

## JOHN WESLEY'S DEED OF DECLARATION

**ENROLLED IN HIS MAJESTY'S HIGH COURT OF CHANCERY ON FEBRUARY 28,  
1784.**

*To all to whom these Presents shall come*, **JOHN WESLEY**, late of Lincoln College, Oxford, but now of the City-Road, London, Clerk, sendeth greeting: —

**Whereas** divers buildings, commonly called **chapels**, with a messuage and dwelling-house, or other appurtenances, to each of the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, have been given and conveyed from time to time, by the said John Wesley, to certain persons and their heirs, in each of the said gifts and conveyances named; which are enrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery, upon the acknowledgment of the said John Wesley (pursuant to the Act of Parliament in that case made and provided);

upon trust, that the Trustees in the said several Deeds respectively named, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the Trustees for the time being, to be elected as in the said Deeds is appointed, should permit and suffer the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, at all times during his life, at his will and pleasure to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises, that he the said John Wesley, and such person and persons as he should nominate and appoint, might therein preach and expound God's Holy Word;

and upon further trust, that the said respective Trustees, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the Trustees for the time being, should permit and suffer Charles Wesley, brother of the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as the said Charles Wesley should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, in like manner during his life, to have, use, and enjoy the said premises respectively, for the like purposes as aforesaid;

and after the decease of the survivor of them, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, then upon further trust, that the said respective Trustees, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the Trustees for the time being for ever, should permit and suffer such person and persons, and for such time and times, as should be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid:

And whereas divers persons have, in like manner, given or conveyed many chapels, with messages and dwelling-houses, or other appurtenances, to the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, and also in Ireland, to certain Trustees, in each of the said gifts and conveyances respectively named, upon the like trusts, and for the same uses and purposes as aforesaid (except only that in some of the said gifts and conveyances, no life-estate or other interest is therein or thereby given and reserved to the said Charles Wesley):

And whereas, for rendering effectual the trusts created by the said several gifts or conveyances, and that no doubt or litigation may arise with respect unto the same, or the interpretation and true meaning thereof, it has been thought expedient by the said John Wesley, on behalf of himself as donor of the several chapels, with the messages, dwelling-houses, or appurtenances, before-mentioned, as of the donors of the said other chapels, with the messages, dwelling-houses, or appurtenances, to the same belonging, given or conveyed to the like uses and trusts, to explain the words, "Yearly Conference of the people called Methodists," contained in all the said Trust

Deeds, and to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof is to be continued: *[SEE ENDNOTE #1]*

*Now therefore these presents witness* , that, for accomplishing the aforesaid purposes, the said John Wesley doth hereby declare, that the Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, ever since there hath been any yearly Conference of the said people called Methodists in any of the said places, hath always heretofore consisted of the Preachers and Expounders of God's Holy Word, commonly called Methodist Preachers, in connection with, and under the care of, the said John Wesley, whom he hath thought expedient year after year to summons to meet him, in one or other of the said places, of London, Bristol, or Leeds, to advise with them for the promotion of the Gospel of Christ, to appoint the said persons so summoned, and the other Preachers and Expounders of God's Holy Word, also in connection with, and under the care of, the said John Wesley, not summoned to the said yearly Conference, to the use and enjoyment of the said chapels and premises so given and conveyed upon trust for the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should appoint during his life as aforesaid, and for the expulsion of unworthy and admission of new persons under his care, and into his connection, to be Preachers and Expounders as aforesaid, and also of other persons upon trial for the like purposes; the names of all which persons so summoned by the said John Wesley, the persons appointed, with the chapels and premises to which they were so appointed, together with the duration of such appointments, and of those expelled or admitted into connection or upon trial, with all other matters transacted and done at the said yearly Conference, have, year by year, been printed and published under the title of "Minutes of Conference."

*And these presents further witness* , and the said John Wesley doth hereby avouch and further declare, that the several persons herein-after named, to wit, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley; Thomas Coke, of the city of London, Doctor of Civil Law; James Creighton, of the same place, Clerk; Thomas Tennant, of the same place; Thomas Rankin, of the same place; Joshua Keighley, of Sevenoaks, in the county of Kent; James Wood, of Rochester, in the said county of Kent; John Booth, of Colchester; Thomas Cooper, of the same place; Richard Whatcoat, of Norwich; Jeremiah Brettel, of Lynn, in the county of Norfolk; Jonathan Parkin, of the same place; Joseph Pescod, of Bedford; Christopher Watkins, of Northampton; John Barber, of the same place; John Broadbent, of Oxford; Joseph Cole, of the same place; Jonathan Cousins, of the city of Gloucester; John Brettel, of the same place; John Mason, of Salisbury; George Story, of the same place; Francis Wrigley, of St. Austle, in the county of Cornwall; William Green, of the city of Bristol; John Moon, of Plymouth-Dock; James Hall, of the same place; James Thom, of St. Austle, aforesaid; Joseph Taylor, of Redruth, in the said county of Cornwall; William Hoskins, of Cardiff, Glamorganshire; John Leech, of Brecon; William Saunders, of the same place; Richard Rodda, of Birmingham; John Fenwick, of Burslem, Staffordshire; Thomas Hanby, of the same place; James Rogers, of Macclesfield; Samuel Bardsley, of the same place; John Murlin, of Manchester; William Percival, of the same place; Duncan Wright, of the city of Chester; John Goodwin, of the same place; Parson Greenwood, of Liverpool; Zechariah Udall, of the same place; Thomas Vasey, of the same place; Joseph Bradford, of Leicester; Jeremiah Robertshaw, of the same place; William Myles, of Nottingham; Thomas Longley, of Derby; Thomas Taylor, of Sheffield; William Simpson, of the same place; Thomas Carlill, of Grimsby, in the county of Lincoln; Robert Scott, of the same place; Joseph Harper, of the same place; Thomas Corbit, of Gainsborough, in the county of Lincoln; James Ray of the same place; William Thompson, of Leeds, in the county of York; Robert Roberts, of the same place; Samuel Bradburn, of the same place; John Valton, of Birstal, in the said county; John Allen, of the same place; Isaac Brown, of the same place; Thomas Hanson, of Huddersfield, in the said county; John Shaw, of the same place; Alexander Mather, of Bradford, in the said county; Joseph Benson, of Halifax, in the said county; William Dufton, of the same place; Benjamin Rhodes, of Keighley, in the said county; John Easton, of Colne, in the county of Lancaster; Robert Costerdine, of the same place; Jasper Robinson, of the Isle of Man; George Button, of the same place; John Pawson, of the city of York; Edward Jackson, of Hull; Charles Atmore, of the said city of York; Lancelot Harrison, of Scarborough; George Shadford, of Hull,

aforesaid; Barnabas Thomas, of the same place; Thomas Briscoe, of Yarm, in the said county of York; Christopher Peacock, of the same place; William Thom, of Whitby, in the said county of York; Robert Hopkins, of the same place; John Peacock, of Barnard Castle; William Collins, of Sunderland; Thomas Dixon, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Christopher Hopper, of the same place; William Boothby, of the same place; William Hunter, of Berwick-upon-Tweed; Joseph Saunderson, of Dundee, Scotland; William Warrener, of the same place; Duncan M'Allum, of Aberdeen, Scotland; Thomas Rutherford, of the city of Dublin, in the kingdom of Ireland; Daniel Jackson, of the same place; Henry Moore, of the city of Cork, Ireland; Andrew Blair, of the same place; Richard Watkinson, of Limerick, Ireland; Nehemiah Price, of Athlone, Ireland; Robert Lindsay, of Sligo, Ireland; George Brown, of Clones, Ireland; Thomas Barber, of Charlemont, Ireland; Henry Foster, of Belfast, Ireland; and John Crook, of Lisburne, Ireland, Gentlemen;

being Preachers and Expounders of God's Holy Word, under the care and in connection with the said John Wesley, have been, and now are, and do, on the day of the date hereof, constitute the members of the said Conference, according to the true intent and meaning of the said several gifts and conveyances wherein the words, Conference of the people called Methodists, are mentioned and contained;

and that the said several persons beforenamed, and their successors for ever, to be chosen as hereafter mentioned, are and shall for ever be construed, taken, and be, the Conference of the people called Methodists.

Nevertheless, upon the terms, and subject to the regulations herein-after prescribed; that is to say,

*First* , That the members of the said Conference, and their successors for the time being for ever, shall assemble once in every year, at London, Bristol, or Leeds, (except as after-mentioned,) for the purposes aforesaid; and the time and place of holding every subsequent Conference shall be appointed at the preceding one, save that the next Conference after the date hereof shall be holden at Leeds, in Yorkshire, the last Tuesday in July next.

*Second* , The act of the majority in number of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, and be the act of the whole Conference, to all intents, purposes, and constructions whatsoever.

*Third* , That after the Conference shall be assembled as aforesaid, they shall first proceed to fill up all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence, as after-mentioned.

*Fourth* , No act of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, or be the act of the Conference, until forty of the members thereof are assembled, unless reduced under that number by death since the prior Conference, or absence as after-mentioned; nor until all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence shall be filled up by the election of new members of the Conference, so as to make up the number one hundred, unless there be not a sufficient number of persons objects of such election; and during the assembly of the Conference, there shall always be forty members present at the doing of any act, save as aforesaid, or otherwise such act shall be void.

*Fifth* , The duration of the yearly assembly of the Conference shall not be less than five days, nor more than three weeks, and be concluded by the appointment of the Conference, if under twenty-one days; or otherwise the conclusion thereof shall follow of course at the end of the said twenty-one days; the whole of all which said time of the assembly of the Conference shall be had, taken, considered, and be the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists; and all acts of the Conference, during such yearly assembly thereof, shall be the acts of the Conference, and none other.

*Sixth* , Immediately after all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence are filled up by the election of new members as aforesaid, the Conference shall choose a President and Secretary of their assembly out of themselves, who shall continue such until the election of another President or Secretary in the next, or other subsequent Conference; and the said President shall have the privilege and power of two members in all acts of the Conference during his presidency, and such other powers, privileges, and authorities, as the Conference shall from time to time see fit to entrust into his hands.

*Seventh* , Any member of the Conference absenting himself from the yearly assembly thereof for two years successively, without the consent or dispensation of the Conference, and be not present on the first day of the third yearly assembly thereof, at the time and place appointed for the holding of the same, shall cease to be a member of the Conference from and after the said first day of the said third yearly assembly thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he were naturally dead. But the Conference shall and may dispense with or consent to the absence of any member from any of the said yearly assemblies for any cause which the Conference may see fit or necessary; and such member, whose absence shall be so dispensed with or consented to by the Conference, shall not by such absence cease to be a member thereof.

*Eighth* , The Conference shall and may expel and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connection therewith, or from being upon trial, any person, member of the Conference, or admitted into connection, or upon trial, for any cause which to the Conference may seem fit or necessary; and every member of the Conference so expelled and put out, shall cease to be a member thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. And the Conference, immediately after the expulsion of any member thereof as aforesaid, shall elect another person to be a member of the Conference, in the stead of such member so expelled.

*Ninth* , The Conference shall and may admit into connection with them, or upon trial, any person or persons whom they shall approve, to be Preachers and Expounders of God's Holy Word, under the care and direction of the Conference; the name of every such person or persons so admitted into connection or upon trial as aforesaid, with the time and degrees of the admission, being entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference.

*Tenth* , No person shall be elected a member of the Conference, who hath not been admitted into connection with the Conference, as a Preacher and Expounder of God's Holy Word, as aforesaid, for twelve months.

*Eleventh* , The Conference shall not, nor may, nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of, or to preach and expound God's Holy Word in, any of the chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, who is not either a member of the Conference, or admitted into connection with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid; nor appoint any person for more than three years successively, to the use and enjoyment of any chapel and premises already given, or to be given or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, except ordained Ministers of the Church of England.

*Twelfth* , That the Conference shall and may appoint the place of holding the yearly assembly thereof, at any other city, town, or place, than London, Bristol, or Leeds, when it shall seem expedient so to do.

*Thirteenth* , And for the convenience of the chapels and premises already, or which may hereafter be, given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, situate in Ireland, or other parts out of the kingdom of Great Britain, [SEE, ENDNOTE #2] the Conference shall and may, when and as often as it shall seem expedient, but not otherwise, appoint and delegate any member or members of the Conference, with all or any of the powers, privileges, and advantages, hereinbefore contained or vested in the Conference; and all and every the acts, admissions, expulsions,

and appointments whatsoever of such member or members of the Conference, so appointed and delegated as aforesaid, the same being put into writing, and signed by such delegate or delegates, and entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference, and subscribed as after mentioned, shall be deemed, taken, and be, the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments of the Conference, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever, from the respective times when the same shall be done by such delegate or delegates; notwithstanding anything herein contained to the contrary.

*Fourteenth* , All resolutions and orders touching elections, admissions, expulsions, consents, dispensations, delegations, or appointments and acts whatsoever of the Conference, shall be entered and written in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference, which shall be kept for that purpose, publicly read, and then subscribed by the President and Secretary thereof for the time being, during the time such Conference shall be assembled; and when so entered and subscribed, shall be had, taken, received, and be, the acts of the Conference, and such entry and subscription as aforesaid shall be had, taken, received, and be, evidence of all and every such acts of the said Conference, and of their said delegates, without the aid of any other proof; and whatever shall not be so entered and subscribed as aforesaid, shall not be had, taken, received, or be, the act of the Conference: And the said President and Secretary are hereby required and obliged to enter and subscribe, as aforesaid, every act whatever of the Conference.

*Lastly* , Whenever the said Conference shall be reduced under the number of forty members, and continue so reduced for three yearly assemblies thereof successively, or whenever the members thereof shall decline or neglect to meet together annually for the purposes aforesaid, during the space of three years that then, and in either of the said events, the Conference of the people called Methodists shall be extinguished, and all the aforesaid powers, privileges, and advantages shall cease, and the said chapels and premises, and all other chapels and premises, which now are, or hereafter may be, settled, given, or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, shall vest in the Trustees for the time being of the said chapels and premises respectively, and their successors for ever;

UPON TRUST that they, and the survivors of them, and the Trustees for the time being, do, shall, and may appoint such person and persons to preach and expound God's Holy Word therein, and to have the use and enjoyment thereof, for such time, and in such manner, as to them shall seem proper.

*Provided always*, that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to extinguish, lessen, or abridge the life-estate of the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, of and in any of the said chapels and premises, or any other chapels and premises, wherein they the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, now have, or may have, any estate or interest, power or authority whatsoever.

*In witness thereof*, the said John Wesley hath hereunto set his hand and seal, the twenty-eighth day of February, in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four. *John Wesley*.

Sealed and delivered (being first duly stamped) in the presence of *William Clulow*, Quality Court, Chancery-Lane, London. *Richard Young*, Clerk to the said William Clulow.

Taken and acknowledged by the Rev. John Wesley, party hereto, this 28th of February, 1784, at the Public Office, before me, *Edward Montagu*.

The above is a true Copy of the original Deed, (which is enrolled in Chancery,) and was therewith examined by us, *William Clulow*.

*Richard Young.*

ENDORSEMENT. *DATED FEB . 28TH, 1784. Clulow.*

The Rev. John Wesley's Declaration and Appointment of the Conference of the people called Methodists, enrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery, the ninth day of March, in the year of our Lord 1784, being first duly stamped according to the tenor of the Statutes, made for that purpose. *Thomas Brigstock.*

**ENDNOTES** (by Rich Marsh)

1. *The language appearing after ENDNOTE #1 is the precursor to our modern-day Book Of Discipline.*
2. *Note here that, as of February 1784 (the date of this Deed of Declaration), the United States had only recently ended hostilities with Great Britain, and the ink on the Treaty of Paris was still moist. Wesley had traveled to the colonies much earlier in 1736, and it is possible that the language, "other parts out of the kingdom of Great Britain", was intended by Wesley to refer to chapels and premises in the original colonies. In any case, the trust clause concept and the annual conference method of organization were soon introduced in the American Methodist movement, starting with the famous Christmas Conference held in Baltimore in December 1784.*