EDITOR'S PREFACE

On behalf of the Historical Society of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, I present volume XVII of THE CHRONICLE. For seventeen years, the society has produced a mix of scholarly, entertaining, informative and inspiring stories of United Methodism – all united by a common theme. This volume continues that tradition.

This year’s unifying theme is “Harrisburg Methodism” and the papers are grouped into two sections: one having to do with Jacob Gruber, and one having to do with women of Harrisburg. Each section is preceded by its own preface, which previews the topics and authors featured in that section.

The Harrisburg theme was chosen for a particular reason. This year the Central Pennsylvania Conference has the privilege of hosting and holding its annual meeting in conjunction with the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church and the denomination’s General Commission on Archives and History. As persons from across the nation gather in Harrisburg for this special celebration, we are pleased to release a journal of quality articles with significant material relating directly to the host city. United Methodism is celebrating a dual 50th anniversary in 2006 – and both of the events being commemorated relate directly to the Central Pennsylvania Conference.

It was in 1956 that legislation finally permitted Negro congregations of the Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church to transfer to appropriate geographic conferences regardless of race. The first congregation in the denomination to take this memorable step was the Mitchell Memorial congregation of Harrisburg, now part of Camp Curtin Memorial Mitchell United Methodist Church. As Jacob Gruber (1778-1850) was, in 1802, the first Methodist Episcopal preacher of record to labor in what became the city of Harrisburg, we pay tribute to the place Harrisburg plays in our denominational history by devoting a section of this year’s volume to the man whose vision began the work in that city. In addition, the papers relating to Gruber will establish his role in promoting racial equality within Methodism.

It was also in 1956 that legislation finally permitted female pastors in the Methodist Church to become full clergy members of an annual conference. The first woman to take that step was Maud Keister Jensen of the Central Pennsylvania Conference. The articles under the heading of “Harrisburg Women” remind us that United Methodist history is not only about males – even though females in the early years were clearly limited to subordinate roles.

Taken together, the two sections in this volume present insights and information that will interest the novice and excite even the most knowledgeable. The volume offers, with appropriate footnotes and commentary, material originally prepared as early as 1817 and as recently as 1984. We trust these articles will enlighten, encourage and empower you in your own walk of faith.