
The assassination of Rev. Tolby caused great furor. Many people were suspect, none of whom were safe. Several suspects were killed. Rev. O. P. McMains, greatly incensed, made it an issue to search out the murderer.

According to Judge S. B. Axtell, Rev. McMains wanted to exact justice so he got a band of desperadoes to help him. Mexican, Cruz Vega, was decoyed out of the settlement by McMains and then the desperadoes began to torture him to get at the "truth". This was done by dragging the Mexican by the neck, by hanging him up and letting him down several times, by beating him with revolvers and then shooting him and leaving him dead hanging to a telephone pole. McMains planned the entire affair.

According to Dr. Harwood, the entire incident got out of hand and when it became clear that McMains could not control the desperadoes and prevent injury to the Mexican he left the scene of torture.

Rev. McMains was indicted for murder in the first degree and put on trial. He was imprisoned in Taos until Rev Harwood obtained a change of venue to Santa Fe.

During this time Rev. McMains was held without bail. Rev. Harwood provided bail and McMains was released on \$20,000. bond. He appeared before courts in both Taos and Santa Fe, was represented by a New Mexico prosecuting attorney before a jury of twelve.



According to Judge B. B. Axtell, a Methodist bishop from St. Louis (Bishop Bowman) traveled to Washington to request the aid of the government to save the "poor, persecuted, innocent, saintly, sanctified McMains". The Attorney General of the United States was directed to take measures for the immediate release of Mr. McMains. He telegraphed the US Attorney for the district of New Mexico to stay all proceedings until further notice. The US Attorney for New Mexico replied that he had no connection with the case, that McMains had been indicted under Territorial Laws of New Mexico and the case against him was being prosecuted by the New Mexico Attorney General.

The United States Attorney, still according to Judge Axtell, then telegraphed the same orders to the New Mexico Attorney General who replied that he could not legally receive any instructions from the Attorney General of the United States because he was appointed by the Governor of New Mexico and was responsible for exercising his duties according to the laws of New Mexico.

The Attorney General of the United States then telegraphed the Governor of the Territory of New Mex-

ico to suspend all legal proceedings in the case of McMains. The Governor replied that he would not stop the trial since McMains was indicted by a grand jury for the crime of murder and that he was actually on trial for said crime presided over by the Chief Justice of the Territory.

At that point the Attorney General of the United States gave up. Rev. Harwood responded to the above charges and added that the jury consisted of three Protestant Americans and nine Catholic Mexicans who found the defendant guilty of murder in the fifth degree (not the first as charged) and that the penalty was a payment of \$300.00. In recording the verdict the word "murder" was left out; therefore, it was claimed that no one could be guilty of the fifth degree and there was no verdict at all. The charge of murder in the first degree was dropped and the case discontinued by Judge Bradford L. Prince.

A continuance of the case was asked and granted but the case was thrown out of court.

Rev. McMains did not receive his missionary salary while under indictment for murder, but after his acquittal he was appointed to Cimarron and Elizabethtown.

There are several versions of this account and it is still argued as hotly in Cimarron country as the Civil War is argued among buffs.

## **RESOURCES**

Thomas Harwood. History of New Mexico Spanish and English Missions, vol1. Albuquerque, El Abogado Press. 1908.

## **Inez Methodist Church**

Published in 1965



Like Abraham of old, when the pioneers began to settle in eastern New Mexico, and the Inez community, they felt the urge for a place to worship immediately after their families were settled. The community Post Office was named for a small child, Inez Mullins, who was one of the pioneer children, so the church organization took the same name.

A small group of homesteaders met in the home of one Edith Sanders, who was interested in a church organization and with the help of the Rev. J. D. Wagner of Causey, a local preacher in a nearby community, the Inez Methodist Church was organized in 1909, with four charter members: J. E. Tollett, Samuel W. Tollett, Mrs. A. L. Westbrook, and Miss Edith Sanders. Since this is the only church of any denomination that has ever been organized in the community, it has served every home regardless of church affiliation. From the charter membership of four the church grew in numbers until at one time there was a membership of 125.

After a short time of meeting in the homes, a little one-room school house was finished and that provided a meeting place for the group.

Old-fashioned revivals were the order of the day, and a tent camp meeting was held beside the school house by a Rev. T. A. Knight in 1914 at which time

the membership was increased by thirteen conversions.

There were many transfers from other Methodist churches as people moved in from other states to make their homes. Early in 1910, the B. B. Greathouse family became a part of the church and also furnished leadership through the years.

The next thought that occupied the minds of these Methodists was a house of worship of their own. In 1914, the Rev. L. L. Thurston and family came from Oklahoma and Rev. Thurston was appointed pastor of the Inez church. The dedication and consecration of the Rev. Thurston was unequaled as he walked, rode with farmers, and finally secured a little pony named "Possum" which he used in visiting with all the people of the community.

His first trip to the community and church was on Christmas Eve, 1914, in a snowstorm. He had ridden out on a wagon with one of the members, thirty miles from Portales. The weather did not prevent his planned visiting and after a night in the home, he was up early on Christmas Day, walking in the snow to visit members and prospects.

His enthusiasm and dedication was the inspiration that caused the people to make plans for a small church building. The community was fortunate in having a good carpenter, Fred A. Westbrook. The building was started immediately and soon there was completed the Inez Methodist Church, built and paid for by the members of the church and the community.

People have come and gone, and many of those who have been reared in the community and had the

influence of the little church, have become leaders in Methodist churches throughout the United States.

Looking back through the years, there were preachers who left their influence in many ways. Beginning with the Rev. J. D. Wagner, the first pastor of the organized church, most of our pastors were local preachers, dedicated, sincere, and full of energy. Following Rev. Wagner were: R. C. Marshall, T. A. Knight, L. L. Thurston, W. L. Jenkins, Rev. Surcey, J. N. S. Webb, H. A. M. White, W. G. Fondren, F. T. Pollard, G. C. Hill, Robert O. Tomlinson, Richard McSwain, Green B. Patterson, J. L. Vance, Theo L. Cox, Leroy M. Brown, J. A. Ludlam, J. R. Wood, Melvin Rankin, J. R. Blevins, W. D. Williams, G. G. Mitchell, J. J. Spurlin, Arlow N. Albro, Royce Herdon, Clarence Stanfield, Leroy Smith, Robert K. Baird, Jack Noble, D. W. Breshears, H. L. Atkins III, James Wayne, M. A. Walker, Carl Gustafson, Jim Carter, Frank Matthews, Clyde Shults, Bill Bridwell, Earl Filby, Leonard Tomlinson, and Keith Bonny.

There were times when we had preaching services only once each month. That gave our people an opportunity to develop by planning and leading the worship services, hence the many leaders who came from our small church. These leaders have brought many honors to the church and to the Methodist Church at large, in serving throughout the New Mexico Conference, the South Central Jurisdiction, and in General Boards.

Among those serving outside the local church are Mrs. Lester Pitt, who served as Secretary of Christian Social Relations in the New Mexico Conference Woman's Society of Christian Service and Mr. and Mrs.

Frank Greathouse. Mrs. Greathouse has served as Conference Director of Children's Work, as treasurer, Spiritual Life secretary of the Woman's Society and as president for four years. She has also served on Jurisdictional Boards, and was a member of the General Board of Missions.

Mr. Greathouse has served many places: as Conference Lay Leader for ten years and as a member of the General Board of Lay Activities; is serving his 4th quadrennium on the Jurisdictional Council and has traveled extensively in the interest of the Methodist Church at home and abroad.

There have been five local preachers come from our church.

The Inez Church is one of eight Methodist organizations in the southern part of Roosevelt County that was organized during the pioneer days and is the only one remaining of the early Methodist Churches.

## RESOURCES

Bryan Hall. A Brief History Methodist Churches of the New Mexico Conference. 1965



# Archives and Historical Society

## *Preserving our History*



**Purpose:** The purpose of this Society shall be to aid in the collection and preservation of facts, documents, reports, records, relics, memoirs, books, periodicals, reminiscences, etc. which may be of historic value relating to the origin and growth of the United Methodist Church and its historic antecedents within the bounds of the New Mexico Annual Conference.

**Membership** in the NM Conference Historical Society is open to all interested persons.

**Officers for the Historical Society** shall be chosen annually by a ballot mailed to all members. Only members in good standing shall be eligible to vote.

**Annual dues** are \$12.00 per calendar year, which shall include printed copies of the New Mexico Conference United Methodist Historical Journal to be received by mail in May and November.

**Archives and History Endowment:** A fund has been established to benefit the NMAC Archives. Donations to this fund are tax deductible. An amount will be allocated from this fund each year to purchase supplies for the day-to-day operations of the Archives, and to carry out projects to preserve photos, books, documents and historical objects found within the Archives. We welcome any and all donations. Please consider supporting this fund to help preserve and share our history.

## **Donations can be sent to**

Archives and History Endowment  
NM Conference of the UMC  
11816 Lomas Blvd NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87112

## *Sharing Our Story*

**Heritage Tour:** The NM Conference Historical Society sponsors an annual Heritage Tour, highlighting places and events in our NM Conference History.

**Kate Warnick Award** (TUMHS) for the Best Local Church History written during the past year. Guidelines are available and entries should be addressed to W. J. Bryan III, P.O. Box 750133, Dallas, TX 75172 by January 31. Copies of the guidelines can be obtained by emailing [wbryan@smu.edu](mailto:wbryan@smu.edu).

## *Recognizing Service*

**Living Archives Awards** are presented at the Annual Conference. The purpose of the award is to lift up and honor exemplary individuals of the conference whose work and/or spirit provide hope and inspiration. The full criteria for this award can be found in the 2019 Conference Journal, page 193, and is available on request.

**Nominations** may be made either by letter or EMAIL to the Archives at the NM Annual Conference Office at any time prior to February first of the nomination year. The nomination should describe the reasons you believe that the individual deserves consideration, sharing their spiritual journey, any offices held, recognition or honors received, and their contribution to the life of the NM Annual Conference.



## **What About the Love Offering?**

by JAMES J. STEWART

Minister, St. John's Methodist  
Church, Albuquerque, N. M.

I am unalterably opposed to the gifts that come to all of us under the pious name of "love-offerings." In all cases these are unnecessary, and usually they are an embarrassment. In some cases they constitute a subtle form of bribery, comparable to the pre-reformation sale of church benefices.

As Goethe said, "I make presents to the mother but think of the daughter." Gifts strengthen the hands of the giver and tie the hands of the receiver. As the poet Dryden noted, "They who possess the prince possess the laws."

At this time when Christian civilization is struggling for its life against inhumane, atheistic Communism, when the church has to keep the educational standards of her ministers as high as those of the secular professions in order to make her message effective to informed people, and when the supply of ministers is running far short of the demand, partly because young men cannot afford to become ministers, it is a sad day for The Methodist Church when she permits any form of gratuities to becloud issues and obtain favor.

Government civil service employees are not permitted to give gifts to their superiors. A school board would not retain a superintendent who collected money from his principals and teachers. A corporation would think twice about retaining a president who indulged in similar practices.

Methodism's next General Conference should adopt legislation making the soliciting for, the giving to, and the receiving of gifts by effective bishops, district superintendents, ministers, and members of their family, grounds for expulsion from The Methodist Church.

*Christian Advocate January 20, 1955*

**NEW MEXICO CONFERENCE  
UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL JOURNAL**

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Published semi annually.

Subscription to this journal is included with \$12 paid membership in the NM Conference Historical Society

Readers are invited to submit articles and stories of general historical interest, less than 1200 words in length, for consideration. These may concern a moment in the life of the church, or a person and their impact, or a topic. Inclusion is at the complete discretion of the editor. Pictures, if included, as well as text, must be free of any copyright restrictions.

Excerpts from primary and secondary sources may be reprinted here in order to call attention to their source and available resources. Authors may submit short excerpts from their work for consideration.

As an historical journal, commentary on current topics will not usually be considered, except those concerning the work of the NM Conference Historical Society.

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