



HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Of the Free Methodist Church In Canada

As we journey forward, it is vital to remember and honour the historical past of our movement. Our roots ground us in a legacy of faith, resilience, and a commitment to justice and holiness that have shaped our identity and mission. Reflecting on the sacrifices, prayers, and vision of those who came before us inspires us to carry the torch of transformation into the future. By remembering our shared history, we gain clarity and purpose, ensuring that our steps align with the values and principles that have defined the Free Methodist movement. This timeline begins with the founder of Methodism, John Wesley.

EARLY LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY

1703

John Wesley is born on June 28 in Epworth, England.

1707

Wesley's brother Charles is born. Charles Wesley becomes the beloved hymn-writer of the Methodist revival. His hymns endure to this day in many branches of the Christian church.



Charles Wesley

THE METHODIST MOVEMENT

Wesley assumes leadership of the Oxford Holy Club, in which members are first called "Methodists."

1729

1700

1710

1720

1730



John Wesley



Christ Church, Oxford

1720

Wesley begins his studies at Christ Church, Oxford.

1728

Wesley is ordained as priest in the Church of England.

1730

1735

Wesley volunteers as missionary to the American colony of Georgia, returning to England in 1738 in spiritual turmoil.

Wesley experiences a profound spiritual awakening on May 24 at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, in which his heart was "strangely warmed." This becomes known as his "Aldersgate Experience."

1738

1739

Wesley begins open-air preaching to evangelize people neglected by the Church of England, a practice which becomes a hallmark of the Methodist revival.

1740

GROWTH OF METHODISM

1744

The first Methodist Conference is held in London, England.

1742

Formation of Class Meetings, cornerstone of Methodist revival and growth.

1750s-1760s

Methodist immigrants come to North America, and begin organizing Class Meetings.

1750



A Methodist open-air meeting



1760

The Foundery, meeting place of the first Methodist Conference in June 1744

1760

1766

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection is first published, the doctrine that Wesley believed was “the Grand Depositum of Methodism, that for which [Methodists] were chiefly raised up.”

1771

Francis Asbury is sent by Wesley as itinerant missionary to America. Asbury would become the beloved circuit-riding leader and catalyst for growth of the Methodist movement in America until his death in 1816.



The Ordination of Bishop Asbury, 1784

1784

Wesley ordains Thomas Coke as Superintendent and Francis Asbury as Co-Superintendent for the work in America, leading to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

METHODISM IN AMERICA

1769

First Methodist Society is organized in America.

1770

1775-1783

The American War for Independence forces American Methodists to break ties with the Church of England.

1780

The Methodist Episcopal Church in America grows rapidly, emphasizing personal holiness and social justice. By the middle of the 19th century, Methodism becomes the largest Protestant movement in the United States.

1787

1790

1790



1791

John Wesley passes away on March 2, his last words being, "Best of all, God is with us."



1800

"Death Of the Rev. John Wesley"

John Sartain., CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

1810



1812 - 1815

War of 1812 between the United States and Britain

1820

1820

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*Warren United Methodist Church (built in 1844)
and Civil War Memorial, Rhode Island*

Kenneth C. Zirkel, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

1840

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1844

The Methodist Episcopal Church splits into Northern and Southern branches over issues including slavery and governance.

1850

FORMATION OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

Dissatisfaction with perceived moral laxity and lack of social justice, including issues of slavery and pew rental practices, grows within the Methodist Episcopal Church.

1858

August 23, 1860

The Free Methodist Church is officially formed in Pekin, New York. Founded by B.T. Roberts and others who were dissatisfied with the Methodist Episcopal Church's abandonment of its foundational principles, the mission of this new denomination was "To maintain the Biblical standard of Christianity, and to preach the gospel to the poor." The Free Methodist Church quickly expands beyond New York, spreading throughout the United States and establishing missions around the world.

Discontent grows among many Canadian Methodists over general spiritual and moral decline in their churches, which they felt was connected to the loss of emphasis on traditional Methodist teaching on personal holiness and revival practices.

1874-1884

1876

The Free Methodist Church sends Rev. Charles Sage as missionary to the newly created Canada Mission District.

1850



Benjamin Titus Roberts

1860



April 12, 1861 - April 9, 1865

American Civil War, fought between the Union (Northern states) and the Confederacy (Southern states) primarily over the issues of slavery and states' rights.

FREE METHODIST BEGINNINGS IN CANADA

1870



Robert Loveless, a Canadian Methodist lay preacher is given a copy of B.T. Roberts' *Earnest Christian* magazine. Excited by what he reads about a new "Free Methodist" movement, he invites B. T. Roberts to speak in Toronto.

1873

1875



1878

Sage is joined by Daniel Marstin, and their work for the next several years involved meeting with Canadian Methodists who were troubled by the move away from John Wesley's fundamental teachings. These discontented Methodists formed new Free Methodists congregations throughout Southwestern Ontario.

1880

FREE METHODISM IN CANADA COMES OF AGE

1883

Reverend Albert Simms replaces Sage, becoming the first Canadian Chairman of the Canada Conference. Other early conference appointments include both men and women.

1880

1880

B.T. Roberts holds a meeting in Galt, ON to organize the Canadian Annual Conference.

1890



Advertisement for an 1891 Camp Meeting in Ontario

Robb Free Methodist Historical Centre

1895

Growth in the Canada Conference results in a division into the Canada East and Canada Great Lakes Conferences.

1900

1898

The first Free Methodist society in Canada to be located west of Ontario is formed at Westview, Northwest Territories (in what is now the province of Saskatchewan.)

1906

West Canada Conference (consisting of Free Methodists in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) is formed.

1910

1910

Canadian Free Methodists initiate an "All-Canada Convention" to meet in Sarnia, ON to establish more autonomy from the American parent church. The Canadian Executive Board is formed to coordinate efforts of the three Canadian Conferences and provide a unified voice in dealing with American headquarters, while maintaining strong ties with the broader Free Methodist Church.

**July 28, 1914 -
Nov. 11, 1918**

World War I

1920

1920

1924

Lorne Park College opens as a ministerial training school in Port Credit, Ontario.

1922

Canadian Free Methodist Herald, a monthly journal, begins publishing.

1927

The Free Methodist Church in Canada is incorporated by Federal Act.

1925

The Methodist Church (Canada) merges with Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form The United Church of Canada. Free Methodist churches gain the members who did not want to join this merger.

1930



West Ontario Conference, Sarnia 1927

Robb Free Methodist Historical Centre

1939

Canadian minister and evangelist Rev. Charles Fairbairn is elected to the Board of Bishops of The Free Methodist Church, serving in USA and Canada.

1940

1940

Moose Jaw Bible College opens as ministerial training school for Western Canada.

1940

**Sept. 1, 1939 -
Sept. 2, 1945**

World War II

1950

1959

The Holiness Movement Church, a small denomination with a number of churches in Eastern Ontario and Western Canada, with mission work in Egypt and Hong Kong, merges with The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

1960

1960

The Free Methodist Church celebrates its centennial, marking 100 years since its founding.

1970

1970

1974

Canadian Jurisdictional Conference is established, and Bishop Donald Bastian is elected as Canada's first resident Bishop.

1980

1983

FMCIC National Headquarters are established in Mississauga, ON.

1980

The Free Methodist Church in Canada celebrates its 90th anniversary, reflecting on its growth and development.

1990

1993

Bishop Gary Walsh is elected by the General Conference.

1990

The Free Methodist Church in Canada is granted status as a General Conference, meeting for the first time as such on August 6.

1994-1996

Reorganization of General Conference structure into one conference eliminates regional Annual Conferences.

1997

Bishop Keith Elford is elected by the General Conference.

1999

A vision for healthy churches, within reach of all people in Canada and beyond is adopted, and continues to guide the FMCIC today, with a focus on multicultural and urban ministries.

2000

2000

The Free Methodist Church in Canada celebrates its centennial, marking 100 years of ministry and service.

2008

2010

The Free Methodist Church celebrates its 150th anniversary globally, highlighting its historical impact and ongoing mission.

2010

2003

Sri Lanka Mission District is inaugurated through Canadian GC outreach.

2009

Ghana Mission District comes under Canadian GC oversight.

2017

Bishop Cliff Fletcher is elected by General Conference.

2020-2021

General Conference is conducted online in multiple sessions during global pandemic.

2020

2024

Bishop Linda Adams is elected by General Conference.

2030



GC2024 Attendees