

tifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety."

**From a letter to her son Samuel,  
around 1704**

"A Christian ought, and in general does, converse with the world like a stranger in an inn; he will use what is necessary for him, and cheerfully enjoy what he innocently can; but at the same time he knows it is but an inn, and he will be but little concerned with what he meets with there, because he takes it not for his home."

**From a letter to her son Samuel, Oct.  
1709**

"In all things endeavor to act on principle, and do not live like the rest of mankind, who pass through the world like straws upon a river, which are carried which way the stream or wind drives them."

**From a letter to her son John, June  
1725**

"Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

**From a letter to her son John, Jan. 1,  
1733**

"For my own part, after many years' search and inquiry, I still continue to pay my devotions to an Unknown God. I dare not say I love (God); only this, - I have chosen (God) or my own Happiness, my All, my only Good; in a word, - for my God."

## In Brief

### General Conference 2020 postponed to 2022

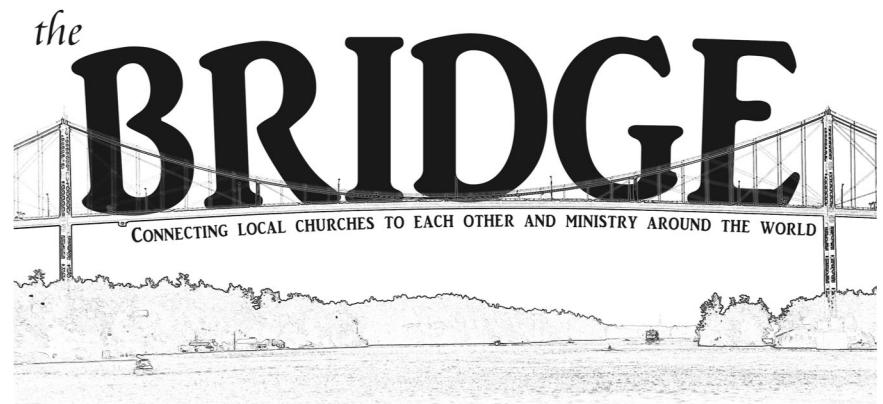
Meeting on Feb. 20, the Commission on the General Conference decided to further postpone the 2020 General Conference until **Aug. 29 – Sept. 6, 2022** in Minneapolis, Minn. as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the safety of mass gatherings and travel.

On Feb. 25, the Council of Bishops announced that there will be a Special Session of General Conference on May 8, **2021**. This Special Session will involve disciplinary matters to be moved, seconded, and then without debate be voted upon using a mailed ballot—this will enable the Church to continue its administrative functions appropriately.

*The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:*

**[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)**

The 2021 Session of the Upper New York Annual Conference will be held remotely June 17-19. Visit <https://www.unyumc.org/events/annual-conference> to learn more.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

## A look inside!

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# Get to know the mother of Methodism

In honor of Women's History Month, this issue of the *Bridge* puts the spotlight on the mother of Methodism, Susanna Wesley.

## Who is Susanna Wesley?

By Rev. Alfred T. Day III, General Commission on Archives and History

Susanna Wesley is the mother of one of church history's greatest dynamic duos. John and Charles are their mother's sons. She is the person who is responsible for their education and spiritual formation.

United Methodist historians say the fathers of the Methodist movement owe much of their success to their mother and the foundation built in their childhood home.

She had a spreadsheet before there were spreadsheets. She had an incredible organizational schedule for their dressing and changing clothes.

Born in 1669, Susanna Wesley was the youngest of 25. At age 19, she married Church of England pastor Samuel Wesley and bore 19 children. Managing a home took great planning but she made time to nurture each child.

Dale Patterson, General Commission on Archives and History said, "She would mark out at least an hour, and so it might well be that Tuesday at 3 was a time that was exclusively devoted to John, let's say. Now that doesn't mean she ignored him the rest of the week. But that was their time to sit down and be together. She did that with all of her children."

Susanna led by example. Her life and faith journey shaped Methodism in ways

we see today.

We see in her and in her sons this tension between Puritan Evangelicalism and Church of England prayer book order, spirituality, and sacramentalism. And I think we Methodists are best when we are both/and not either/or.

Long before women were ordained, Susanna would sometimes gather friends around the kitchen table and lead prayers when her preacher husband was away. She kept the parish going in his absence.

Dale Patterson said, "That was actually pretty radical. Now today, a family devotion with friends we wouldn't think anything about it. In the early 18th century? And her argument was there was no one else to read. It needed to be done for the good of the people. I'll do it."

Susanna also planted the unconventional idea of letting lay people serve as local preachers.

Dale Patterson added, "When John started traveling the circuit and preaching, he was late. And he shows up and a gentleman that he knew, a layman, was filling in for him. Well, he was aghast. A layman kind of almost preaching. Well, you know who told him to take another look? His mother. He listened and realized this guy's doing a good thing. That changed the character of our Methodist revival."

Susanna Wesley is a major difference maker. And the differences that she made have lived on from the history of 17th and 18th century well into the present moment because of the sons that she raised.



## Quotes from Susanna Wesley

The mother of the Wesleys was herself the daughter of a prominent Dissenting minister. Brilliant, beautiful, and strong-willed, she had a profound influence on her children and thus on the Methodist movement. She was the devoted mother of at least nineteen children, 10 of whom lived to adulthood. When the children were small, she developed a remarkable and effective method of education and spiritual nurture. As they grew older, she wrote manuals for them on such topics as the attributes of God, the Apostles'

Creed, and the Holy Spirit. John, Charles, and the other children relied on her wise counsel on matters spiritual, theological, and personal.

## From a letter to her son John, July 24, 1732, describing her method of child-rearing

"As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mor-

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