

Disciple 08

Mission Field Engagement – A Wesleyan Thing To Do

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CONTEXT

We live in difficult times.

Historically the Methodist 'movement' has, at it's best, grown in the midst of "difficult times." It has done this through organizing diverse communities of discipleship for the transformation of the world, rooted in and energized by the Wesleyan vision that –

"...there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of God who gave it. And this we conceive to be no other than love: the love of God and of all humankind; the loving God with our heart and soul and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving of every soul which God hath made, every one on earth, as our own soul." (J. Wesley)

QUESTION

- How might we embody this Wesleyan organizing spirit today?
- How might we grow such a network of diverse, transformative communities of discipleship, rooted in our neighborhoods, now in these difficult times in which we live.

A PROPOSAL IN RESPONSE

Through organizing an alliance/partnership/relationship between –

- 1) Marginalized folk who seek communities of faith rooted solidarity and empowerment, and –
- 2) A new generation of faith based activists who seek missional communities of spiritual support for living lives of compassion, justice & joy.

THE MARGINALIZED

It may surprise you to know that a recent study shows that since 1970 religious affiliation has dropped much faster and farther among the working class and the poor than it has among the middle and upper classes.

SCRIPTURE READING : _____ *James 2:1-8 – Don't dishonor the poor.*

DISCUSSION

- 1) What relevance does this passage from James have for how we as United Methodist congregations better live out our call to make disciples for the transformation of the world?
- 2) How is this passage relevant to your particular context of ministry as you and your community of faith seek to live out this vision?
- 3) What difference does the church make in the lives of the increasing numbers of persons who are under increasing amounts of economic pressure?
- 4) Who are we being church with?

- 5) Who are we leaving out?- keeping out?
- 6) What are the barriers and how do we remove them?
- 7) Do we want to?

FAITH BASED ACTIVISTS

"We want to be challenged to live lives of holiness, not only when it comes to sex, but also when it comes to living simply, caring for the poor and oppressed, pursuing reconciliation, engaging in creation care and becoming peace makers. You can't hand us a latte and then go about business as usual and expect us to stick around." (Rachel Evens – "Why Millennials are leaving the Church")

"Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?" (United Methodist Baptismal Covenant)

DISCUSSION

- 1) What persons and groups in your neighborhood are involved in work for social justice or community transformation? How can the church be a source of spiritual support for them?
- 2) Who in your church is longing to express their faith through action and involvement? How can they be provided ways to do this through your church and, with the church, build relationships and partnerships with the activists out in the neighborhood?

WESLEYAN APPROACH TO MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Growing communities of Christian discipleship for the transformation of the world -

- 1) Through an alliance/partnership/relationship between the marginalized who seek communities of spiritually based empowerment and faith rooted activists who seek missional communities in which they can find a spiritual home;
- 2) Through weaving together a Wesleyan fabric of a Christian community that includes:
 - a) "Liberal Protestant" commitment to Biblically rooted social justice and openness to diversity.
 - b) "Evangelical" commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - c) "Catholic" emphasis on a religious life nourished by sacramental worship and spiritual disciplines.

HOW TO BE A CHURCH THAT'S A GOOD NEIGHBOR IN THE HOOD

- Be actively present in your community and enjoy discovering who is there.
- Move from "providing services" and "holding services" to building relationships of mutual blessing in which talents are nourished, gifts are shared and needs are addressed.
- Stay close to Jesus wherever you are.

