

## Beginnings of Methodism



The founder of The Methodist Church was  
**Rev. John Wesley.**

Wesley was born in 1703 in Epworth,  
Lincolnshire



The Fire at  
the old  
rectory, 5-  
year-old  
'Jacky' is  
saved.



Epworth Rectory, rebuilt after  
the fire and as it is today.

### **Early Years:**

He was one of 19 children born to Rev Samuel and Susanna Wesley. Only three boys and seven girls lived in to adulthood. Susanna established a strict routine with her children, getting them up at 5.00am, ensuring that they always had things to do and methodically spending set times with each of them each week. She had a great love of learning and encouraged her family in their education, frequently reading to them. As the children grew and left home she maintained her concern for them and wrote letters to them regularly.

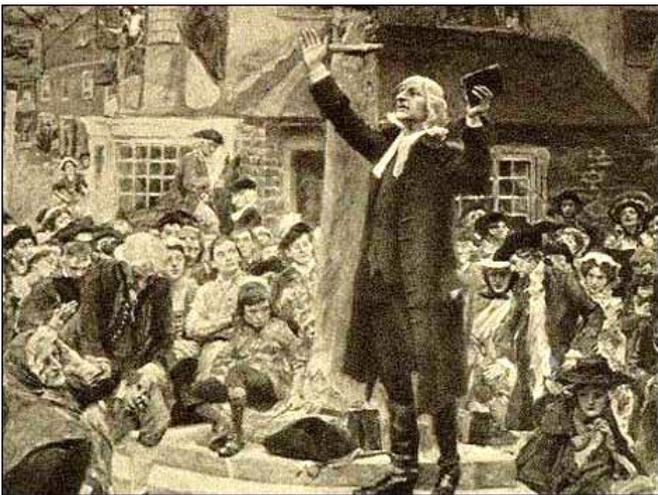
John Wesley was 10 years old when he went away to boarding school in London called Charterhouse. Life was tough in the school, often the older boys would pick on the younger boys and steal their food. Wesley often went with little to eat except bread. His lessons included Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the languages that the bible was written in.

When he was 17 years old he went to Oxford where he studied for the next 6 years. He became a priest at the age of 25. In Oxford he and his brother Charles and a few others would meet regularly to study the bible and pray together. Their fellow students thought they were strange for doing this and gave them nicknames such as 'Bible moths', 'the Holy Club' and '**Methodists**'. Methodist comes from the methodical way in which they studied the bible. This last name stuck and his followers have been known as Methodists ever since.

### **Giving to the poor:**

In the eighteenth century there were no social services or welfare state to help poor people who had little money to live on. Wesley and his friends made time to visit prisons and the poor parts of town. They put aside some of their own money to buy food, clothing and medicines to help people and they started schools for people who could not afford to send their children to school.

Living a simple life, Wesley found that he could live of just £28 a year, when he was earning £30, so he could afford to give away £2. When he was earning £60 a year, he gave away £32. When he was earning £90, he gave away £62.



John Wesley preached not less than fifteen sermons a week—frequently many more. These sermons were delivered mostly in the open air. He preached, on average, for a period of fifty-four years, fifteen sermons a week, making in all forty-two thousand four hundred.

Wesley met a preacher called Rev George Whitfield who had started to preach outdoors, in town squares and in villages rather than in churches. The men realised that most ordinary working people lived in poverty, their lives were difficult and miserable. The preachers wanted to share the love and happiness that they had found in God with people who never went to church. John Wesley never served as a vicar with a parish of his own he declared that, 'All the world is my parish.' And so he travelled all over the country preaching everywhere he went.

He travelled to Wales, Scotland, Ireland, North America and parts of Europe and in all these places people decided to build churches in the name of Methodism, and so the movement grew rapidly through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



John Wesley's brother Charles was the Vicar in a parish in Bristol. He was prolific hymn writer and wrote over 6000 in his life.

John Wesley averaged, during a period of fifty-four years, about five thousand miles a year, making in all some two hundred and ninety thousand miles, a distance equal to circumnavigating the globe about twelve times. It must not be forgotten that most of this travel was on horseback. Think of riding around the globe on horseback twelve times!



Wesley would read his bible and write while riding his horse on long journeys.



John Wesley was an ordained priest in the Church of England. His understanding that God's love was for all people, both rich and poor and the way he chose to live his life connecting with ordinary people outside of the church, brought him into conflict with others in his church. He always wanted 'Methodism' to be something that renewed the Church of England, not for it to become a separate church. When a Methodist building was opened it did not carry the word church, it was a 'preaching house', or 'meeting room' where people would gather to pray and study the bible, or listen to someone preach a sermon. Holy Communion was never shared in a Methodist building, Wesley always insisted that people went to their local Parish Church for communion.

It was after his death in 1791 that the people who called themselves Methodist decided that they wanted to become a separate church. But rather than forming one church they formed in to many unconnected groups. They went under many different names:

Wesleyans,  
Primitive Methodists,  
Bible Christians,  
United Methodists,  
The Methodist New Connexion,  
The United Methodist Free Church,  
Protestant Methodist Church,  
Wesleyan Reform Union,  
Independent Methodist Church,

Most towns and villages, not just in Lincolnshire but all over the U.K., had two Methodist Churches, usually a Wesleyan and a Primitive.

The current Methodist Chapel in Caistor is what was the Wesleyan Chapel, while the Heritage Centre on Plough Hill used to be the Primitive chapel. (this is where both David and Louis King went to Sunday School)

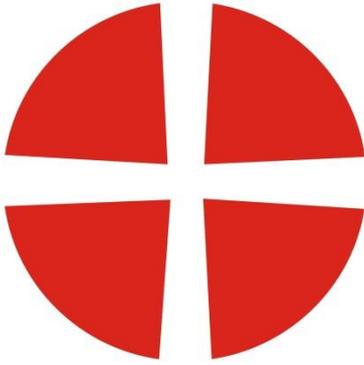
In 1932, 141 years after Wesley's death, all the different groups came together to form the Methodist Church in Great Britain, uniting them as one church, with over 1000,000 members. In his life time and for many years after his death Wesley was an inspiration to people who wanted the world they lived in to be a better place. Many people followed his way of doing things, preaching outdoors, giving part of their income to the poor, and campaigning for the rights of the oppressed.

### **The New Room Bristol.**



This is the oldest Methodist building in the world, built in 1739 and enlarged nine years later. It was not only a chapel for preaching, there were rooms for Wesley and other preachers to sleep when they visited Bristol and there was also a stable for the preacher's horse. Methodists were not popular with everyone, sometimes men with clubs would try to stop their outdoor meetings and when they met indoors bricks would be thrown through the windows. When the New Room was build there were no ground floor windows in order to keep people safe. There is a unique two tier pulpit, the lower level was used for reading the bible and the upper level for preaching. The upper level was not accessible from the ground floor in order to prevent any would be attackers from reaching the preacher.

(booklet on New Room available)



The 'cross and orb' is the symbol of the Methodist Church

It depicts two of our four central beliefs, which are often expressed as "the four alls":

All need to be saved  
All can be saved  
All can know that they are saved  
All can be saved to the uttermost.

The red orb stands for the world, which is red to stand for sin. Christians believe that the world has been spoiled by human sin - our tendency to do, and say, the wrong thing and to be selfish.

Over the red orb is a white cross. White is the colour of purity, and it represents the salvation offered to everyone by Jesus Christ. "Salvation" means that we are set free of our sinful impulses and habits. Sometimes this happens quickly, sometimes it takes many years. Being saved "to the uttermost" is to be completely free of all sinful, selfish impulses, which few people reach in their lifetime.



This is Westminster Methodist Central Hall, opened in 1912, the biggest Methodist Church in England, it is just across the road from Westminster Abbey. The minister here, Rev Martin Turner, is one of the chaplains to the government in the Houses of Parliament.

The Methodist Church is a worldwide Christian Protestant Church. Today there are about 300,000 Methodists in the UK and over 6,000 churches/chapels. There are over 70 million Methodists worldwide and the Methodist Church is growing by a million members annually.

### **Beliefs:**

There is no difference today between what the Church of England and the Methodist Church believe, we share the same faith and belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Important aspects of the faith for Methodists are:

- singing hymns and songs that reflect what we believe about God (we call this theology).
- faith is not just something we think about it comes from the heart and prompts us to do good things for people.
- each person is made a member which gives them a sense of belonging.
- every member has a duty of care for each other and no one is over looked.
- a great concern for social justice - speaking out and acting to make a difference when something is wrong in the world around us.
- importance of the bible to teach and encourage us.
- listening to a preacher explain what God says through the bible, we call this a sermon.
- everyone is involved not just the minister, anyone can lead and preach.

### **Practice:**

In the Methodist Church we celebrate worship every week on Sunday morning, we share in Holy Communion approximately every six weeks. We conduct weddings for anyone who wishes to be married, baptisms for children and adults, and funerals, when we celebrate the life someone has lived.

Useful websites:

<http://www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk/index.php>

[http://www.goforthall.org/articles/jw\\_bio.html](http://www.goforthall.org/articles/jw_bio.html)

<http://www.newroombristol.org.uk/Home>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism>

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/history>

<http://www.methodist-central-hall.org.uk/>

[index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=29&Itemid=25](http://www.methodist-central-hall.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=29&Itemid=25)