

----- Through The Years -----
August 2019

The United Methodist Publishing House, located in Nashville, Tennessee, is the oldest and largest general agency of the UMC. The origins of this institution were rather humble.

The earliest print materials used by the new church in American were books and pamphlets sent over by John Wesley. However, by 1787, it was decided that the Methodist Episcopal Church (as it was known) would publish in the United States. The first publishing house, was called a Book Concern. It was established in 1789 in Philadelphia headed by Rev. John Dickens. The operation was short on funds and Dickens often used his own money to keep things afloat. The circuit riders wanted material they could leave in homes until they returned to that particular area. The first publication of the new Book Concern was An Extract of the Christian's Pattern by Thomas a Kempis. By 1795 Dickens had produced a catalog of books for purchase. Rev. Ezekiel Cooper succeeded Dickens in 1798 and moved the operation to New York City. The Methodist Episcopal publishing operation remained in New York until 1939.

Other Methodist groups set up their own publishing houses. The Methodist Protestant Church split from the M. E. in 1828 and set up a book concern in Baltimore. The Methodist Episcopal Church South was created over the issue of slavery and in 1854, they opened a publishing house in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Methodist Episcopal publishers in New York and the Methodist Episcopal Church South also had publishing arms for other churches. The New York operation was called Abington Press while the Nashville operation was Cokesbury Press.

Finally, in 1939 the three Methodist denominations merged to form the Methodist Church. It was decided to use Nashville as the site for the Methodist Publishing House. The 1968 merger with the Evangelical United Brethren church caused the name to change to the United Methodist Publishing House as it is known today. The headquarters building is called the John Dickens House in honor of the first book steward.

Our denomination's publishing arm continues to produce large numbers of books read by Christians everywhere. This carries on the hope of John Wesley that there should be books in every home.

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation? Please send it to:

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