

A Timeline of History for The New Mexico Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1850 - 2009

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MEC = Methodist Episcopal Church

MECS = Methodist Episcopal Church South

UB = United Brethren

MC = Methodist Church

EUB = Evangelical United Brethren

UMC = United Methodist Church

1850

In 1850, the missionary society of the MEC sent out its first missionary to the new territory of New Mexico. E George Nicholson preached his first sermon in Santa Fe, taking as his text, 1 Cor 2:2 "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He made his headquarters there creating a small congregation made up of Americans connected with the army. Rev Nicholson also met an intelligent, well educated, Catholic priest named Benigno Cardenas. He knew Cardenas was unhappy with the new Roman Catholic Bishop, but he did not pursue the matter.

When the army headquarters moved, the little congregation was gone too, and the Nicholson's returned home, with an unfavorable report about the possibilities of any kind of mission in New Mexico.

Meanwhile Cardenas, still unhappy, went to Rome. He left there even more discouraged with the Catholic Church. He traveled to London, and stayed for 10 weeks with Rev. Rule, who had once been a Methodist missionary to Spain. Cardenas went on to New York with a letter of introduction, determined now to become part of a Methodist mission to New Mexico.

The decision was made to begin again. This time Rev Nicholson, Rev Hansen, and Cardenas left for New Mexico, arriving in Santa Fe on November 10th of 1853. Arrangements were made for Cardenas to preach on the Plaza, under the portal of the Palace. They printed notices and posted them, only to have them torn down. The Bishop denounced Cardenas from the pulpit, declared him apostate, and forbid people even to look at him. There was actual fear on the part of the little band of Methodists that they might be stoned if they continued with their plan. They did it anyway. Some of those passing by ignored them, but others gathered to hear Cardenas speak. He declared his reasons for leaving the Catholic church and his intention to become a protestant minister instead.

After that they began traveling house to house, visiting and preaching in places like Tome, Peralta, and Socorro. On one of his journeys to Peralta in 1853, Rev Nicholson met Ambrosio Gonzales and gave him a Bible. "It was the first Bible I had ever seen," Ambrosio said later. "I read until the chickens were crowing for day...fell asleep...When I awoke the sun was shining through the window into my face. The sun of righteousness was shining brightly in my soul."

Rev Hansen soon went back to New York. DD Lore came out to inspect the Spanish work. He served communion in Socorro on Nov 11th, 1855. He then organized a circuit, consisting of Peralta, Jarales, Polvadera, and Socorro. In all there were 31 persons. Cardenas was living then in Jarales, enthusiastically traveling and preaching wherever he could.

Upon his return to New York, DD Lore gave the mission an unfavorable report, however.

Soon only Cardenas remained, and for several years he continued trying to maintain what they had had begun. His letters pleaded for more help. He eventually became so discouraged, that he gave up, returning to the Catholic church, after being publically flogged in the plaza in Santa Fe, where his Methodist career had begun.

“Who will give his life to this work, and make the New Mexico Mission the great and only enterprise of his life?” wrote JP Durbin, the missionary Secretary in New York. At the time, Thomas Harwood was just preaching his first sermon as a local preacher in Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, in 1858 Bishop George F Pierce of the MECS made a stop in El Paso on his way to San Francisco. There Mr. Hart gave him \$100 to aid in securing a pastor. In 1859 Rev. J H Harper was sent to El Paso. He brought with him a 500 pound church bell. He stayed about a year but in the end he accomplished very little. As one writer put it later, “The only use El Paso had for a preacher in 1859 was to bury the dead.”

1860

Time passed. The nation fought a civil war. In New Mexico, the Rev. John M Chivington MEC from Colorado became the hero of the day at the battle of Glorieta in 1862. In 1864, however, his involvement in the Sand creek massacre and the slaughter of native women and children was rightly condemned.

In 1865, John Dyer was appointed to the South Park district of the Colorado Conference MEC. He came to “feel that they ought to have the gospel in New Mexico. “ So he made a journey south, preaching at 2 ranches, and marrying a couple who had run off together. He came across a group of Penitentes, and saw a bleeding man carrying a heavy cross. He asked if these men were better than the rest of the nation, and was told, “No, they were the worst. If they behaved, they wouldn’t have had to punish themselves so much.”

Dyer stopped at the Maxwell home, traveled down to Santa Fe, and then back up to Taos, before returning to Colorado. By that time he had worn out his pony and had to get a new one.

In 1868 after talking about New Mexico so long, Dyer was appointed to the New Mexico District, a new work. He felt what was needed was a more educated and younger man. He wrote back to Wisconsin, hoping to persuade a friend to join him. That year Dyer traveled all over New Mexico from his headquarters at Elizabethtown, where he created a small class, bought a lot and put up a house to be shared by him and his horse. Later, in April of 1870 he gave this building to them to serve as a church until one could be built

His friend from Wisconsin finally joined him in 1869. Thomas and Emily Harwood soon opened their first school at Cherry Valley. There were now 2 Methodist preachers in New Mexico.

In September of 1869, John Dyer preached in El Paso to about 30 people, said to be the entire English speaking population at the time.

Harwood, meanwhile handled the work in the north.

Emily went with him one time to Fort Union on December 31st, 1869. Only a few came to the service. As a former Chaplain in the Union Army, Harwood was very disappointed, and as he noted, "As usual, the singing (by Emily Harwood) was very highly complimented, but not much was said about the sermon."

1870

The next decade began then with 2 preachers, 15 total members, and no real church buildings at all.

In March, Thomas Harwood was called upon to perform a secret wedding for Captain Keyes, and Virginia Maxwell in Cimarron. The wedding took place in the Grist Mill and was kept secret for several weeks, until Captain Keyes received his new orders. Lucian Maxwell, the richest man in New Mexico and a law unto himself, was furious, and is said to have pulled one man from his horse preparing to beat him, thinking he was the parson. Thomas went to Elizabethtown in spite of the danger and preached about the sin of bowing down to any man just because he has money.

By July of 1870, the first real MEC Church building had been consecrated in Elizabethtown, and plans were made to build a proper schoolhouse at Tiptonville. A committee listened to the offer by William Kroenig of land by the lake for the school and \$400, *provided* the Bible not be read or religion taught there. Emily quickly responded saying, "Mr Harwood, we are not out here to build up an infidel school, and I will not teach a school where I can't sing when I want to, pray when I want to, and read the Word of God when I want to." The nays had it and the school was built on another site offered W B Tipton.

At the Colorado Conference in the Summer of 1870, Dyer was given a new appointment in Colorado, and Thomas Harwood now found himself the *only* preacher in all of New Mexico.

In 1871 Harwood got some help. The Rev N S Buckner and his wife traveled with Harwood, returning from the Colorado Conference in Denver to accept his new appointment in Elizabethtown. About 4 miles outside of Cimarron lightning struck their wagon, leaving them stunned and paralyzed for a time. For some reason the Buckner's did not stay in New Mexico very long.

The son of William Kroenig attended the school at Tiptonville in spite of his father's misgivings about a school where the Bible would be read. Later when the son died suddenly Harwood preached the funeral sermon, and Preacher and skeptic became life long friends.

Traveling down to Peralta, Harwood discovered Ambrosio Gonzales, still serving as a class leader 16 years later for a group that now numbered 42. He gave him a license to preach, and promised to find them an elder soon. That man was John Steele from Wisconsin, who served in Peralta from 1872 to

1879, building a remarkable church that had gun slits so it could serve as a fort just in case.

Others came as well, including Franklin Tolby who took charge of the work at Elizabethtown and Cimarron in 1874. While traveling between the two, Tolby was shot and killed in 1875 – an assassination that set off a whole chain events sometimes called the Colfax County war.

One figure in those events, who tried to discover what had happened, was O P McMains. Appointed to replace Tolby, he worked with some others to lure one Cruz Vega out to a place where they could question him. That quickly became a lynching, and O P McMains was later tried and convicted for his part in the conspiracy. Because a clerical error failed to specify the charge, he was eventually let off on a technicality. He and Thomas Harwood didn't always get along, but when McMains got married later, it was Harwood who performed the ceremony at McMains' request. Years later Thomas would say of McMains, "He was often rash, often imprudent, not safe as a leader, and too strong to be led; but in the main he meant well." (They still say the same thing about some preachers today.)

In November of 1876 the first meeting of the New Mexico Mission was held at Peralta, marking what is now recognized as the beginning of our current New Mexico Conference. The appointments included, Peralta, Cimarron & Elizabethtown, Ciruelita, Socorro, Valverde, Silver City, and Las Cruces.

With the coming of the railroads, the English speaking part of the mission began to see some growth, as did the territory. One Spanish speaking pastor was surprised to learn that there was a Methodist church in Las Vegas, because on his trip he saw nothing but wickedness. "Look out for the railroad," he said, "for like a new ditch when you first let the water into it, it is muddy and gathers a great deal of filth. After it has been running awhile maybe it will bring a better class of people."

In 1879 Harwood's nephew, T M Harwood, then just 14 years old came to New Mexico and traveled about with his Uncle.

At the end of 1879 Ambrosio Gonzales and Pablo Salazar were ordained deacons, by Bishop Stephen Merrill at the Mission Conference in Tiptonville. There were now 11 church buildings, 13 preachers and 364 total members in the New Mexico Mission.

The MECS had yet to show up and stay, but that was about to change.

1880

In 1881 Bishop George Pierce of the West Texas Conference appointed John F Carter to start an MECS congregation in El Paso. Trinity MECS soon organized with 13 members.

The Denver Conference, meanwhile ventured into New Mexico. By August of 1882 they had 6 pastors in New Mexico, at Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Socorro, White Oaks, Roswell, and Cerillos. Work had begun to build a "female seminary" at Las Vegas to train missionary workers.

In Socorro, a young preacher, Joseph Tardy, was working to build a church. He died of small pox in 1883, before the church could be finished, becoming the first MECS pastor on the list of their honored dead in New Mexico. His church was finished later.

By 1888 the MECS had 5 actual churches, and 84 members in New Mexico.

Meanwhile the decision had been made by the MEC to begin to publish a newspaper in English and Spanish to be called El Abogado Cristiano. In the first issue in May of 1880 four separate church dedications at Las Vegas, La Gallina, Silver City, and Valverde were mentioned. The paper soon had a large number of subscriptions, and continued to be published for over 30 years.

Emily Harwood's health seemed to be failing so she had left to go back to Wisconsin for awhile, until the General Conference in May 1880. D W Calliffe and his wife took over the work at the school in Tiptonville.

Joining her at the General Conference Thomas expressed his disappointment that the Conference did not elect a colored Bishop, nor provide for the ordination of women, nor agree to publish Methodist Literature in Spanish, the latter being the worst omission of all.

With the work at Tiptonville now taken care of by someone else, Thomas & Emily returned from General Conference to move their headquarters to Socorro, where Rev Matthieson had been working for some time already. Emily taught in the public school there.

Christmas Eve 1880, the Methodists and the Presbyterians gathered together for a service. Present among their new friends, Mr. and Mrs. Conkling, publisher of the Socorro Sun. During the service Mr Conkling offended some of the young Dons by insisting they remove their feet from the benches and the dresses of the women in front of them. As they left the service to go home Mr. Conkling was grabbed and shot in a short struggle. Harwood caught him as he fell and heard him say "God have mercy on my soul." The killing sparked racial unrest in the community and led to the Vigilante movement that followed. The situation was such that Matthieson was moved the following year to Peralta, and the Harwood's soon moved to Santa Fe as well.

For a short time the schools at Tiptonville and Peralta closed down, only to be opened again with the help of a territorial appropriation.

Ambrozio Gonzales died on October 6, 1884. 300 people attended the funeral, of the man whom Harwood called the "first Mexican protestant in the world."

In 1884 the General Conference, at Harwood's request, divided the work into an English Mission and a Spanish Mission. Now W R Kistler, also appointed to Albuquerque, became superintendant of the English Mission, while Harwood continued with the Spanish Mission.

The English mission at that time had 6 preachers, 181 church members, and 7 buildings. They would end the decade with 327 total members in 10 charges.

The Spanish Mission meanwhile went from 6 to 15 preachers with 12 more in training, and went from 410 members to 1256 members, and from 10 churches to 20 circuits, not counting Tucson.

There were also now 14 schools, counting those established by the Women's Home Missionary society. The largest of these, the Albuquerque College, started in 1887, could boast 150 students.

In 1889 Thomas Harwood was considered for Territorial Governor. He told them no thanks.

The New Mexico Conference of the MECS finally came into being in 1890. By 1891 they counted 16 churches, 439 white members, 1 colored member (in Deming), and 20 preachers. Their growth was coming as the railroad brought new settlers to the territory. Their church in El Paso now had 120 members.

The female "seminary" in Las Vegas closed in 1893, under a cloud of debt.

In El Paso the MECS opened a day school in 1891 under the direction of Rev. Corbin. It closed and reopened under the direction of Miss Effie Eddington, and then was washed away completely in a flood in 1897.

By 1895 they had 1203 members. El Paso had 202 members. Roswell had 170 members. Albuquerque had 48.

By 1899 they had 1567 members. 6 churches now had memberships of over 100, including one in Eddy (Carlsbad), where an MEC church had closed for lack of members. Of the 15 pastors, however, 9 had been there for 3 years or less.

Among their recent recruits, still on trial, was one William Sherlock Huggett who had emigrated from England to settle in the Carlsbad area. He first joined the MECS Church there, then the MEC, and then the MECS again when the MEC church closed. Like many he came to New Mexico in ill health and lived to a ripe old age serving as a pastor in the MECS, and bringing a degree of experience to benefit the many new pastors who passed through the conference rolls.

In October of 1891, Mary Eldridge and Mary Raymond from the Women's Home Missionary Society of the MEC arrived alone on the Navajo reservation to begin a mission. They built a small adobe building at Hogback and won over the Navajo people by treating the sick. Mary Raymond eventually married Thomas Whyte who ran a trading post nearby. She later passed away following childbirth. She was replaced by Mary Tripp, who had started a project in El Paso in 1893 that came to be known later as the Rose Gregory Houchen settlement, and then Friendship Square. Language at the Navajo mission was a great barrier until they recruited Frank Damon the son of a Navajo mother and a Scotch Irish Father. The day school they opened lasted only 2 years. They realized that what was needed was a boarding school, which was opened in 1899 in Jewett, a place the Navajo called "between waters".

In the English mission of the MEC there were some signs of growth, 133 new members in 1892, when Charles Bovard gave his first report as the superintendant A P Morrison would report 826 members in 1900, with churches in Las Vegas, Silver City, Alamogordo, Albuquerque and El Paso to name a few.

In all there were 14 schools and 397 students in 1891. In Albuquerque, both the Harwood Girls School, started in 1896, and the Albuquerque College Preparatory, started in 1887, were prospering. The Boys Biblical and Industrial School, which closed in 1892, was revived by Harwood. Land was purchased in 1898 for a new Boys School and Farm in Albuquerque.

Meanwhile Thomas Harwood looked to the south, traveling as far as Mexico City in 1896. Though he visited some of these far flung districts in the Spanish work, he lacked the money to do much there. By 1899, there were 1733 members in 4 districts and 25 churches in the Spanish Mission. Thomas and Emily lived now in Albuquerque, where they both helped in the Biblical School.

1900

The MECS began the new century with 1725 members in 18 charges. There were 17 pastors on the roll, and 20 churches, extending from Alpine to Watrous. By 1909 there would be 34 pastors on the roll, serving 43 churches. Membership would soar to almost 6000. Almost all the pastors listed were new, having been there less than 2 years.

In El Paso in 1901, Rev Corbin tried again, naming his new school after Effie Edington. It was a coed school until 1906 when it became a school for girls only. However it proved difficult to keep any of the girls past the 7th grade, after which it was thought they had been educated enough.

There was some talk of union with the MEC, and in 1909 a commission was established to meet with their counterparts in the MEC. They noted that it was probably going to take awhile.

In January of 1902, Emily Harwood died in Albuquerque in the arms of Thomas Harwood. Although Thomas Harwood remained active many more years, he himself once said the "light of his life had gone out." He continued to work with the New Mexico Spanish Mission Conference and the Boys Biblical and Industrial School.

The English Mission of the MEC, which began the new century with only 12 pastors, 14 churches and 826 members, would increasingly find itself in competition with the bigger MECS. They would grow to 1742, but actually show a decrease in 1909 of 40 members, even while the population of NM was growing rapidly from immigration and homesteading. 20 pastors on the roll now served 18 charges. Their ongoing complaint was about many denominations trying to occupy the same town of 500 or less. They decried the waste while at the same time they bemoaned the lack of funds to go to more places. "There are more than 600 post offices," The DS reported, "but we are occupying less than 50 places and have only 20 preachers scattered over 144000 square miles."

In 1907 Mary Tripp died of cancer.

Now it is time for a new voice.

One evening in 1906 a United Brethren pastor from Kansas, who was visiting his parents in Amistad, went to a prayer meeting at a community church. Invited then to lead worship, he did so. They asked him to consider coming to stay. He noted his obligations in Kansas, but promised that he would consider it. Writing to the Home board in Dayton, Ohio, he gained permission to go to the southwest, following Brethren families who had migrated to the area.

In 1908, Clarence Schlotterbeck returned, and began his work, not only preaching at Amistad, but traveling into Texas and Oklahoma. By November 1908 he had gathered 9 pastors together at the Childress Schoolhouse near Amistad for their first meeting with Bishop Weekly presiding. The North Texas Mission Conference was born, the first conference of the United Brethren in the Southwest. Rev. Schlotterbeck was named their superintendant. Among those in this new conference were Rev. Callie King, the first fully ordained woman to serve in our Conference area, and a deaconess, Mellie Perkins.

1910

In 1910 Rev Schlotterbeck returned from a journey by horseback into the Espanola valley convinced of the need there for education. He soon collected \$1000 to establish a school at Velarde, and Mellie Perkins stepped forward to volunteer to start the work, which began in 1912.

The North Texas Conference broke up in 1913 in favor of geographical boundaries, creating the New Mexico Conference of the UB.

A friend of Mellie Perkins from college, passed away suddenly in 1912. A grieving father made a gift of \$1000 in her memory to the Santa Cruz Mission. By 1915 the first Mission Building was completed and officially named The Edith M McCurdy Mission. By 1917 a school was started at Alcalde at the request of residents there who told her that the work at "Velarde and Santa Cruz missions had shown them the importance of enlightenment and education." Mellie resigned from the mission in 1918, both because of her own illness and to tend to an ailing mother.

That year Rev Callie King, now with the Home Mission Board filled in at Santa Cruz for a time. While there she presided at the wedding of Charles Peterson and Lottie Newman in the chapel on July 18th. She stayed on through that summer, "working at the school and with various pastoral duties."

At the end of the decade the New Mexico Conference of the United Brethren had 6 churches with 226 members, and mission schools at Alcalde, Velarde, and Santa Cruz.

Meanwhile the MEC continued to show some small gains.

By 1911 the Navajo mission at Jewett was prospering. A two story brick building that housed the school and 31 children was surrounded by an irrigated farm and orchard. In October, however, they barely managed to evacuate the children, before a flood washed everything away, including J M Simmons, the superintendant. He survived on a makeshift raft for 30 hours before coming to shore. The mission was rebuilt on higher ground.

In El Paso, Lydia Patterson began to envision a school for Spanish speaking children, to be a high school that would train young men as Methodist Pastors as well. When she passed away her husband gave \$75000 to build the Lydia Patterson Institute, which opened in 1913.

In 1912 the Houchen Settlement house was completed in El Paso. That same year, the Women's Home Missionary Society established the Harwood Methodist Hospital to help those suffering from tuberculosis. He later asked them to rename the facility and it became the Methodist Deaconess Sanatorium in 1919.

A group of people in Cimarron came to the DS in 1912 saying they wanted to leave the MECS and join the MEC. A deal was finally struck in 1913 that gave Cimarron to the MEC in exchange for Alamogordo, to be exclusive work for each denomination. Nevertheless the MECS appointed a pastor to Cimarron the following year, much to the dismay and outrage of the MEC. "He has not preached in Cimarron, and has been a constant source of annoyance," they complained. (They still say the same thing about some preachers today.)

1915 saw the end of both the English and Spanish Mission Conferences and the first session of the newly combined New Mexico Annual Conference of the MEC. The work was now divided as the English District and the Spanish

District. Thomas M Harwood, Harwood's nephew, now had charge of the Spanish District.

At their meeting in September of 1916 the Conference voted to cease publication of Abogado Christiano citing an inability to make a profit and debt of \$15. Thomas Harwood died in December of the same year. The Spanish District had lost ground and now had only 908 members.

The English district meanwhile reported 3437 members at the end of the decade.

The work of the MECS, however, was soaring. The work was divided into 3 districts, Albuquerque, El Paso, and the Pecos Valley (later renamed the Roswell District).

In 1910, against the advice of their own study committee, they established their Western College in Artesia, instead of Roswell. It floundered and closed in 1915, leaving big buildings and an even bigger debt, which would not be settled until 1924.

The report by the end of the decade showed the Albuquerque District with 1835 members, the El Paso district with 3427 members, and the Roswell District with 3525 members. Trinity El Paso alone now reported over 1000 members. There were 56 pastors on the roll of the Conference.

1920

One of the pastors who transferred into the New Mexico Conference in 1926 was W Angie Smith from the Tennessee Conference. He served Trinity UMC in El Paso for 4 years, and then transferred out again to the Louisiana Conference in 1930.

By 1929 there were 61 pastors, serving 14684 members, and the organization included a fourth district in Las Vegas.

In 1920 Miss Effie Stolz, a nurse, arrived in El Paso. The Freeman Clinic of the MEC was established at the Friendship Square.

The work in the MEC seemed to be stagnating. In 1928 the General Conference dissolved the New Mexico Annual Conference, recreating an English mission and a larger Spanish Mission once again. The English mission at that point had 3344 members.

In 1926 the Colorado and New Mexico conferences of the United Brethren held a joint meeting.

The University Heights United Brethren Church in Albuquerque was completed in 1928.

That year the New Mexico Conference of the United Brethren reported 378 members in 7 churches, the largest of which was Santa Cruz with 122 members. In 1929 the New Mexico Conference of the United Brethren merged with their neighbor to the north to form the Colorado – New Mexico Conference. That new Conference had 3395 members. McCurdy School continued to be successful with an enrollment of 110.

1930

Santa Cruz continued to be the largest United Brethren church in New Mexico throughout the 1930's. University Heights in Albuquerque however, was growing and had 139 members by 1939.

In 1930 the Freeman Clinic in El Paso added some rooms for maternity patients. By 1937 with the help of the Newark Conference of the MEC in New Jersey this was expanded to become the Newark Hospital.

The New Mexico Mission of the MEC met for the last time in June of 1939. At that time they noted 26 charges, 3 of which were shared with the MECS. The merger was already underway. In Clayton the members of the MEC joined the former MECS Church. In Las Vegas the MECS closed their church and joined the MEC. The churches in El Paso, Albuquerque, and Roswell continued as they were. (They even noted that Albuquerque might need a third church soon.)

At the time of the merger, they noted three ongoing projects by the Women's home Missionary Society; The Harwood Girl's school, established in 1887, (The Harwood Boys School had closed down.), The Methodist Deaconess Sanitorium in Albuquerque, and the Houchen settlement in El Paso. The roll of the faithful contained the names of 25 pastors. "We enter into this union taking with us a rich and varied history" they proclaimed. They also brought with them 5365 members, in 33 churches.

After considering the need for a summer campground for a decade, in 1931 the MECS finally acted to accept an offer of land near Weed, New Mexico, which was mostly swampland, and established the Sacramento Mountain Methodist assembly. 4 Dormitories and a kitchen were constructed, and local churches were encouraged to build their own buildings on the property.

In 1932 hit by the depression, the Effie Eddington School was forced to close. Some of the staff and paying students went to Lydia Patterson, creating a coed environment there for the first time.

The MECS met in October of 1939, and had a unification observance. Thereafter it was business as usual. Among those admitted in full connection that year was John Carpenter. The report noted 106 churches with 24253 members, and included an Albuquerque-Denver district.

1940

The newly formed Methodist Church met in October of 1940 at the Center Street Methodist Church in Tucumcari. The new Albuquerque District had 31 churches and 6679 members. The Clovis District had 26 churches and 6140 members. The El Paso District had 22 churches and 7585 members. And the Roswell District had 32 churches and 6437 members. In all there were 26841 members in 111 churches.

The former members of the MEC, however, felt like they had been swallowed up by the larger MECS, and were not always happy with their appointments. Moreover the history of which they were so proud was ignored and quickly forgotten. The Historical record noted only the sessions of the New Mexico Conference of the MECS. The "roll of our dead" was left incomplete and no effort was ever made to reach back into the history of the MEC. Even the name of Thomas Harwood was effectively forgotten. That attitude was reinforced later by a Bishop, who seemed to think that all those who had served before in the MEC started their real careers in 1939.

In 1944, now Bishop Angie Smith was appointed Bishop for The New Mexico Conference as well as Oklahoma. He remained our Bishop for 24 years, until his retirement in 1968. He was far more active in the Conference than any of

the Bishops of the past had been, and was labeled “the last of the benevolent despotic Bishops” by Buren Stewart who also served on the cabinet. “He could be kind, considerate and generous,” Stewart said, “but also ruled with complete authority.” Without a doubt Bishop Smith could be tough on any pastor or church that he felt was not pulling their own weight, and New Mexico sometimes became the place to which a pastor would be banished if he was not successful in Oklahoma. Oddly enough, these pastors often turned out to be the best leaders in the New Mexico Conference. Membership reached 33337 as noted in the 1949 Journal.

At the Friendship Square in El Paso, the final corner was completed with the building of the church, El Buen Pastor.

In 1949 the sale of the land once used for the Methodist Deaconess Hospital was used to create the Bataan Memorial Hospital Association. The new hospital was dedicated in 1952.

The big news for the United Brethren churches in New Mexico was the merger in 1946 with the Evangelical Church creating the Evangelical United Brethren church.

1950

One notable blemish on the record of Bishop Smith came in 1956, when the pastor James J Stewart (no relation to Buren Stewart) brought charges against Bishop Smith for accepting “love gifts”. He was accused of receiving improper payment for carrying out his regular duties as a Bishop. The event played out in the newspapers as well as the Committee on Investigation of the Oklahoma Conference, and elicited an aggressive defense from the cabinet of both the New Mexico and Oklahoma conferences. The Committee not only exonerated Bishop Smith, but also went on then to accuse James J Stewart of “the grossest type of unministerial conduct.” Stewart then filed a libel lawsuit against the Oklahoma Conference for publishing the committee report. At a trial in the New Mexico Conference in 1957, James Stewart, who had been the founding pastor of both Trinity Methodist Church and St John’s Methodist Church in Albuquerque, was finally removed from the ministry.

In a precursor of things yet to come at this time Amistad became the first EUB church to become a Methodist Church in New Mexico in 1959. This enabled them to share a pastor with Clayton on a regular basis.

1960

One lasting consequence of the whole affair with James Stewart was the creation of the Lay Movement for Democracy in Methodism, which successfully lobbied the General Conference for term limits (2 four year terms) for bishops in 1960, known as the Smith-Corson rule. That did not keep Angie Smith from serving another 8 years, however, since it was not applied retroactively.

Bishop Smith was always a strong supporter of Sacramento, and instrumental in the creation of Landsun Homes as well. The idea of building “a place for people to live who are up in years” was adopted by the Conference in 1960. After deciding on a place beside the Pecos river in Carlsbad, construction began, and the first resident moved in May of 1965.

The short lived Arrowhead Camp, near where Chivington had his triumph at Glorieta, also came into being in 1963. It closed and the property was sold in 1971.

In 1963, after a 5 year bureaucratic struggle with the Navajo tribal government, the First Methodist Church of Shiprock was constructed, serving both Anglos and Navajos in the same facility. In 1966, Fred Yazzie graduated from Asbury Theological seminary and returned to serve as the chaplain at the mission school and later as the preacher at the Navajo services in the church at Shiprock. In 1968 a change of the boundaries of the New Mexico Conference to include the entire Navajo reservation was agreed upon by the New Mexico and the Southern California - Arizona Conferences. A Navajo Mobile Ministry was started with the purchase of a special truck. That effort was never very successful, and by 1973 the rough roads had shaken the truck to pieces.

In 1965 the Women's Division transferred the Bataan Hospital to the New Mexico Conference. Evangelism was a top priority for Bishop Smith. Records were kept to ensure that every pastor made at least one call every day to a prospective new member. 17 new churches were created during the 1960's, accounting for much of the growth in membership.

Bishop Smith was also hard on anyone who tried to remove names from a church roll except by death or transfer. That and the terror he sometimes inspired in Pastors to show progress may be the real reason the Methodist Church in New Mexico grew to almost 93,000 members by 1968.

The last Annual conference over which Bishop Smith would preside took place at Trinity Methodist Church in El Paso, the same church he had once served as pastor in 1926.

By 1968 there were 126 churches were served by 133 ministers. This included 5 Wesley Foundations on the college campuses as well.

In May of 1968, perhaps thinking of his own retirement and his legacy, Bishop Smith commented, "The fault finders will pass and be forgotten, but the prophets of God will live on and on in the lives of millions who are touched by their lives." Certainly no Bishop before or since has left a more indelible mark on our Conference.

Alsie H Carleton took over in 1969.

At a special called session of the New Mexico Conference in July of 1969, the sale of the Bataan Memorial Hospital was approved for 2 million dollars. The money was placed in the Methodist Foundation.

While the coming merger of the smaller Evangelical United Brethren church with the Methodist Church was exciting, it also worried many of the EUB churches in New Mexico, particularly those in the Espanola Valley. They banded together to form the Espanola Valley Group Ministry, consisting of 9 Churches, the McCurdy School, the Espanola Hospital, and the Rio Grande Community Activities. The individual churches that remained in this group ministry did not join the NM Conference until 1982. 4 other churches became United Methodist in 1969, including the 385 members of University Heights in Albuquerque. There were 7 pastors serving in New Mexico at the time. 1384 members became United Methodists.

1970

The New Mexico Conference of the United Methodist Church began the next decade with a decrease of 6000 members in 1970. This was on top of a 5456 member decrease in 1969. Much of this came from Charge Conference Action. Changing times were also starting to take a toll. By 1979 membership would be 64733.

In September of 1972 a special called session of the New Mexico Annual Conference reorganized the work of the Conference by creating a Conference Council on Ministries, which altered and replaced the Conference Program Council. They also voted to allocate \$50000 a year to the pension program for the next 10 years from the Bataan Interest money. Then they voted to allocate \$25000 a year for 8 years to a revolving fund to secure land for new churches.

In 1977, the idea of a new ministry among the Navajos embracing indigenous leadership gave birth to the Four Corners Native American Ministry. The Mission School meanwhile floundered and seemed to lose its way, spiritual speaking. It merged with a federally funded Navajo Academy to become the Navajo Mission Academy to the dismay of many.

In May of 1976, the Harwood Girls School graduated its last class and closed its doors after 80 years.

Meanwhile, John Carpenter was asked to make a general historical presentation to the Annual Conference that same year. His research led him to the story of Thomas Harwood and the almost forgotten work of the MEC. Later, in 1979 the Archives and History Commission moved to renumber the sessions of the New Mexico Conference to start in 1876, recognizing the start of the New Mexico Mission of the MEC.

1980

However, the roll of the Honored Dead would not be corrected to include the names of Franklyn J Tolby, Thomas Harwood and other MEC pastors until 1982.

Louis Schowengerdt became Bishop of the New Mexico Conference in 1981.

In March 1982, a special called session of the Annual Conference met in Roswell to consider the recommendations of The New Thrust committee (TNT), emphasizing evangelism and creating a fourth district.

The first two Living Archive awards were presented by the Archives and History Commission to Bryan Hall and Polly Price in 1986.

By 1989 membership fell to 59433.

1990

In 1993 Bishop Alfred Norris took the reigns.

After years of becoming more and more secular in nature, the Navajo Mission School was finally disowned by the National Division and most of the land and buildings were sold in 1995.

The Four Corners Native American Ministry carried on during this time and saw success, in spite of criticism because of their insistence that the old ways could never be blended with the new. In contrast with the Native American International Caucus, they maintained that the cross and the feather were incompatible.

By 1999 membership in the New Mexico Conference was only 44482.

2000

D Max Whitfield became the Bishop presiding over the New Mexico Annual Conference in 2001.

A vote in 2004 lowered the number of districts to 3, effective with the 2005 Conference.

The total membership reported in the 2009 Conference Journal, was 37720. This was a drop of 727 members for the year, and almost 50000 members since the birth of the United Methodist Church in 1969. That is 1250 members per year on average. The 2009 membership level was last seen in 1951.

2010

(A History not yet written.)

Statistically speaking, it would not be a bold prediction to say that the New Mexico Conference will lose another 5000 members or more in the next decade, perhaps even falling below 32000. Small churches in towns throughout New Mexico, separated by distance and burdened with the increasing over all cost of pastoral leadership, will continue to close. In metropolitan areas United Methodist Churches that do not adapt to the trends apparent in other more successful denominations will attract fewer new members.

Demographically speaking, the society around us is changing once again and fast becoming almost a foreign mission field. Both the Hispanic and Anglo communities in New Mexico are in a process of cultural transformation. New emerging patterns for life no longer recognize the traditional role of the church as the guardian of morality. Biblical literacy is decreasing, and a post literate society is making the former means of communication within the church less effective.

In this decade we will no longer be able to ignore these changes. Our message may no longer have a medium that can reach beyond its cloistered halls.

Driven by compassion we remain committed to ministry, helping people face the physical challenges of life. We seem reluctant however to listen, learn and theologically engage the new society that is emerging around us in any effective way.

In some ways we are now an “old” church in New Mexico that has reluctantly found itself in a “new” world. In this new society Methodism is as much a stranger in a strange land as it was in 1850.

To take our place in this new world we will need a clear and compelling message conveyed in new forms that can be heard in the plaza again.

- Will Steinsiek