



REIMAGINING TRADITION:

TRADITION, TRADITIONALISM, AND THE
REALITY OF CHANGE IN THE CHURCH



Presented by Rev. Dr. Stanley Hearst II

TRADITION VS. TRADITIONALISM

DEFINITIONS

TRADITION (N)

A long-established or inherited way of thinking or acting; a continuing pattern of culture beliefs or practices.

TRADITIONALISM (N)

Adherence to tradition as authority, especially in matters of religion.





Then Pharisees and scribes came
from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked,
"Why do your disciples break the
tradition of the elders? For they
don't wash their hands when they
eat!" He answered them, "**And why do
you break God's commandment
because of your tradition?**" Vs. 1-3

MATTHEW 15:1-9



1

THE PHARISEES CARED MORE ABOUT TRADITION THAN TRANSFORMATION

Jesus just healed the sick and fed 5000+ but they were worried about handwashing!

2

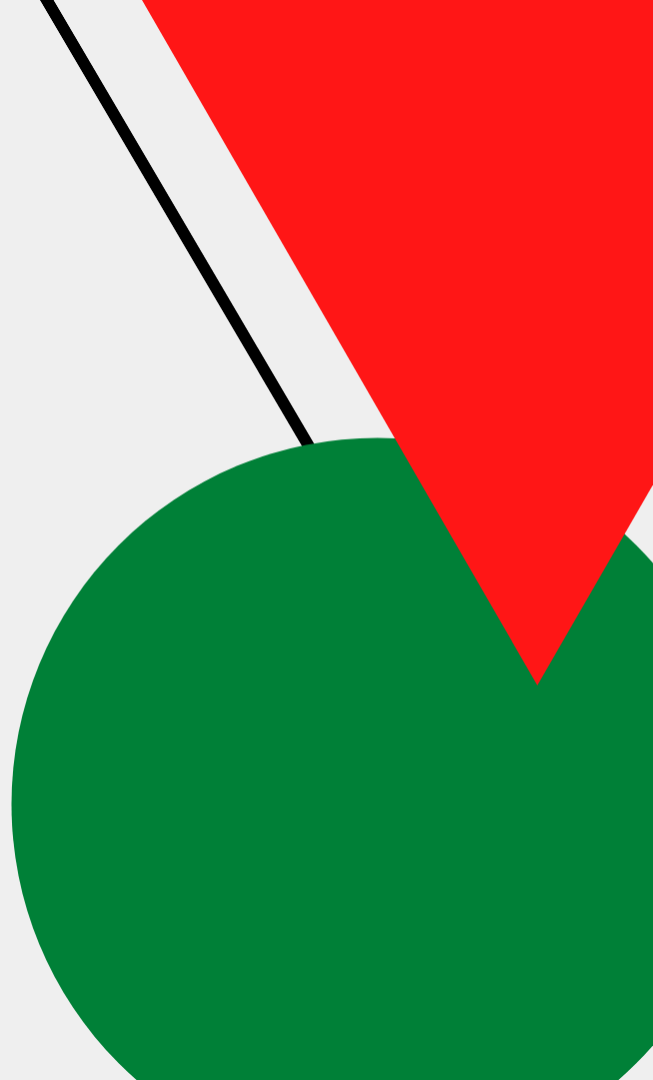
THE PHARISEES WANTED TO USE TRADITION TO TRAP JESUS

They were afraid of Jesus' authority and wanted to make him violate the Mosaic Law

3

THE PHARISEES ELEVATED TRADITION OVER THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD

They exploited the people and the word for their own gain.



TRADITION VS. TRADITIONALISM

What side are you on?

TRADITION (N)

A long-established or inherited way of thinking or acting; a continuing pattern of culture beliefs or practices.

TRADITIONALISM (N)

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...**the idolatry of traditionalism**, which causes us to do everything as it's always been done, to such an extent that worship remains boring and stale. New wine must indeed be put into new wineskins; to try and nurture revival and be genuinely open to the new movements of the Spirit require that we not be stuck to old forms that have no life.



Marva J. Dawn. , *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*



COVID-19 HAS FORCED US TO DO/BE CHURCH IN A NEW WAY

Traditions associated with Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism, Visitation, Mission work, etc, have been put on hold and reevaluated in this season.

THOSE MARRIED TO TRADITIONALISM HAVE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF A REFUSAL TO ADAPT

Traditionalists live in the past, often reminisce about the good ol' days, rarely speak about a vision for the future, are comfortable even as the local church declines.

"TRADITIONS" EVOLVING HAS BEEN THE NORM IN AFRICAN METHODISM



A horizontal timeline with a black line and five red downward-pointing triangles. The years 1816 AD, 1872 AD, 1960 AD, 2000 AD, and 2020 AD are written in red above the line. Below the line, corresponding events are listed in black text. A large green circle and a red triangle are in the top right corner.

1816 AD

The birth of the AME
Denomination

1872 AD

Assessments are "born"
with the advent of the
Dollar Money at the GC

1960 AD

Women are finally ordained
as Itinerants in the AME
Church

2000 AD

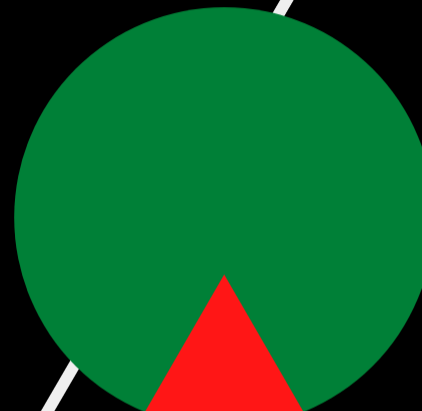
Electronic voting begins at
the General Conference in
Cincinnati, Ohio.

2020 AD

The Church is forced to "do
church" in a digital space
due to COVID-19

EVOLVING TRADITIONS

LOVE FEAST, GENERAL
CONFERENCE, MUSIC & CHRISTIAN
ARTS IN WORSHIP, CLERGY ROBES



EVOLVING TRADITIONS: LOVE-FEAST

777 Q. Can any person come into love-feast at any time?

A. No. Two stewards are required to keep the doors of entrance into love-feast, and admit no one without a quarterly ticket from his or her leader, and then not later than the members begin to give in their experience.

Bishop H.M. Turner, *The Genius And Theory of Methodist Polity* (1885)



EVOLVING TRADITIONS: LOVE-FEAST

We've moved from the mandatory ticket, but how can we keep the spirit of Love-Feast alive in a Pandemic? Are we still having Love-Feast? Did we have Love-Feast pre-pandemic? Will we return to Love-Feast once we return to the building? How can we REIMAGINE Love-Feast?



EVOLVING TRADITIONS: GENERAL CONFERENCE



Where we hold GC and how we vote has changed over the years. COVID-19 has forced the Church to reevaluate traditions surrounding GC.

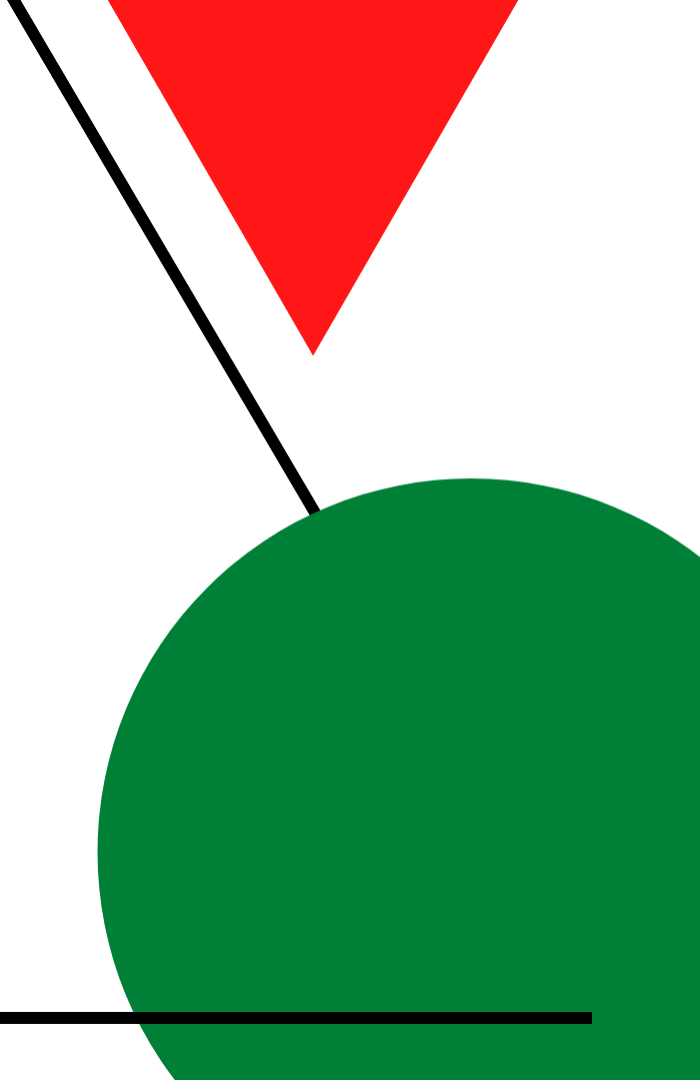
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WHAT WILL GENERAL CONFERENCE 2021 LOOK LIKE?

The Council of Bishops and The General Board are wrestling with how to plan something that **MUST** be held, but **CANNOT** be held in the same way as previous years. How can we REIMAGINE General Conference?



EVOLVING TRADITIONS: MUSIC & CHRISTIAN ARTS IN WORSHIP



CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

"Methodists-A Singing People"



CHOIRS & ENSAMBLERES

Mass Choir, Young Adult Choir,
Youth Choir, Male Chorus



PRAISE TEAMS

Gospel, Contemporary Gospel,
CCM (Christian Contemporary Music)



EVOLVING TRADITIONS: MUSIC & CHRISTIAN ARTS IN WORSHIP



INSTRUMENTS

There were "worship wars" in churches when drums, guitars, Hammond Organs, and other instruments were introduced.



LITURGICAL DANCERS

A ministry that is now considered normal was looked at as unnecessary and ungodly in some circles.



DRAMA MINISTRY

People are now worshipping God through creative methods such as acting and poetry.



MCAM & SOCIAL DISTANCING

Many of our MCAM's have been shut down because of the social distancing rules. How do we adapt to the changing times to allow ministry to flow, while remaining safe? How are we building community in a digital space? How can we REIMAGINE MCAM?

EVOLVING TRADITIONS:

EPISCOPAL THOUGHTS ON CLERGY ROBES



BISHOP RICHARD
ALLEN

Anti Clergy Robe



BISHOP HENRY
MCNEAL TURNER

Pro Clergy Robe



BISHOP GREGORY
G.M. INGRAM

Pro Clergy Robe

EVOLVING TRADITIONS:

EPISCOPAL THOUGHTS ON CLERGY ROBES

"...this was the beginning of the Episcopal Church amongst the Methodists. Many of the ministers were set apart in holy orders at this conference, and were said to be entitled to the gown; and I have thought that religion has been declining in the church ever since." **Rt. Rev. Richard Allen**, *Life Experience and Gospel Labors*




"What we wear reveals who we are...Since ordained clergy are representatives and ambassadors of our Heavenly Father they should adorn themselves accordingly...robes...help point people away from the material things of the world, like clothes and adornments." **Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram**, *Spiritual Protocol, Policies, and Procedures for Excellence in Ministry*

Are You Still Robing in a Pandemic?

If we choose to not wear a robe during this season of Virtual Worship we need to make sure our clothing does not distract from God's word. How can we REIMAGINE clergy attire?





CHANGE IS NECESSARY

THE PANDEMIC HAS GIVEN US ALL AN OPPORTUNITY
TO CREATE A PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL MINISTRY

REIMAGINING TRADITION: A MESSAGE FROM OUR PAST

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No institution or custom should be held simply because it is old and comes to us as an inheritance from the past when it can no longer fit into or compete with the life of today. They should be superseded by forms of action and service that will reach our objectives.

-**Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom**, "The Church That Shall Survive",
Quadrennial Sermon 1936 General Conference





TRADITION is inspirational.
TRADITIONALISM becomes
idolatrous. As we seek to make
disciples for Jesus Christ in a
digital space we have to know
the difference and govern
ourselves accordingly.