

## Do You Know Why We Are Called 'United Methodists'?

*Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. (Ephesians 4:1-3, CEB)*

Did you know that this past week, the United Methodist Church celebrated its 50th anniversary? That's right. What we now refer to as the UMC was officially formed on **April 23, 1968** with the joining together of the **Methodist Church** and the **Evangelical United Brethren Church**, along with the dissolution of the **Central Jurisdiction**, a segregated group of African-American congregations.

An article by Fran Cood Walsh (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/do-you-know-why-we-are-called-united-methodists>) explains what happened in greater detail:

*On April 23, 1968, Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church, and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke, of The Methodist Church, joined hands at the General Conference in Dallas, Texas. They declared "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church."*

*A new denomination was born and a new logo was created to represent this coming together. A traditional symbol—the cross—was linked with a single flame with dual tongues of fire. This ties The United Methodist Church to God through Christ (cross) and the Holy Spirit (flame). Most church members know that the symbol is a sign that "this is a place where United Methodists gather." But not everyone recognizes how, and why, it is important to use the denomination's full name.*

*The moniker is a merger of the names of the mostly German Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church. Not using the denomination's full name can feel hurtful to some members.*

*Another meaning of united in the name speaks to the fuller inclusion of black churches. Even though the Methodist Episcopal Church had re-united in 1939 after being divided on the issue of slavery, African American congregations were still segregated into a separate Central Jurisdiction. In 1968, that segregation ended.*

*Day explains, "The United name also represents a coming together of black Methodists and white Methodists in the same conference, with the same preachers, with the same bishops, as opposed to segregated conferences as well. So if you leave the name 'United' off you're leaving off both a significant piece and powerful part of the naming of who we are."*

*That newly formed United Methodist Church became one of the largest Protestant churches in the world with 12.4 million members today. And the cross and flame logo created in 1968 still represents that body, a body united in the goal to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.*

In a day and age when people and organizations tend to split off and go their separate ways when they have disagreements, I find it refreshing to be part of a church that found common ground and joined together around a common purpose. We can be proud of the fact that unity in Christ was put above all other things back in April 1968. I pray that will continue to be the case for us as we press forward into the future.

What does being a 'United Methodist' mean to you? Submit your answer to [office@orrvilletrinity.com](mailto:office@orrvilletrinity.com) and we will post your answers on the bulletin board across from the office.

Easter Joy,

*Pastor David Rittgers*