

## CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

History Series: The History of John Wesley and the Methodist Church

Compiled by John H. Evans

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### Part 15: ITINERANT MINISTRY BEGINS

In the last installment we saw that Wesley had undergone his heartwarming experience on May 24, 1738. This was followed by considerable spiritual turbulence. (Recall that Charles had had a similar experience three days earlier.) From John's journal:

**Wed. June 7, 1738** - I determined, if God should permit, to retire for a short time into Germany. I had fully proposed, before I left Georgia, so to do if it would please God to bring me back to Europe. And now I saw the time was clearly come. My weak mind could not bear to be thus sawn asunder. And I hoped conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means, under God, of so establishing my soul that I might go on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength.

Wesley traveled through Holland and France en route to Herrnhut, Germany, the Moravian colony. He remained with them for three months, returning to England in the fall of 1738. Back in London he was much involved with the Fetter Lane society of Moravians, making that his base. He traveled over southern England preaching the evangelical message of God's unmerited love in Christ, praying, visiting prisoners and celebrating Holy Communion. He read and studied while riding, mainly about the early church and church governance. He saw people whose lives were changed through his declaration of the Gospel. On Monday Sept. 18, 1738 he met with the Fetter Lane society "which now consisted of thirty two persons." On Tuesday, Sept. 19, he offered salvation to condemned felons in Newgate. In the evening he preached to a society in Bear Yard, the next evening in Aldersgate Street. Friday, November 3rd he preached at St. Antholin's and on Sunday, November 5th he preached at St. Botolph's, Bishopgate in the morning, in the afternoon at Islington and in the evening at St. Clement's in the Strand. Two especially notable journal entries are:

**Dec. 5, 1738** - I began reading prayers and preaching in Gloucester Green workhouse; and on Thursday in that belonging to St. Thomas's parish. At St. Thomas was a young woman, raving mad, screaming and tormenting herself continually. I had a strong desire to speak to her. The moment I began she was still. The tears ran down her cheeks all the time I was telling her "Jesus of Nazareth is able and willing to deliver you."

**Mon. Dec. 11, 1738** - Hearing Mr. Whitefield was arrived from Georgia, I hastened to London from Oxford; and on Tuesday 12, God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together.

This will lead to Wesley's ministry taking a very significant turn.