

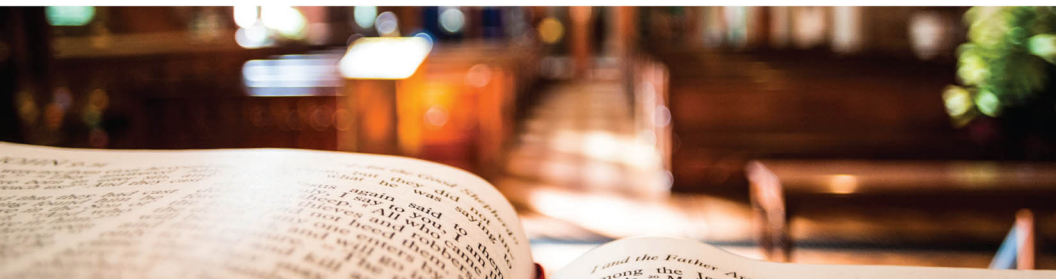
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*hope and vision for
a new methodist future*

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a new methodist future*

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Contents

Foreword by William J. Abraham	vii
1. Commitment to Transformation • <i>Jeff Greenway</i>	1
Witness: “Awakening Orthodoxy” by Madeline Carrasco Hennes	
2. When Jesus Is Lord • <i>David Watson</i>	17
Witness: “Living and Relevant Church Today” by Carlos Pirona	
3. Faithfully Engaging the Scriptures • <i>Chris Ritter</i>	35
Witness: “Committed to Scripture” by Debo Onabanjo	
4. When the Holy Spirit Comes with Fire • <i>Carolyn Moore</i>	53
Witness: “Hiring a Sanctified Felon” by Heather Hill	
5. Loving God with an Undivided Heart • <i>Maxie Dunnam</i>	71
Witness: “Our God of Deliverance” by Kenneth Levingston	
6. The Dynamism of Discipleship • <i>Andrew Forrest</i>	87
Witness: “Jesus on the Margins” by Jorge Acevedo	
7. The Church’s Global DNA • <i>Kimberly Reisman</i>	105
Witness: “Agenda at the Crossroads” by Jerry Kulah	
Epilogue: What Comes Next? • <i>Keith Boyette</i>	119
About the Writers	125
Acknowledgments	127

Foreword

I had never wanted to go to Jerusalem or to the Holy Land. A lot of folk have been puzzled when they discovered that this was the case. My reasoning was simple: the risen Lord is present everywhere so there is no need to travel to the Holy Land; we occupy holy spaces here where we are and where we seek the Spirit's grace. Then I was invited to attend a conference in Jerusalem led by Jewish philosophers, and I decided to go. After ten days there, I cannot wait to get back. Three things caught my attention; some of the holy sites, especially the Garden Tomb and the Sea of Galilee; the amazing intellectualism and spiritual fecundity of the Jewish scholars I met; and the remarkable achievements (warts and all) of the state of Israel over the last seventy years. I am glad that I got over my hesitations.

Many of us have similar hesitations about the journey ahead of us in United Methodism. We would prefer to stay where we are, minister to the people the Lord has called us to serve, and finish our work in peace. However, the next Methodism is already around the corner; we cannot sit on the sidelines. More dramatically, the crowbar of events within our church has awakened us from our complacency and slumber, and we must move forward in faith and hope to a new future.

This splendid set of essays is a great place to begin. They represent a sea change in our orientation. Every one of them is written with grace and hope; the days of hand-wringing and lament are over. Every one of them speaks to an issue we need to ponder; there is no shirking the new challenges to be met. Every one of them is written with grace and wit; there is not a hint of polemic

or agitation. Every one of them is clear and to the point; there is no doublespeak or sail-trimming.

We have started a long-haul conversation that will continue for years to come. Within this, there are and will be disagreements. But the table is set. All are welcome to work through to a new phase of our history. We need a combination of firmness and flexibility; of impatience and patience; of fear and confidence; and of divine wisdom and human ingenuity. Above all, we need to get our act together in mission and evangelism. There is no need to rush to immediate decisions on the organizational horizon; we will be given the grace needed to cross whatever bridge lies ahead. The road ahead will at times be extremely difficult and even treacherous; the destination, however, will open up a new day for a fresh expression of classical Methodism and of the Evangelical United Brethren tradition.

John Wesley once noted that, whatever happened in the future, God would not allow what he had achieved through Methodism to vanish from the face of the earth. This was not pious sentimentality in operation. It was a serious theological assertion grounded in the fact that Methodism, like the church down through the ages, is created and sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit is, there is the church. To be sure, folk will disagree on how to work this out in practice, but this is no excuse for diffidence or despair. We have to take our stand and get on with the light God has given us.

This is not easy when critics misrepresent our convictions and motives. Wesley was no stranger to this; right up until the end he was called all sorts of names and accused of all sorts of errors. To be sure, he made some errors; and we shall too. However, we know that we have come to a crossroads in United Methodism, and we have rightly taken our stand on the moral faith of the Scriptures and of the church through the ages. It is time to move on and work for a fully faithful commitment to Christ and to find fresh expressions for the tradition we inhabit.

We leave to Providence those who disagree with us.

The progressive wing of United Methodism will no doubt flourish in various parts of the United States. Its adherents will render sterling service in some areas of the church's comprehensive mission. They will find a niche in the complex religious landscape of the nation, even as they risk becoming the chaplain to the Left in American politics. However, they will not be able to hold the line morally or theologically and will continue to fly with, if not provide sourcing, for the progressive winds of the culture with enthusiasm.

The so-called centrists will also find preliminary traction because they offer an initially tempting display of tolerance and diversity. They will appeal to the fairmindedness of United Methodists and readily paint their critics as extremists. However, they will have enormous difficulty getting beyond their rhetoric. They have no center of gravity of their own; their position is entirely relative to the contrasting positions at hand. Given the current drive beyond diversity to intersectionality (the jargon for whatever new multiple of identity groups that emerge), they will soon find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Moreover, once it becomes known that most of their leaders are closet progressives, they will have to face the full effects of their confusion and obfuscation.

What we need is a whole new configuration of United Methodism that will be missionary oriented, open to the full working of the Holy Spirit, unapologetically orthodox, sacramentally robust, and committed to justice and the care of the needy. In the short term, we may be a minority in the United States; worldwide, we are likely to be a global majority. I have every confidence in the new generation of leaders who are emerging; some of them are represented in this volume. However, this is not a matter of numbers; it is a simple matter of commitment to truth and grace.

There is also a wider context to consider. My own work and ministry have been devoted to tackling the deep opposition to Christianity that has emerged both in Europe and North America over the last two centuries. Some of this work is high-octane

academic work; some of it is teaching and preaching in my local church and in select missionary work abroad. In my own field of research, we face formidable challenges from renewed efforts to undermine the great faith of the church. Over against this, the tide has turned in some circles (most surprisingly in philosophy); it is the opposition that has grown ignorant and paranoid. It is time for United Methodists to recover their nerve, for its members and scholars to dig deep into the resources God has given us in our heritage, and for all of us to lean into the new resources that the Holy Spirit will supply. It is also time for us to stand with other brothers and sisters in the wider culture in articulation and defense of the faith, not least in its moral commitments.

There is a new Jerusalem and new promised land up ahead of us. I will not live to see the full contours of its landscape. However, these essays give us a constructive glimpse of what is coming in the next Methodism. I am delighted to commend these to your attention. In the meantime, I still hope to see the streets of the old Jerusalem again in the near future!

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1

Commitment to Transformation

Jeff Greenway

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

—2 Timothy 4:2–5

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

—John Wesley in “Thoughts on Methodism” (August 4, 1786)

Everyone has participated in difficult, but necessary conversations about touchy subjects in their lives. It is hard to talk about some things in a marriage, on the job, or in a friendship, but we know that talking about them in the context of love and trust can make them opportunities to strengthen our relationships. As a

lifelong pastor, I can testify that some of these difficult discussions can lead to the healthiest of relationships. I can also confirm that they are rarely easy.

As the pastor of a growing and vibrant United Methodist congregation, I want to talk to you about the present state and future direction of our denomination. Currently, our church is in a time of open schism and crisis. Some observers believe that we are living in an era similar to the one Paul wrote about in 2 Timothy 4, where some in the church have “not put up with sound doctrine,” and have been turned “away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” There are also signs that we may have become what John Wesley feared the Methodist movement would become: “a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.”

In the midst of this somber diagnosis, we also believe in resurrection and that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us (see Romans 8:11). Resurrecting power can renew and transform our denomination if we will repent and refocus our lives on Jesus.

We believe in resurrection power because we see its evidence in the global movement of vibrant and vital Wesleyan Christianity. One need only look at the growth of Methodism in Africa, South Korea, Cuba, South America, Vietnam, and the Philippines to note that our doctrine, practices, and message can have an incredible impact in the lives of individuals and entire people groups when it is lived in its unfettered and most robust form. In those regions, the Wesleyan movement is flourishing.

Sadly, that is not the case everywhere. The United Methodist Church has dramatically lost membership in the United States for the last fifty years. The reasons for this can be read about elsewhere, but the reality is that many in our connection have wandered far from what Wesley called for when the Methodist movement was spreading scriptural holiness across the land.

Recent events in the life of our denomination have accentuated the growing divide in faith and practice in our church. In our most recent history, we engaged in a process of discernment and decision-making that we agreed to abide by as a denomination. Today, there are segments of our church—clergy, laity, congregations, Annual and Jurisdictional Conferences, and even bishops—who are openly practicing an expression of Christian faith that is defiantly contrary to our agreed-upon covenant and polity. These actions have exposed massive cracks in the foundation of our theology and ministry.

Many pastors and local churches have avoided discussing what is happening in the denomination because their congregations reflect our culture and want to avoid conflict. Others have shied away from discussing it in the noble effort to protect their people from the pain of this larger conversation.

Many evangelical, orthodox United Methodists have spent their lives sharing the saving faith of Jesus, making disciples, reaching out to the outcast and marginalized, and growing their congregations. They have been loyal to their ordination vows, kept their covenantal promises, and paid their apportionments. They pastor warm-hearted and Jesus-loving congregations. They have celebrated the great things United Methodists have done together, such as providing disaster response through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the building of Africa University, and establishing Imagine No Malaria. However, they have also shielded their congregations from the theological drift away from historic, orthodox, Wesleyan Christianity and the recent acceleration of acts of ecclesial disobedience.

I was once in the same place. While I have been involved in serving in our denomination beyond my local church in my Annual Conference and at the general church level, the main focus of my ministry has been in the congregations and places I have led. There was a time I was not convinced our denominational discord would affect me and my people. I thought that the polity of the

church would be honored and held. I did not have the conversation about the developing schism within the denomination in my local church. However, I was wrong.

With increasing regularity, our denomination has begun to show the manifestations of being torn away from what has held us together—our common, agreed-upon covenant. When the denominational news started making the front page of our local newspaper, and was talked about on the nightly news of our local television stations because of celebrated acts of ecclesial disobedience, I was forced to begin to find language and ways to have a discussion with my congregation. We started privately at first with our elected and influential leadership. We then began to have congregational conversation forums where information could be shared, questions asked, and grace shown. Few of our congregations are monolithic; we have a wide variety of opinions in our pews. There is, however, a way to provide helpful leadership in the face of this denominational crisis. Conversations can be held and congregations can move forward together.

The Symptom

Some would say that the cause of the schism is our growing differences on human sexuality. While this topic grabs the headlines, human sexuality is merely the presenting symptom of much deeper theological fissures and systemic problems that are dividing the United Methodist Church.

There are those who no longer support the orthodox belief that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life—the only way to the Father. In other words, there are those who no longer believe Jesus is who he said he is. There are those who undermine the nature, diminish the role, and gut the authority of Scripture in favor of their own personal experience. There are those who no longer hold to our theology of personal sin, and neglect what salvation means in the

Wesleyan tradition. There are those who have a misappropriated allegiance to the institutional church and have forgotten that our church only has power and standing as we are faithful to the mission and message of Jesus Christ. We have also developed a denominational system with no means of holding those who lead or serve in it accountable. We are fast becoming a church with “the form of religion, without the power” that results in life transformation.

Commitment to Transformation

In order to face a faithful future, our churches must be willing to offer new life in Christ and walk men and women through the not-always-easy steps of transformation. Let me give you an example. Carly and Jim had a past when they began coming to our congregation. While outward appearances might have seemed to be the epitome of success, their marriage was in trouble. Over time, a wall of anger and bitterness had built between them. They came to our congregation because they saw some positive things happening in the lives of some of their friends, and they wanted what they had.

They began to attend worship and Bible study weekly, and those around them could see the wall they had started building around each other begin to crumble. However, it was not until they went on the Walk to Emmaus that God began to do the deepest healing work in their lives. Carly confided that she had been sexually abused as a young girl, which had fractured her self-esteem. She also confessed that she had an abortion when she and Jim were dating. The wall of bitterness that was being built brick by brick on her side was because of her increasing anger toward Jim for wanting her to get an abortion and the lack of worth she felt because her identity had been violated. When she placed those at the feet of Jesus, it opened a pathway to healing that now has her sharing her story and guiding other post-abortive women on the journey of healing and wholeness.

The bitterness between them had manifested itself in alcohol and pornography addiction in Jim. He used the distance from Carly to justify his behavior, but the result was the building of the wall between them on his side. When he was able to lay his addictive behaviors at the feet of Jesus, the deeper path of healing and wholeness began for him. He is now living a life in recovery, and is a leader in our men's ministry.

There is nothing about Carly and Jim's story that came easy. Along the way, the local church was there to hold them in their brokenness and rejoice in their newfound freedom. Ultimately, the local church—through the power of the Holy Spirit—was there to help them walk into their transformed future together. This is our Wesleyan legacy and, more important, this the benchmark of the ministry of Jesus.

The Stretch and Pull

While many in our denomination hold fast to our historically evangelical foundations, others have continually shifted further and further away from our original moorings. One way to envision the current struggle within the United Methodist Church is that of a stretched rubber band. Although we have always had tugging back and forth between conservatives and liberals within the denomination, the leadership of the church has decidedly shifted to the Left—away from transformational Wesleyan Christianity—and pulled the church in that direction. The leftward direction may have appeared to be incremental, but the pull of their influence is unmistakable. The result has been a pulling of the center of the church to the Left.

Thankfully, there have been evangelical brothers and sisters that faithfully drove a stake in the ground around the essentials of biblical, orthodox Wesleyan Christianity, which has anchored one end of that rubber band for the last fifty years. As forces within and outside the United Methodist Church have continued to pull the

denomination to the Left, the traditionalist anchor has held firm. Unfortunately, the result of that pull is that the covenant of the church is being stretched to its breaking point.

In recent years, there has been a grassroots pulling back toward a traditional biblical Wesleyan anchor in our activities at General Conference. That is not to say that all things have gone our way, but there are more traditional United Methodists wanting to make their voices heard. As the United Methodist Church has appeared more orthodox in its belief, practice, and polity, progressives that have controlled the larger systems and structures have seen their power base diminish as the denomination changes. The result has been a season of unprecedented disobedience and breaking of our common covenant by individuals, congregations, Annual and Jurisdictional Conferences, and bishops. As the progressive Left has run through the stop signs of the covenant, those with a more traditional view have rallied to the stake placed in the ground around historic Wesleyan orthodoxy.

There has been a renewed rally for those who share a similar view of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the nature and role of Scripture as has been embraced by the mainstream of Christianity for two thousand years. These brothers and sisters embrace a Wesleyan understanding of sin, and the need for salvation that begins to be reflected in holiness of heart and life. They believe in ministry outside the church walls with the poor and downtrodden, embracing a thoughtful faith that warms and changes the heart and works itself out in social justice that is connected to personal holiness.

On the other end of this stressed and stretched rubber band of the United Methodism spectrum is another group with whom we share increasingly little in common. The result is a deeply divided church where we often use the same words, cite the same Scriptures, quote the same Wesley sermons, and pledge fidelity to the same *Book of Discipline*, but we are talking about *very different*

expressions of Christian faith. We are miles apart in basic beliefs and practices—with no real means of accountability—making our covenantal relationship untenable.

Once again, let me be clear, human sexuality is not the cause of our differences. It is merely the presenting symptom. The real cause of our division is related to what we believe about Jesus; the nature, role, and authority of Scripture; the nature of personal sin and salvation; and the work of sanctification in the life and conduct of a follower of Jesus. This is not just about orthodoxy or “right beliefs”—it is also about *orthopraxy* or “right actions.” In response, we need to have both a theological renewal and a movement of the Holy Spirit in the living of our faith.

As United Methodists, we either have to find a way to step back from our irreconcilable visions, or we need to find a way we can separate for the sake of the mission.

The Opportunity

While I pray that our denomination will find a way to right itself and restore the order of our covenant, we very well may be at a Paul-and-Barnabas moment as a denomination. Although the circumstances are uniquely different from our current divisions, we might find wisdom in the way Paul and Barnabas ultimately resolved their dispute. In Acts, Paul’s partner on his first missionary journey was Barnabas, the “son of encouragement.” He was the first person to embrace and support Paul when he returned to Jerusalem after his Damascus Road conversion. John Mark was a young companion on that first trip. However, John Mark went home early.

Later, in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas secured the blessing of the Jerusalem Council to take the gospel to the Gentiles and prepared to leave on their second missionary journey from Antioch. It was a pivotal moment in the Christian movement. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement over John Mark. Barnabas wanted to give

his cousin, John Mark, a second chance and take him along. Paul did not. This disagreement had the potential to derail the mission, stopping it dead in its tracks.

However, Paul and Barnabas didn't allow their personal disagreement to derail the mission. Paul took Silas and went off to missionary fame. Barnabas took John Mark, and we never heard about Barnabas again. However, he did what he did best by pouring his life into helping John Mark answer his call.

One of the most remarkable things about that story is what happened to John Mark. He became the traveling companion with Simon Peter, and eventually wrote the Gospel of Mark. Later, Paul would write Timothy and tell him to bring Mark with him because he was helpful to him (see 2 Timothy 4:11). Paul also writes about Mark (the cousin of Barnabas) being with him while he is under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome (see Colossians 4:10).

For the sake of the mission, they went their separate ways. I contend we are at a Paul-and-Barnabas moment. We shouldn't allow our inner squabbling to jeopardize the mission. It may be better served if we bless each other, separate, and see what God does when pursuing the mission once again becomes central.

It is unknown what the "next" for the United Methodist Church will exactly look like, but be assured that the denomination that has nurtured us to this point will look very different in the very near future. If that kind of change is coming, those who share the same heart for a renewed and vibrant expression of evangelical, orthodox Wesleyan Christianity should join together in planning what we need to do to reform our church in order to see transformation in our personal lives and local congregations.

Steps to Reformation

Let me suggest four actions that could help reform our church, and give us confidence for the future.

Refocus on Jesus

As the Bible makes clear, there is no other name by which people can be saved. I have a friend who continually reminds me to focus on Jesus. At first, it was annoying, but then I began to think differently. I began to notice how little Jesus was mentioned at denominational gatherings—except at the end of a prayer. I began to notice how my own preaching became much more effective when I lifted up the name of Jesus. I experienced how bewildering ministry can become when we take our focus off of Jesus. Ministry can be a grind, but too frequently we rely upon what we can do in our own strength, and we forget about the power that is available in Jesus.

The Bible declares that there is no power in any other name than Jesus. Institutions do not save the world; Jesus does. Right theology will not reform the church or save the world; Jesus does. Similarly, winning the right votes at General Conference will not reform the church or save the world; Jesus does.

We need to reclaim the sure and certain belief that Jesus is who he said he is and did everything he said he would do. Jesus lives. Jesus loves. Jesus names sin. Jesus announces grace. Jesus redeems. Jesus saves. Jesus forgives. Jesus heals. Jesus transforms. Jesus sanctifies. Jesus calls. The future will be determined by whether we refocus on Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.

Reclaim the Authority of Scripture

Either the Bible is the sufficient rule of faith and practice, or it is not. Dr. Albert Outler was one of the greatest thinkers and theologians in the history of the Wesleyan movement. When he developed the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, it was meant to be a framework to help Methodists learn how to work out their salvation and live faith in our world. It has helped to shape our theologizing for

fifty years. However, toward the end of his life, he regretted what it had become.

Outler said that there were four sides to this theological decision-making framework: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The challenge comes with where one places Scripture in the Quadrilateral. To Wesley, Scripture was always primary. When the Bible speaks clearly about a subject, tradition, reason, and experience should all be subject to Scripture. This is the view held by most evangelical United Methodists.

While we bring who we are to the reading of the text, orthodox Methodists attempt to understand the text within the original context. When I read something in Scripture that is contrary to an action or attitude within my life experience, that is called sin and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I can receive forgiveness and bring that area of my life under the leadership of Jesus.

Unfortunately, Outler's model is misused by some United Methodists. For them, Scripture is one of four opinions to consider, but is not necessarily primary in the decision-making process. Some actually believe that God is still giving revelation today with the same authority as the canon of the Scriptures. This ultimately replaces or supersedes the Bible. In other words, if an attitude or action in their lived experience contradicts what the Bible clearly teaches, then they feel free to reimagine the Scriptures to fit their present context. Not surprisingly, there is a very different interpretation and application of Scripture when one takes the liberty of reading one's experience into the text.

Refine Our Theology

Yesteryear's theological pluralism of "big tent" Methodism watered down and gutted our robust heritage of evangelical theology and practice of our Wesleyan movement. Because of it, our

denomination no longer has a clear theological core and identity. Within limits, theological diversity can be a good thing and stretch us beyond ourselves. After all, orthodox Christianity welcomes and embraces high-church folks, charismatics, and contemporary-worship-style evangelicals. We don't all have to be in lockstep, but throughout the history of our faith, the church has established some essentials, which we in the United Methodist Church have turned into nonessentials. Our problem is unchecked theological pluralism. We need to help each other think theologically and embrace a robust, vibrant Wesleyan theology in the midst of a swirling culture because we often no longer know what we believe in.

As evangelical United Methodists, we are for Jesus. We believe in a risen, living, grace-giving, sin-forgiving, life-changing Jesus who accepts us as we are and transforms us into who he created us to be. We believe in the nature and authority of the Scripture as has been embraced by the majority of Christians around the world for two thousand years. We believe in a global movement of Wesleyan Jesus followers who are committed to take the life-changing message of the gospel to every people, tribe, clan, and tongue. We believe in the new birth as described in the Scripture and taught by John Wesley. We believe in holiness of heart and life—and not just a moral code or rules and regulations that must be followed to be “Christian.” We believe in a thoughtful faith that warms and changes the heart and works itself out in social justice that is connected to personal holiness. We believe in the deep transformation that happens through the Holy Spirit, which enables us to perfectly love God and neighbor as we are being renewed every day.

Reform Our Systems

Although this is the least glamorous of the changes required, there simply is no need for much of our institutional bureaucracy. Other

voices have called for this right-sizing of systems and structures, and even the world of business has embraced the concept of going “lean.” The system and structure of our denomination was developed for a bygone era, but it continues to be propped up rather than reformed and right-sized. Furthermore, we have often organized the Holy Spirit right out of our movement.

Twenty years ago, I was surrounded by bishops and other leaders at a denominational meeting as we listened to a young man from Africa who was responsible for evangelism in one of the fastest-growing areas in United Methodism. They had no money, resources, or institutional support to help them do what they were doing. Nevertheless, the church in that area was growing exponentially.

One of the bishops asked him how he did it, and he said, “We put a church in every village and we do four things at every church: (1) we teach people to read because education is the key to their future; (2) we teach people to farm so that they can feed themselves; (3) we provide basic healthcare which is the only healthcare in the villages; and (4) we share Jesus with everybody!” They were not encumbered with a top-heavy institution that was draining the life and resources out of its churches. They had a simple, laser-focused vision and system to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their mission field. We need to reform our system for missional focus and flexibility.

In the immediate future, pastors and local church leaders are going to have to be prepared to move into what is next for our denomination. There is not a United Methodist pastor who is going to get a pass on having this conversation. If we can take these four actions, we may be graced by God to reform our denomination like Wesley did in the Church of England years ago and experience the much-needed transformation that marks the legacy of that world-changing revival.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. On a scale of one to ten (one being not at all, and ten being very), how familiar are you with the current state of the United Methodist Church?
2. What are some of your concerns or fears as our denomination grapples with cultural change?
3. In a few words, how would you characterize Methodist theology? How important is our theology to you as a United Methodist?
4. Read Acts 15:36–41. In your own words, describe what happened between Paul and Barnabas. How was the church affected? What does this story teach you about conflict within Christian circles?
5. Jeff Greenway casts a vision based on four pillars of change: refocus on Jesus, reclaim the authority of Scripture, refine our theology, and reform our systems. Which of these seems more needful to you? About which do you have questions?
6. If you could dream about your local church (and how it relates to your denomination), what would you dream for it in the next ten or twenty years? What's your deepest hope for your local church?

WITNESS

Awakening Orthodoxy

Madeline Carrasco Hennes

Only five short years ago I was comfortably progressive. If we were having a conversation about the future of the United Methodist Church, I might have said, “Well, as soon as the older generation is gone, we will have our church.” As a clergywoman, I would also have said what we are dealing with is the civil rights movement of our time.

So what happened? What changed my mind and heart? I was working in ministry and I looked around at my circumstances and concluded: nothing is changing. We’re not growing. This is not what I’m reading about the church in the Bible. Graciously, my church gave me a month’s sabbatical time to study and be at home and to unplug. I thought I was going to have time to rest, to take a breath. Before long, I realized the Lord had other plans in mind. I was worshipping, I was reading the Bible, I was praying, and I was earnestly saying, “Lord, fill my heart, I need more of you.” As I did, I felt this weight come upon me and the Lord clearly said: “I need you in this Word, this gospel that you’re reading. I need you to see what you’ve added that’s not here.”

There is no way to prepare for being humbled by the Lord. Although it was difficult, it was also awesome because God cared enough to talk with me. I began to ask God, “What is your truth? What is your truth that transcends cultures, generations, countries, or eras?” The response I got was to pursue the truth of Christ. “Seek it, go after it, and I will not forsake you,” God seemed to say. “I will show you what my truth is.” If we seek with all our hearts and humble ourselves or maybe are humbled by him, then we can find a truth that has implications in our current culture, but is not dictated by it.

As I was reading the Bible, I would ask myself if I actually believed the words of our Lord were true, and possible, and achievable in this life. Did I actually believe that healing—yes of the body, spirit, and soul—was possible. Wholeness, redemption, transformation, and holiness? Who or what would I give authority over my life? Who would I trust and to what extent? Was anything truly possible through God’s power as Scripture says?

As I began pressing in, I had an awakening of orthodoxy—and a charismatic awakening as well. The more you believe the truth of this Word, the more it will become true in how you walk every day. The more you trust the God who loves you so much that he is pursuing you beyond your imagination, the more the longing of our hearts for this to become reality, you get to see it every day.

Too many of us have lost a sense of expectancy that God will show up and transform our lives. Because of that disposition, we do not cry out with urgency or find ourselves willing to pay a price for revival to happen within us. In Ephesians 3:19, Paul prays that we would “know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” To be filled with the fullness of God, we have to go beyond an intellectual knowledge of the Lord and find intimacy in the presence of God. We need to hunger for more of God and seek him with all our hearts. This is where the true transformation begins. Did Jesus die on the cross so we could feel and be just a little bit better on occasion? Was it for small victory or life-changing victory? Have we settled for less than God’s fullness in our lives and ministries?

If he speaks into your heart and he lovingly humbles you, don’t run. Go to the Scriptures and pray, “Lord, through your Holy Spirit, reveal your truth to me, even if it’s painful. I am yours.”