

Methodists in the UK are dwindling quickly

by [Trevor Grundy](#) in the [October 1, 2014](#) issue

As the Methodist Church in Britain loses members, one religious affairs commentator described it as “like an iceberg that’s just crumbling into the sea.”

The comments of Linda Woodhead, a sociologist of religion at Lancaster University, follow the publication of a report titled “Statistics for Mission” by the Methodist Church, which shows a dramatic collapse of membership to about 200,000 in the U.K. in the last decade.

“It’s totally dying out,” she said. “On current trends, [the Methodists] will disappear, very soon.”

Moira Sleight, editor and publisher of the *Methodist Recorder*, said, “During the past ten years membership of the Methodist Church has fallen by a third, with attendance falling by a similar proportion.”

Methodist churches sprang up in Britain during the aftermath of the French Revolution and the start of the Industrial Revolution—days when the working classes were poorly paid and revolution was in the air.

The brothers Charles and John Wesley were ordained Anglicans who defied the Church of England’s establishment by holding open-air meetings and writing more than 6,000 hymns urging industrial and agricultural laborers to turn their backs on alcohol and gambling.

In America, Methodists were popular because they helped fill a spiritual vacuum created by Anglicans who deserted their flocks at the time of the American Revolution.

Methodists around the world number 70 to 80 million people. The United Methodist Church in the United States has 8 million members. There are approximately 5 million members in Africa, Asia, and different parts of Europe.

In the *Times*, Richard Vautrey, former vice president of the Methodist Church, said Methodists must not despair.

“Let’s not dwell on our pain,” he said, “but instead celebrate each God-given day we have left.” —Religion News Service

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