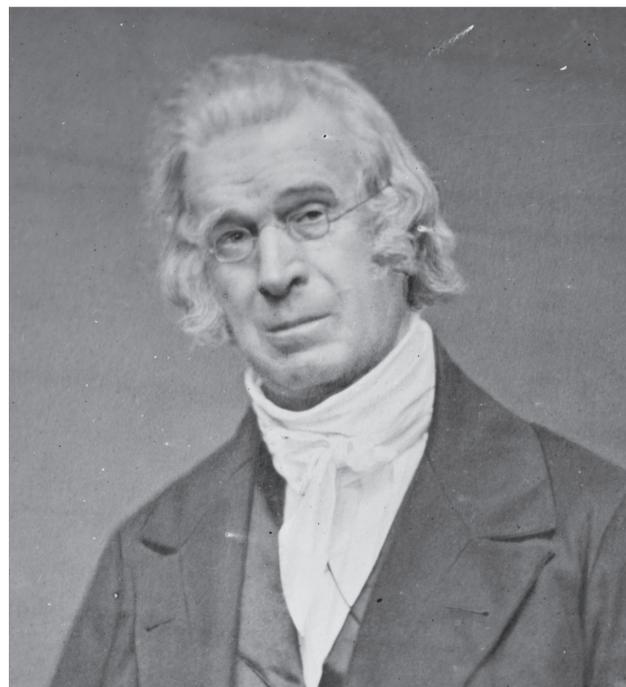




Global Ministries
Celebrating 200 Years in Mission



NATHAN BANGS

First Executive of the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society

Nathan Bangs, 1778–1862, was the first administrator of the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society, founded on April 5, 1819. He was also the head of the Methodist Book Concern. With these two roles, he had a major impact on two of the United Methodism's first and continuing organizations, the General Board of Global Ministries and the Publishing House.

Born in Stratford, Connecticut, into an Anglican family, he found his religious home in the Methodist movement while working as a teacher and land surveyor in Upper Canada (along the Ontario-Québec boundary). He was ordained a deacon and elder in the New York Conference and returned to Canada as a missionary circuit rider. He would become the equivalent of today's district superintendent, but did not aspire to the episcopacy when proposed for the office.

Bangs helped to charter the Missionary Society and became its first executive after it was authorized by the General Conference of 1820 to raise money for mission. The role fit easily into

that of a book agent since the Methodist Book Concern was one of few Methodist entities equipped to receive and disperse funds.

Bangs was knowledgeable and self-educated, writing extensively on theology and early American Methodism. His multi-volume *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church from its Origin in 1776 to the General Conference of 1840* was published the year before he left the Missionary Society to become the second president of Wesleyan University, a school with strong Methodist ties in Connecticut. However, Bangs' skills were unsuitable to higher education and in 1842 he returned to New York City, devoting himself to writing and pastoral ministry. He and his wife Mary Bolton had 11 children.

A new biography, *Nathan Bangs and the Methodist Episcopal Church: The Spread of Scriptural Holiness in Nineteenth-Century America*, by historian Jared Maddox was published by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in 2018.