

2-2020

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Women and People of Color in Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR  
IN LEADERSHIP IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2020

Portland Seminary  
George Fox University  
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Global Perspectives

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard  
Version, 1989.

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## DEDICATION

To William and Lucy. May you embody God's inclusive mission as the world continues to transform.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Portland Seminary Doctorate of Ministry team. You have been an incredible support and I will forever be grateful for your tireless work on our behalf.

Jase, thank you for developing this program for the many of us who are enacting God's kingdom through this formative work. Your wonder has formed a legacy of critically minded doctoral practitioners.

Diane, thank you for your steady encouragement and enthusiasm around my many swirling ideas. I hold much gratitude for you.

To my community of friends and colleagues, thank you for believing in me, and, more importantly, in the hopefulness of God's kingdom come.

William and Lucy, your endless grace and happiness, even through the stress of writing, compelled me on. You are my inspiration for the future of God's kingdom come.

Troy, my love, thank you for sacrificing alongside me in this good work for an equitable future for our children and our world.

## EPIGRAPH

Oh, my dear ones.  
I know you were hoping  
For a once-and-done.  
For an earthquake,  
A tidal wave.  
Hoping that if we gave it our all,  
A single push would be enough.  
That after this, we could  
Sink  
Back into complacency,  
Back into the comfort of our privilege.  
I confess, in the secret corners of my heart,  
I wanted to believe it could be that easy  
That justice would emerge as from an egg  
Fully grown  
Not with wet down and weak wings...

But beloveds,  
We are chipping away at a mountain,  
Not a boulder.  
Calcified structures  
Created to oppress,  
Control,  
Kill.  
2000 years of this stupid idea  
That some are worthy,  
Some deserve power by virtue of who they are.

Erosion is slow work, sweethearts.  
Celebrate the progress  
The triumphs.  
Celebrate also the heartbreaking almosts.  
Breathe.  
Rest for a time.  
Then get up and turn again toward kindness,  
Toward your neighbor in need,  
Toward those who are still trapped in the stone.  
Tell them, "I won't give up."  
Tell them, "I am with you."  
Tell them, "For you, I will learn to eat rocks."  
"For you, I will keep chewing, keep grinding,  
Until the mountain crumbles to dust."

-Elizabeth Stevens

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## ABSTRACT

The majority of Wesleyan denominations began with theological belief rooted in social action, particularly as it pertained to abolition and women's equality. Though their beginnings were radical, today the same groups are primarily homogeneous, representing a largely white congregational and leadership demographic, predominantly led by white males. With a historical theology of diversity and inclusion, this research seeks to understand why women and people of color are excluded from leadership roles in the Wesleyan Tradition and how it may affect the future of these denominations. Methodologically, this analysis utilizes research from Deloitte Insights as a template for gauging organizational effectiveness of integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion within Wesleyan denominations. The sections begin with a description of the ministry problem, particularly on the origins of the Wesleyan Tradition's theology with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion of women and people of color. Second, the biblical rationale for God's partnership with humanity, and humanity with one another, inclusive of women and the nations, is viewed through a Wesleyan lens. Third is the existence of the gap, throughout the existence of the Wesleyan movement, between theology and practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Barriers include a loss of memory, cultural accommodation, internal culture, and lost vision for the future. These barriers explore the reasons why Wesleyan churches are not practicing their theological heritage in section four. The fifth assessment is a sample of current pockets of hope from compliance, programs, leadership, and full integrative practice of Wesleyan churches. The research concludes with an overview, a list of central challenges to practice, and pathways toward leadership and integrative practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I intend to use my

findings to support Wesleyan denominations in heightening their awareness and practice of holistic integration of women and people of color as prophetic shepherding communities.

## CHAPTER 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

### **Introduction**

The church in the United States consists of more than one hundred denominations, not including the vast number of non-denominational congregational bodies.<sup>1</sup> Among the affiliated, a group of denominations categorized as Wesleyan Holiness, also known as the Wesleyan Tradition, took shape in the early to mid-1800s. These churches formed their individual denominations and alliances with one another out of a practical theology following the Anglican minister and field evangelist John Wesley. While Wesley had no intention of forming groups outside of the Anglican tradition, his methods of practicing his faith were so radical and reproducible that many came to faith, were discipled, and started new groups more closely aligned to Wesley's practice than that of the Church of England.

Today Wesleyan-holiness-affiliated churches are in nearly every country across the globe, with more than 14 million members at over 130,000 churches.<sup>2</sup> Well-known in the Wesleyan movement are the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the Church of God, among several others. Pentecostal

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<sup>1</sup> PEW Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study, Summary Table: Religious Composition of U.S. Adults," May 11, 2015, <https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/05/Religious-Composition-of-U.S.-Adults.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Data gathered from a Google search of each denomination, October 9, 2019.

denominations with a Wesleyan background include the Foursquare Church and Assemblies of God.<sup>3</sup>

One of the hallmarks of Wesleyans, which propelled early adopters to begin the denominations known today, was a theology of inclusion and ordination for minorities and women.<sup>4</sup> Initially seeking equality for all people, the groups that began with a fervent message of inclusion have since struggled to honor that founding belief.

### **Challenges on the Horizon**

In the summer of 2019, the Free Methodist Church USA gathered for their quadrennial General Conference for all its churches in the United States. At this gathering, the denomination had the opportunity to elect, for the first time in its 159-year existence, both a person of color and a female as bishop, the foremost leadership role of the denomination. In fact, the Church had the occasion to elect three new bishops as the standing board of bishops were all choosing to retire.

The anticipation of the diversifying of leadership in the denomination is rooted in the theology of the Free Methodist Church. As one of several Wesleyan Holiness denominations that began with founders who believed all people were equal, the Free

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<sup>3</sup> Denominations include African Methodist Episcopal Church; Assemblies of God; Brethren in Christ Church; Christian & Missionary Alliance; Christian & Missionary Alliance, Canada; Church of God in Christ; Church of God, Anderson; Church of God, Cleveland; Church of the Nazarene; Free Methodist Church; Grace Communion International; Int'l Pentecostal Holiness Church; Shield of Faith; The Evangelical Church; The Foursquare Church; The Salvation Army; United Methodist Church; Wesleyan Church. Dave Imboden, "Wesleyan Holiness Connection," Participating Denominations, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://www.holinessandunity.org/about-us/participating-denominations>.

<sup>4</sup> Not all Wesleyan denominations listed in footnote 3 ordain women. Those who do not give full ordination rights to women include the Evangelical Church of North America; Christian & Missionary Alliance; Church of God in Christ; and Shield of Faith. Those who do ordain women are the focus of this research.

Methodists opposed slavery and the marginalization of women in ordained ministry. Electing a woman or a person of color as bishop would finally embody the theological heritage voiced over their history.

To inaugurate the process of transition, the outgoing bishops chose a bishop nominating committee to begin the search more than a year in advance. This committee accepted a diverse cross-section of names of qualified elders from each of the twenty-two regions across the United States. Beginning with more than twenty names, the vetting included extensive interviews of candidates and spouses, written strategy for mission implementation, and review of ministry history. After considerable deliberation among the committee, five names were chosen, the minimum number per the denomination's book of discipline. Each candidate was an exceptionally effective leader, having earned the respect and support of their ministry area and colleagues. Of the five nominees, two were women and three men. All five hailed from a distinctly European heritage.

Not long after the names of the candidates were officially released, communication among the voting delegation began to circulate. Two primary concerns arose, including first, the questioning of one nominee's ability to enact the mission of the church with a spouse who supported a lifestyle alternative to the denominational belief and practice. And second, the reality that no racial diversity was represented in the nominees, though several persons of color were nominated by the regional delegates. Emails ensued, including a letter with 170 signatures, encouraging the bishops and denominational board of administration to reconsider and include at least one candidate of color.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Email, "Bishop Nominees 2019," Google Doc, March 28, 2019.

Following several online and in person conversations, the nominee of concern withdrew his name from consideration as bishop. The loss of one candidate created the necessity of at least one new nominee to be introduced, with the possibility persons of color represented. With less than a month before the General Conference where the next bishops would be chosen, the bishop nominating committee convened. The committee recognized through the voices of clergy and laity the strong desire to have diverse representation and added two new candidates, both males of color.

When the time came for the General Conference to convene in sunny Orlando, Florida, the lay and clergy delegates had assembled from around the country, as well as many bishops, superintendents, pastors, and members of the church from around the world. Two hundred and sixty-nine of the more than 2,400 attenders would be voting. This was the chosen delegation by each conference, made up of equal parts clergy and laity.<sup>6</sup> Voting would happen on the third day of the five-day event.

The week began with a variety of voices from the stage, as female and male elders from diverse backgrounds preached and led the global church in worship through song, testimony, and prayer. The official opening of the conference began with African-American pastor and superintendent from Southern California, Charles Latchison, leading the congregation in reciting the mission, vision, and freedoms of the denomination. As Latchison led, he introduced five freedoms to the gathering, which included:

- Freedom of all ethnicities to worship and live together.
- Freedom of women to be treated as equals in the church, at home, and in the world.

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<sup>6</sup> “GC19 Begins 5-Weeks from Today!” Free Methodist Church USA, June 9, 2019, <https://mailchi.mp/b03e19ceacfb/gc19-update-december-11-2615155>.



- Freedom of the poor to be treated with dignity and equity in the church and in the world.
- Freedom of the laity to be given voice and shared leadership within the church.
- Freedom of the Holy Spirit in worship.<sup>7</sup>

Latchison concluded his remarks with, “We want to actively align ourselves in Christ through His story and our history and prophesy our future as a people who breathe new life into our calling, who listen, learn, and lead others into freedom in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are a prophetic people.”<sup>8</sup> He then had the conference divide into small groups to pray for the enactment of the first freedom.

While the five freedoms embraced the spirit of the Free Methodist Church in many ways, they were adapted from the original history and polity of the denomination. In its origination only four existed, which focused on the abolition of slaves, freedom from pew rental (also understood as freedom for the poor in worship), freedom from oaths and secret societies, and freedom of the Spirit in worship.<sup>9</sup> As is visible, the list from Latchison is a modern representation that encompasses much of the belief of the founder, B.T. Roberts, who believed in the ordination of women as well. However, the original set did not include equal representation by laity and clergy in decisions and leadership for the denomination, nor did it provide clear statements on the equality of all people as clarified in the recently written first three freedoms. This is important to note, as the only other place where the five freedoms were vocalized in a way that the entire

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<sup>7</sup> “The Freedoms of Free Methodists,” *Light and Life Magazine*, August 2016, <https://lightandlifemagazine.com/the-freedoms-of-free-methodists/>.

<sup>8</sup> “A Timeline of General Conference 2019,” *Light and Life Magazine*, August 2019, [https://lightandlifemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/e-edition\\_final.pdf](https://lightandlifemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/e-edition_final.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Leslie R. Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness: A Historical Interpretation of Free Methodism’s First Century*. (Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press, 2016), 252.

denomination would have access, was in one online article from 2016 by the denominational magazine, *Light and Life Magazine*.<sup>10</sup>

After Latchison was seated, another elder came to share the devotional for the morning, lead pastor Colleen Hurley-Bates. Hurley-Bates recognized the beautiful mosaic of the church that includes all races, all genders, the outcast, the marginalized, the refugee. After citing 1 Corinthians 3:11<sup>11</sup> in reference to Christ having laid the foundation of the church, she made mention of the months leading to the conference and the difficulty faced by the members of the denomination (particularly with regard to the election of the bishops), calling for “lament in how we have wronged one another,” and accountability for what is said and done. Specifically, she says, “we need to ensure no matter what, moving forward, there is a full complement of voices at the table of race, and culture, and age, and gender, and experience. And we need leadership that is going to guide us to be a prophetic visionary shepherding people who will impact our neighborhoods, and our colleges and our world in life changing ways.”<sup>12</sup>

By day three of the conference, significant discourse had commenced from the pulpit, the breakout sessions, and one-on-one conversations on the subject of the need for diversity among the newly elected bishops. Before noon, the delegation would be electronically voting for three new bishops. After one round of voting, where 269 votes

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<sup>10</sup> “The Freedoms of Free Methodists,” *Light and Life Magazine*, August 2016, <https://lightandlifemagazine.com/the-freedoms-of-free-methodists/>.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.”

<sup>12</sup> Free Methodist Church in Southern California, “Tuesday Morning Devotion: Colleen Hurley Bates,” YouTube video, 21:37, July 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1obEk6oHDk&feature=youtu.be>.

were cast with a majority of 135 needed for election, three new bishops of the six nominees were elected. All three were from the original selection of nominees. The percentage of votes were as follows:

- White male: 59%
- White male: 58%
- White female: 53%
- Male of color: 51%
- White female: 40%
- Male of color: 32%

Six votes separated the woman who received the bishop nomination and the male of color.

Much joy erupted for the chosen leaders, particularly the first female bishop. At the same time, many members, including delegates, had mixed feelings or a sense of frustration at the outcome of the election. In the Ethnic Reconciliation Breakout following the election, a word cloud was created by the participants, with “disappointed” being the word most represented (see Figure 1).<sup>13</sup> Though the denomination had attempted to right itself with the nominations of both women and people of color,<sup>14</sup> both white men received the majority of the votes, leaving the two women and two non-white men left to vie for the final opening.

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<sup>13</sup> Kristy Hinds, word cloud created in Ethnic Reconciliation Breakout, Free Methodist General Conference, July 17, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> The research in this text recognizes the term “people of color” as referring to all non-white people, thus making white people the center for which all others are juxtaposed. People of color is currently an acceptable term, though the phrase “race and ethnicity” are sometimes substituted in this document to clarify a reference.

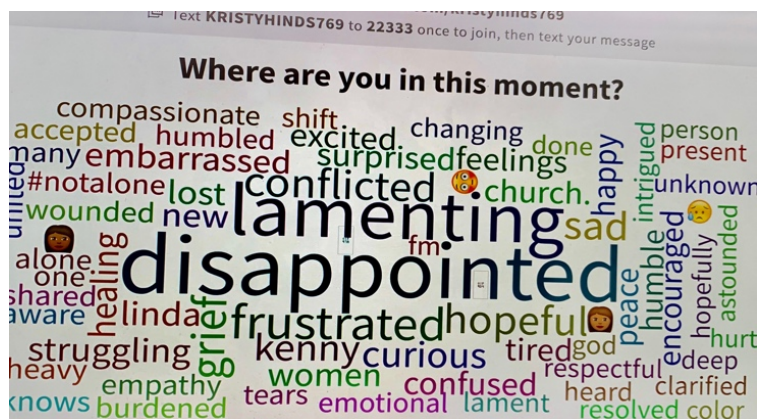


Figure 1 – Ethnic Reconciliation Breakout, Free Methodist General Conference 2019

The Free Methodists are not the only ones facing the struggle of diversifying leadership. Only two months prior to the FMCUSA election, the Foursquare Church had their election of a president of the denomination with two nominees, one white male lead pastor of a local church, and one white female who had been the executive vice president of the denomination for ten years. Who did they elect? The local church pastor.

Leah Payne, American church historian, remarked in her article in *Christianity Today* titled “Why Foursquare’s Female Leaders Have it Harder Today” that more than double the amount of votes came in for the election than any other election in Foursquare history.<sup>15</sup> The votes for the two candidates were a near even split, which was monumental for a denomination began by a woman who had not seen another female as president beyond the founder. In fact, the Foursquare Church had once boasted 40% female pastors in its early years had dipped to a mere 7% female pastors by 2012.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Leah Payne, “Why Foursquare’s Female Leaders Have It Harder Today,” *CT Women*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2019/may/foursquare-church-aimee-semples-mcpherson-tammy-dunahoo.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Payne, “Why Foursquare’s Female Leaders Have It Harder Today.”

## Factors to Consider

What are we to make of events like these? There are some who believe the elections were simply God's will. Others note the excellent qualifications of those who were chosen. Popularity is also a factor. In the case of the Free Methodists, the three elected were the most known in the denomination.

Those choosing to notice the demographics around the election may casually comment that the church is not ready for diversity or that those who were not elected were not the best choice.

The way in which the voting was completed is also a possible signal for question. Could there have been a more equitable way to cast ballots? Or further, is there a flaw in the way that the voting was structured and outcomes were achieved?

Tokenism becomes part of the conversation, as multiple leaders felt that adding a nominee simply because they were not white created an inequity among the nominees. While possible, this negates several factors, including the multiple qualified people of color nominated that were not chosen in the final selection, the prospect of embodiment in leadership to best serve an ever-diversifying world, and the missed opportunity for those who are equally gifted but with less experience or reputation.

All too often, there appears to be a view that the Caucasian male is the most qualified for the job. This may come about because many identify white males in past leadership roles as being effective and, thus, suitable candidates for the future. Both the Foursquare and Free Methodist denominations had previous and long-standing traditions of white male leaders. And while it is not always true that the white male is the most qualified, as was the case with the Foursquare Church, they are typically the less risky

candidate. Indeed, because they have had more opportunity, they often have additional experience, which lends itself to highly developed skillsets and, thus, the presentation of a well-formed candidate for further leadership opportunity.

The mystery around why women and people of color are less likely to be chosen or deemed to be less qualified for leadership positions begins to be solved when looking at the history and structures created among the organizations. The choice of tradition over core belief accentuates the betrayal of the prophetic visionary shepherding movement at the inception of the Wesleyan Holiness Tradition. Though each of the denominations was born out of a theological position of inclusion and ordination for people of color and women they have yet to practice their theology at the most influential and transformative levels.

### **Disparities Revealed**

The case of Wesleyan denominations being primarily led by Caucasian males may seem to be happenstance with elections of bishops or presidents. However, when looking at the regional leaders, those placed into lead pastor roles across the denomination, and the resulting actions, there is an obvious lack of diversity.

A quick view of any of any of the Wesleyan denominational websites reveals a predominantly white male leadership. The Wesleyan denomination is headed by a general superintendent who is a white male and oversees twenty-four regions in the U.S. and Canada. Of these regions, all but one is led by Caucasian men, with the single man of color superintendent in leadership over the Hispanic district. Reverend Andrea Summers of the Wesleyan Church clarified the disparity between male and female leadership through statistical data: “The Wesleyan Church has fantastic theology for women in

ministry and leadership, and while we have covered substantial ground in the last few decades, there is still a significant leadership gap. Twenty-three percent of appointed Wesleyan pastors are women, while only 7.6 percent of Wesleyan pastors are women in roles with significant spiritual authority (senior pastor, solo pastor, co-pastor, etc.).”<sup>17</sup>

The Free Methodist Church USA website reveals of the twenty-five superintendents, seven are women and people of color.<sup>18</sup> Of those, three are women with one being a woman of color, two of which serve full-time, while one is bi-vocational. Also, one of the full-time superintendents and the one who serves part-time both share the role with their spouse. Of the ethnically diverse superintendents, only one is full-time, serving in a notably ethnic territory (Southern California Pacific Coast Japanese Conference), while being racially Latino. Two of the people of color are part of the three sets of co-superintendents as a married couple. The final two are serving as part of a triad of superintendents in the same region. They are both part-time while pastoring a local church, with the third superintendent being a white male who serves full-time and superintends a second conference on his own.<sup>19</sup>

Wesleyan denominational leadership also funnels into the Global Wesleyan Alliance, a Wesleyan affiliate organization. Thus, because the denominations are made up of senior leaders who are Caucasian males, each of the named leaders in the Global

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<sup>17</sup> Communication Team, “Sacred Alliance Elevates Mutual Ministry,” The Wesleyan Church, March 19, 2018, <https://www.wesleyan.org/sacred-alliance-elevates-mutual-ministry>.

<sup>18</sup> “FMC Leaders,” Free Methodist Church USA, accessed September 15, 2019, <https://fmcusa.org/about/fmc-leaders>.

<sup>19</sup> “FMC Leaders.”

Wesleyan Alliance is a white male, along with the appointed leadership running the organization, who are also Caucasian males.<sup>20</sup>

From a recent sample of six Wesleyan Holiness denominations in the Northwest, women and people of color make up less than five percent of the leadership in the church.<sup>21</sup> This does not reflect the roots of their movements or the culture of their region. Of the Wesleyan denominations surveyed (Nazarene, Church of God, Free Methodist, Wesleyan, Foursquare, and Salvation Army), ordained women make up between nineteen and thirty-six percent of the pastors in each district (this includes ordained women who serve alongside their husband, are retired, serving outside the church, and non-serving).

Of the Northwest denominations sampled, one lost two of its four Spanish speaking congregations in the last five years due to transferring to non-Wesleyan denominations because of lack of support by the sponsoring church or area. One of the two remaining Hispanic churches lost its building to a white congregation coming into the denomination. The church was later given the opportunity to share space with an existing white congregation in a city more than twenty miles away. No visible efforts have been made to add additional diverse churches or prioritize diversity within the existing churches.

When considering female lead pastors from the survey, the numbers dramatically drop: to two percent. Further, ordained women of color make up only one to two percent

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<sup>20</sup> “Resources,” Global Wesleyan Alliance, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.wesleyanalliance.com/resources>.

<sup>21</sup> Bud Pugh, Cortney Howell, Wayne Mueller, Nancy Dunbar, Janene Zielinski, and Sally Ranton, “Women and WOC,” email from Oregon-based Wesleyan Superintendents, December 6, 2018.



on average of all paid lead or staff pastors in each of the Northwest sampled denominations.

The gap between the denominational leadership and the demographics they serve is clarified when analyzing the make-up of the region. In Oregon, fifty percent of the population is female, and seventy-five percent of the population considers themselves white only, with twenty-five percent of people identifying as non-white or two or more races.<sup>22</sup> Though church locations and diversity of groups may vary, the overlap of race is present in many areas, and all areas where Wesleyan churches are located have a near average of females to males in accordance with census data.

Further, a look into a sample of Wesleyan Holiness church members among Christians from all fifty states by the PEW Forum reveals a growing trend from 2007 to 2014 of women as the majority of members, now at 56%. Among the same group, the racial and ethnic composition reflects diversity as a slightly diminishing trend, with 88% of members being white in 2014 as opposed to 87% in 2007. The difference in ethnic members lies in the number of each group with black members dropping from 5% to 2%, and mixed-race members lessening by 2%. Only the Latino population grew in the sample.<sup>23</sup>

In the PEW survey of over 35,000 Americans, respondents were asked to share their gender and ethnic identity, among other information. Among most Wesleyan

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<sup>22</sup> “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oregon,” Census Bureau Quick Facts, accessed December 7, 2018. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/OR>.

<sup>23</sup> “Members of the Holiness Family in the Evangelical Protestant Tradition, Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, May 11, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-family/holiness-family-evangelical-trad/>.

denominations, no demographic records are kept. When requesting demographic records for research of the Free Methodist's denominational history of racially diverse leaders, it was reported that none have been recorded. Thus, there was no way to honor the history of diversity or be able to measure either growth or decline throughout the denomination in reference to the stated freedoms.

As evidenced above, Wesleyan Holiness churches have lost sight of their inclusive historic theological discipleship practice with regard to women and people of color and now lack diverse leaders for the next generation. Why does it matter that the Wesleyan Holiness churches are not growing in diversity of women and people of color throughout its members and leadership? This is a question that must be examined when considering the survival of these historically radical groups.

The lack of diversity is causing several gaps in health and vitality for the future of the Wesleyan Tradition. Biblically, the groups are not honoring the theology set forth from their founders and recorded in current denominational doctrine. Missionally, the churches are not living the great commandment (Mark 12:29-31) or the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20) in reaching the actual demographics of their communities. When looking at the future of the denominations compared to projected demographics, the imbalance will grow significantly in the coming years, as will be evidenced in later sections of this study. Considering development of disciples, the lack of diversity limits the church's ability to grow people into a full cognition and embodiment of their identity as part of a multiethnic kingdom of reconciliation with both Christ and neighbor. Practically, the number of women and people of color pursuing Christian faith continues to rise, while the number of white Christians, particularly white male Christians,

continues to drop.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the number of white men in leadership continues to remain the same and even grow depending upon the number of churches and their rate of growth.

If it is essential to have diversity throughout the church, then what elements are keeping Wesleyan Holiness churches from making diversified disciple-making leaders with regard to gender and race? This study intends to research and assess the reasons for the gap between belief and practice within the Wesleyan Tradition with regard to gender and ethnicity.

### **Biblical Motivations for Inclusion**

The evangelical church in the United States has anchored itself firmly in the biblical commands to love God and neighbor and to make disciples of all nations found in Mark 12 and Matthew 28:

Jesus answered, “The first [commandment] is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”<sup>25</sup>

Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Alex Vandermaas-Peeler, Daniel Cox, Molly Fisch-Friedman, and Robert P. Jones, “One Nation, Divided, Under Trump: Findings from the 2017 American Values Survey,” PRRI, December 5, 2017, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://www.prii.org/research/american-values-survey-2017/>.

<sup>25</sup> Mark 12:29-31.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 28:19-20.

Each Wesleyan Holiness denomination has these three commands as part of their core beliefs and expected practice for their leaders and churches. The Free Methodist Church states explicitly on their national website and in their book of doctrine the following of loving God and neighbor:

God's law for all human life, personal and social, is expressed in two divine commands: Love the Lord God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. These commands reveal what is best for persons in their relationship with God, others, and society. They set forth the principles of human duty in both individual and social action. They recognize God as the only Sovereign. All people as created by Him and in His image have the same inherent rights regardless of sex, race, or color. All should therefore give God absolute obedience in their individual, social, and political acts. They should strive to secure to everyone respect for their person, their rights, and their greatest happiness in the possession and exercise of the right within the moral law.<sup>27</sup>

In continuing with the mission of the church, Bishop David Roller of the Free Methodist Church explains the compulsion from the Mark 12 command to love God to the commission to make disciples of all people,

There's that "image of God" thing that instills in us that "love of God" thing, that drives us to that "mission of God" thing. That's why we embrace those who are different, and especially those who can't reciprocate, who have nothing to offer us. We love them and embrace them simply because they bear the image of our Creator and are included in the redemptive work of the Son.<sup>28</sup>

The sentiments in both statements are replicated in Wesleyan and evangelical denominations worldwide. From the Wesleyan perspective, historical service to the marginalized, particularly people of color and women, drives the mission of God to embrace all people. In living the great commandment and commission of God in the world, Wesleyan churches have sent missionaries to plant churches worldwide. To this

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<sup>27</sup> "Doctrine," Uniquely Free Methodist, September 24, 2012, <https://fmcusa.org/uniquelyfm/doctrine/>.

<sup>28</sup> "Embrace All," Uniquely Free Methodist, February 17, 2014, <https://fmcusa.org/uniquelyfm/embraceallpeople/>.

end, denominations such as the Free Methodists who began in the United States now have the majority of their ministry happening internationally.<sup>29</sup>

With such a grand movement of God through these groups, it may seem that the mission of God is indeed being fulfilled. Yet, there has been a repeated claim over the last twenty years by academics and ministry leaders that the church is one of the most segregated institutions in American culture. In *Divided by Faith*, one of the foundational texts written about the segregation in the evangelical church in America, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith cite a study revealing that “more than 90% of American congregations are made up of at least 90% of people of the same race.”<sup>30</sup> Three years later, in response to the original text, a second book was written, titled *United by Faith*. It explained that a racially mixed religious congregation could be defined by 80% or less of a single racial group in a church. “For Christian congregations, which form over 90 percent of congregations in the United States, the percentage that are racially mixed five and a half.”<sup>31</sup> The argument of *United by Faith* is that “Christian congregations, when possible, should be multiracial.”<sup>32</sup> The authors root their radically inclusive argument in Scripture, primarily with the great commission and the examples of Jesus and Paul in their fulfillment of the commands to love God and neighbor.

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<sup>29</sup> *Yearbook: Personnel, Organization, and Statistics of The Free Methodist Church, USA* (Indianapolis, IN: Free Methodist Communications, 2015), 629, 634.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 136.

<sup>31</sup> Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>32</sup> DeYoung, *United by Faith*, 2.

In April of 2019, an article by the Pew Research Center casts an even brighter light on the need to enact the great commandment and commission in diversifying the church to reflect the ever-changing population of the United States. Titled, “6 Demographic Trends Shaping the U.S. and World in 2019,” the article states the number one trend is that Millennials, age 23-38, are the largest adult generation with the most education, and are the most racially and ethnically diverse.<sup>33</sup> Following the millennial generation is Generation Z, ages 7 to 22, with a minority rate of forty-eight percent. The nation as a whole is moving toward a more diverse multiracial, multiethnic reality. Businesses and non-profits have caught wind of these trends and have begun to make profound shifts in practice to empower both women and men from a variety of backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> The Wesleyan Tradition is poised with a history of valuing diversity and inclusion based on a high view of Scripture and should be ready to practice these stated values as demographics trends continue to diversify.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

In considering diversity in the church, three terms have become popular, and even essential, in modern analysis of whether an organization is actually serving their people well in their diversity practice. The first is diversity itself; the other two are equity and inclusion. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are often found together, and are referenced as

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<sup>33</sup> Anthony Cilluffo and D’vera Cohn, “6 Demographic Trends Shaping the U.S. and the World in 2019,” Pew Research Center, April 11, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/11/6-demographic-trends-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world-in-2019/>

<sup>34</sup> Examples of business shifting toward diverse and inclusive practices are Apple, Quantas, and BMO Financial Group. Non-profits include The Ford Foundation, Murdock Trust, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

DEI throughout the research. To begin to understand the importance of how diversity, equity, and inclusion can inform and transform organizations, it is essential to offer proper definitions. These terms will be used throughout this research to help navigate the modern situation of Wesleyan denominations.

While many would use diversity, equality, or inclusion interchangeably to explain shifts in gendered and racial leadership and culture, the term equity nuances the conversation in a different direction. Though each of these terms are linked, they are not synonymous. In fact, the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion are being used together to promote healthy organizational movement.<sup>35</sup>

Diversity is most often defined as the presence or representation of a variety of characteristic differences among a group, such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, political perspective, or religious commitment.<sup>36</sup> As Deloitte Insights research group defines it, “diversity refers to the presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, which they were born or have acquired.”<sup>37</sup> Diversity is a state of being based on group member identity that only changes by the transition of diverse members into or out of the group.

Inclusivity or inclusion, by contrast, is a practice in how the group behaves and governs itself. As Deloitte explains, “inclusion refers to the practice of making all

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<sup>35</sup> “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” Ford Foundation, April 6, 2018, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/about/people/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>.

<sup>36</sup> “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” Ford Foundation.

<sup>37</sup> “The Inclusion Imperative for Boards,” Deloitte Insights, April 2, 2019, <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion/redefining-board-responsibilities-to-support-organizational-inclusion.html>.

members of an organization feel welcomed and giving them equal opportunity to connect, belong, and grow—to contribute to the organization, advance their skill sets and careers, and feel comfortable and confident being their authentic selves.”<sup>38</sup> Inclusion is centered on participation without favoritism, where all are valued for their unique identity. The Cooperative Extension organization is primarily focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their research in change management cites that

inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.<sup>39</sup>

Equity is similar to, and often confused with, equality. While equality means creating the same opportunity for people without reference to personal identity, equity considers potential barriers based on the diverse identity of people to ensure impartial treatment and equal access to benefits for all. Meyer Memorial Trust, a granting organization for Oregon, includes equity in their mission, practice, and applicant resources page of their website. The trust describes equity as “*the existence of conditions where all people can reach their full potential...* Our goal is to make equity as much a part of our everyday operations as it is a part of Meyer Memorial Trust’s mission: To contribute to a flourishing and equitable Oregon. We believe that if we really want a flourishing Oregon, we can’t get there without equity.”<sup>40</sup> Meyer’s definition and use of equitable practice aligns with research defining equity in organizations. As Cooperative

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<sup>38</sup> “The Inclusion Imperative for Boards.”

<sup>39</sup> “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” Diversity Equity and Inclusion, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://dei.extension.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Equity Inclusion,” Meyer Memorial Trust, emphasis in original, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://mmt.org/equity>.



Extension explains, “equity is promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.”<sup>41</sup>

Equity, while being a known term in government and business, is not found on denominational websites unless relating to finance. The Wesleyan tradition is largely known for its historical focus on justice rather than equity. Justice within the Wesleyan church can be categorized primarily as restorative justice, seeking to provide care and fair treatment to the oppressed and oppressors. Though equity was not a known term at the beginning of the Wesleyan movement, much of the efforts to do justice were out of a desire for equity. Further, justice as a term has become clouded with political and legal jargon, much of what the church shied away from as it developed, as will be seen in the history and barriers of the church in chapters three and four.

Together, diversity, equity, and inclusion are becoming standard terms for many businesses and nonprofits, although they may be overstated and under-established in practice. Leadership throughout organizations, once tuned in to the terminology, may appropriate the language while overlooking the roots of many glaring inequities and injustices. The next sections reveal how diversity, equity, and inclusion affect all organizations. Business and government research groups have examined the terms for

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<sup>41</sup> “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”

decades, providing a wealth of information for the church to draw upon in becoming more holistic participants in the great command<sup>42</sup> and commission.<sup>43</sup>

### **Impacts of Diverse and Equitable Practice**

Ani Turner of the Kellogg Foundation argues,

History has shown that reducing barriers to opportunity can lead to greater economy-wide growth. An analysis by economists at the University of Chicago and Stanford University showed that reductions in occupational barriers facing blacks and women between 1960 and 2008 in the U.S. could explain 15% to 20% of the aggregate growth in output per worker over this period.<sup>44</sup>

This quote by the Kellogg Foundation comes from their research on structural inequities, which resulted in the article produced, titled “The Business Case for Racial Equity.” The article reveals the benefits to business, government, and the economy when organizations equitably diversify. Citing research from Scott Page of Princeton, who wrote *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, Turner states, “Research has shown that businesses with a more diverse workforce have more customers, higher revenues and profits, greater market share, less absenteeism and turnover, and a higher level of commitment to their organization.”<sup>45</sup> One specific example of the benefit to society from diversity and equity is through the elimination of income inequality, which the U.S. Department of Commerce projects

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<sup>42</sup> Mark 12:29-31.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28:16-20.

<sup>44</sup> Ani Turner, “The Business Case for Racial Equity,” Racial Equity Tools, October 2013, [http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/The\\_Business\\_Case\\_for\\_Racial\\_Equity\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/The_Business_Case_for_Racial_Equity_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Turner, “The Business Case for Racial Equity.”

would increase minority purchasing power “from a baseline projection of \$4.3 trillion in 2045 to \$6.1 trillion, reaching 70% of all U.S. purchases.”<sup>46</sup>

Turner determined at the end of their study the lack of continued development of diverse and equitable practice harms the economy: “Our results suggest that the decline in occupational and human capital barriers to women and blacks was a very important source of growth to the U.S. economy and the leveling out of changes may be one reason why growth has slowed down.”<sup>47</sup>

The value of diversity extends beyond diverse identity and economic growth. Research from Page, Deloitte, and others reveals that demographically diverse teams not only give insight into the culture and knowledge of varying populations but also produces cognitive diversity. “In fact, identity, diversity, and cognitive diversity often go hand in hand. Two people belonging to different identity groups, or with different life experiences, also tend to acquire diverse cognitive tools.”<sup>48</sup> Deloitte Insights expands on this thought, saying, “For example, racial diversity stimulates curiosity, and gender balance facilitates conversational turn-taking.”<sup>49</sup>

Deloitte Insights has found that organizations wanting to take part in the benefits from diversity and inclusion must incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusivity at every level of the company, from compliance to programs to leaders to integration. The only

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<sup>46</sup> Turner, “The Business Case for Racial Equity.”

<sup>47</sup> Chang-Tai Hsieh, “The Allocation of Talent and U.S. Economic Growth,” accessed April 20, 2019, <http://klenow.com/HHJK.pdf>, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), Preface to the Paperback Edition.

<sup>49</sup> “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths,” Deloitte Insights, January 22, 2018, <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html#endnote-18>.

way an organization could become equitably mature was when the leaders were involved, and then included the entirety of the organization in integrating practice. “Our final truth is the most sweeping (and underpins all seven truths above:) Most organizations will need to transform their cultures to become fully inclusive. While an overwhelming majority of organizations (71 percent) aspire to have an ‘inclusive’ culture in the future, survey results have found that actual maturity levels are very low.”<sup>50</sup> The needed cultural transformation is often due to the underestimation of the required change and the tendency toward compliance and program shifts without the active involvement of leadership.

### **Benefits of Diversity in the Church**

Most research on the benefits of diversity are based in business and governmental research, as seen above. Within the church, the appeal to diversity rests primarily on the future hope of looking more like the kingdom of God.<sup>51</sup> In building a case for diversity in the church, most cite Jesus’ inclusive message in Matthew 22:37-39, commanding followers to love their neighbor and make disciples of all nations; Paul’s work of church planting among the Gentiles in Acts 13-21; and John’s words in Revelation 7:9, which say, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” The biblical text, while authoritative, can be difficult to contextualize in American churches. Most Wesleyan denominational websites utilize the Bible to

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<sup>50</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 8.

advocate for evangelizing the nations, with no explicit expectation that all churches be diverse.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the call is often toward global diversity (via missions) without concerning themselves with local diversity and matching the ethnic makeup of their own neighborhoods. Finally, little to no quantitative or qualitative research is being done on the benefits of current congregational experience of diversity.

Curtiss DeYoung, in *United by Faith*, examines four diverse congregations across America to reveal empirical evidence of the benefits of diversity in the church. A few of the known benefits are as follows. First, the congregations reflect the demographics of their neighborhoods, revealing that the church is fulfilling both the command and commission of Jesus in loving its neighbors and making disciples.<sup>53</sup> Second, the people within the churches find unity in their diversity. The members are friends across racial, gender, and economic class.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the church is able to experience the gospel as multidimensional in discipleship, from reconciliation with Christ to reconciliation with neighbor. In being reconciled with people different from themselves, members then bear one another's burdens in reconciling broken aspects and systems in their community.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

The Wesleyan Tradition was founded on beliefs and practices that have brought millions into the kingdom of God. Yet, at a time in history when millions are still to be

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<sup>52</sup> "Church of the Nazarene," Church of the Nazarene, accessed April 20, 2019, <http://www.nazarene.org/>.

<sup>53</sup> DeYoung, *United by Faith*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> "CRG Blog," Congregational Resource Guide, October 22, 2018, <https://thecrg.org/blog/the-multicultural-congregation>.

<sup>55</sup> DeYoung, *United by Faith*, 81.

reached, the institutions who claim this belief in diversity are not practicing their inheritance well. The lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion is affecting the outcomes and long-term health of the church.

With the prolific and easily accessible amount of research being done on the benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations, the church has an opportunity to readily incorporate these practices. By equitably including women and ethnic minorities at every level of Wesleyan denominations, the church will align with its biblical and historical mission of loving neighbor and making disciples of every nation.

The following chapter will examine the biblical foundations of the Wesleyan Tradition that gave rise to policy favoring gendered and ethnic leadership. The biblical roots reveal threads of diversity, equity, and inclusion among the people of God. Building on Scripture, the third chapter will provide the history of inclusion in the Wesleyan Tradition, bearing its radical beginnings and more conservative current status. The sociological changes in the Wesleyan denominations will be assessed in chapter four, with the final two chapters revealing pockets of hope and pathways forward.

## CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Denominations claiming an attachment to Wesley operate out of an exegesis of Scripture that secures ordination for women and equality for all ethnicities, with no reservation for leadership based on race. While many non-Wesleyan groups question the validity of women's leadership and ordination in the church, very few would disagree with the necessity of all races and ethnicities being welcomed into God's kingdom as pastors, leader, and parishioners.<sup>1</sup> The Wesleyan Tradition welcomes both women and people of color into all roles of leadership based on their exegesis of Scripture.

This chapter will review the biblical texts that make up the Wesleyan belief of diverse leadership in the church, from the call to equity and inclusion of all people to specific texts affirming biblical authority for women and people of color to lead the church.<sup>2</sup>

### **Old Testament**

The foundation for diversity, equity, and inclusion of women and the nations into God's kingdom begins in the Old Testament. Even after creation is broken by sin in Genesis 3, the story of restoration, and the partnership of humanity with God and one another, continues to be portrayed throughout the Hebrew text.

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<sup>1</sup> Though, as will be verified throughout this research, many ignore the command to welcome all cultures, tribes, and tongues.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the interconnectedness of gender and ethnicity in the biblical text, many of the highlighted texts for gender also contain important information on ethnicity and vice versa. Thus, the following sections may treat the same text twice, but with regards to different groupings.

### *Gender Inclusion in Leadership*

From the beginning, God's plan was for equal partnership with male and female, and with one to the other. The following section explains how gender inclusion in leadership began, was distorted, and was continually fostered by God in the midst of a broken patriarchal culture.

#### **Partnership in the Image of God**

Genesis 1 tells of each of the first six days of creation with the culmination being the creation of humans. God's creation of humankind is done differently than the rest of creation. Rather than merely creating humanity and giving them authority over creation, God has a conversation among the godhead and imparts God's own image into humankind. This creates a marked break in the flow of creation as God is revealed in the plural, "Let us make humankind in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves."<sup>3</sup> In addition, the image of God in the creation was an act of relational partnership with humanity as "the essence of partnership is contained in the very image of God."<sup>4</sup> God, as the relational triune creator, has extended the desire for community into both women and men.

"So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). Both male and female receive the resemblance of God in their entire physical and spiritual being, as it would have been understood by the original writers. The first distinction between the humans is their

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26.

<sup>4</sup> Fran Ferder and John Heagle, *Partnership: Women & Men in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1989), 34.



complementary gender to one another. Ferder and Heagle argue, “They stand as equals, created simultaneously, both contributing to the fundamental definition of what it means to be human. Without either of them, humanity would lose something vital to its identity. So would the image of God.”<sup>5</sup>

As visual reproductions of God in their relational partnership, male and female are given authority together over the creation. Neither gender had dominion over the other. B.T. Roberts, founder of the Free Methodist Church, observed the mutuality of genders in God’s original intention in his text *Ordaining Women*, “It is, then, evident that God created woman a female man—nothing more—nothing less. She had all the rights and prerogatives of the man. The dominion given to him was given equally to her.”<sup>6</sup> Roberts recognized God’s original design as God’s intention throughout history, and, thus, begins his defense of gender equality at creation.

Genesis 2 provides a second creation story of humanity in a more poetic form, though still with a mutuality of the genders. The equality between the couple is explained in the Wesleyan Church’s statements on the “Theological Framework on Women.” The framework stresses Genesis 2’s reference to woman “as Man’s helper” (*ezer*) in verse eighteen is not focused on ranking, as God is also regarded as a helper to humanity. “God creating the woman from the man’s side does not necessitate subordination (v. 22) any more than the man’s creation from the ground (v. 7) makes him equal to the animals who

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<sup>5</sup> Ferder and Heagle, *Partnership*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> B.T. Roberts and Benjamin D. Wayman, *Ordaining Women: New Edition with an Introduction and Notes* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 43.

were made from the ground as well (v. 19). Neither can we affirm that the man's naming of the woman's gender in v. 23 signals rule or authority.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Humanity Distorted**

There was no authority of man over the woman before the first act of disobedience in Genesis 3. Only after the sin of the first couple was a gender hierarchy formed, with the male ruling over female. The disobedience of the couple caused a power struggle, with the woman then desiring her husband and the potential for him to rule her. The partnership with God and humanity with one another was distorted as a result of their sin.<sup>8</sup>

The distortion from the fall continue, even into the reading of the text itself, with many interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 through a patriarchal lens, including well-meaning Wesleyans. Phyllis Trible has cited a list of nine inaccurate readings of the first chapters of Genesis used to support female subordination to the male in her text, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*.<sup>9</sup>

### **Female Inclusion and Partnership**

The resulting subjection of woman to man in the fall was not God's original design. Nor was it the conclusive end to the relationship between the genders. The Old and New Testaments both point toward reconciliation of the genders over and again,

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<sup>7</sup> Anita Eastlack, “A Theological Framework on Women,” The Wesleyan Church, August 10, 2018, <https://www.wesleyan.org/a-theological-framework-on-women>.

<sup>8</sup> Eastlack, “A Theological Framework on Women.”

<sup>9</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality: Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73.

particularly in the incarnation of Christ. However, even predating Jesus' earthly life, multiple women were empowered to serve as leaders among God's people. A few of the many notable women were Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, and Esther.

**Miriam.** Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, served alongside them as the director of music for the nation of Israel and was a prophet who sang of the faithfulness of God in Israel's exile, as shown in Exodus 20:15. Miriam's influence by her voice in God's deliverance of Israel is remembered throughout the nation's history, as recognized in Micah 6:4, "And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."<sup>10</sup>

**Huldah.** Upon finding the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord in 2 Kings 22, King Josiah sends the high priest and secretary to Huldah, rather than the prophet Jeremiah, to review the contents. As a prophet of God, Huldah speaks the word of God. Her reputation and assessment of the text were accepted as authoritative, instigating a national revival for Israel.

**Deborah.** Deborah was known as both a prophet and a judge of Israel, who had all the responsibilities of the male judges of her time. Judges 4 describes how Deborah claimed victory in battle when Barak, the commander of Israel's army, was unwilling to lead without her. She recognized the patriarchal culture, yet walked in her authority as a leader, warning Barak that the glory would go to a woman because of his cowardice.<sup>11</sup>

**Esther.** The entire book of Esther is dedicated to the story of Esther as the deliverer of Israel with the support of her uncle, Mordecai. Though an outsider among the Persians, Esther became the queen and was granted extraordinary favor from the king.

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<sup>10</sup> Micah 6:4.

<sup>11</sup> Judges 4:9.

When she learns of a plot to destroy her people, she consults with her uncle and finally risks her life to save the remnant of Israel in Persia from extinction by the design of one of the king's officials. Esther's courage and collaboration gave her the ability to preserve the lives and heritage of the nation of Israel.

### *Ethnic Inclusion in Leadership*

Inclusion in the Old Testament included not just male and female, but also all cultures and people, who were, as descendants of the first couple, made equally in the image of God. The following section explains how cultures and nationalities began and then became distorted, and how people of multiple nationalities were continually valued and included as partners by God.

### **Origins and Culture**

While gender diversity begins with Genesis 1, there is no designated race or ethnicity revealed in the order of creation. There is simply humankind, or the human race. The couple has dominion and are commanded to procreate in Genesis 1:28, becoming the ancestors of all future races and ethnicities. Because the first humans were made in the image of God, all of the children in their lineage would also bear the image of God, regardless of their nationality or culture. The implications of God creating humanity in God's image in Genesis 1 are monumental, particularly as they relate to those who view the Bible as authoritative throughout history.

In God's blessing and command to multiply comes a second part to the blessing, to take responsibility for the care of creation. Together with Genesis 2:5, cultivating the land becomes the first cultural mandate. As Gary Parrett and Steve Kang explain,

“Indeed, the word *culture* derives from the Latin *colere*, which means “to cultivate.”

Therefore, although culture is a human enterprise, it began as an act of obedience to the command of God.”<sup>12</sup> So, in the beginning, both genders, out of the only “race,” were focused on the tasks of developing the culture.

### **Cultural Distortion**

Again, Genesis 3 reveals the breakdown of the relationship with humanity to God, one another, and creation. While retaining the image of God, the harmony that existed was replaced with hostility and brokenness. By chapter 4, the first murder occurs among the second generation of humanity.

Genesis 5:1-2 opens with a reiteration of humans being created in the likeness of God. “When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and blessed them and named them ‘Humankind’ when they were created.” The chapter then proceeds to the descendants of Adam and Eve, culminating with Noah.

Noah walked with God, unlike most of humanity, and was chosen to sustain the human race with his family. However, after the flood, Noah’s descendants continue to turn away from seeking God. By chapter 11, a tower is constructed by the people for the people. The people feared that if they did not make a name for themselves, they would be disbursed across the earth (11:5), which becomes the very punishment for their arrogant posture toward their creator. God then confuses their language so they cannot continue to build the city. The nation’s rebellion to the original command to fill the earth then causes

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<sup>12</sup> Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 52.

their scattering. As Parrett and Kang explain, “God’s kingdom would extend to the ends of the earth, and human disobedience would not triumph over his will.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Cultural Inclusion and Partnership**

The scattering of people would eventually result in a variety of ethnicities and physical differences among humanity. Following Genesis 11, a variety of nations have formed with their own distinct cultures. Of those who follow God is Abram. God enters into a covenant with Abram to make a great nation from his descendants that will bless all of the nations of the earth. Thus, Abram becomes Abraham, “the ancestor of a multitude of nations.”<sup>14</sup> God is still focused on the nations as image-bearers, and not merely one bloodline of offspring.

Throughout the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is apparent that God is creating a nation to bless the world. The law written by Moses in Leviticus 19:33-34 plainly states, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

The Davidic covenant reveals God’s continued plan to establish the nation of Israel as a blessing for all people, as demonstrated through David’s descendants.

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<sup>13</sup> Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 17:5.

Beyond the nation of Israel, many examples are given in Scripture of God's partnership with those traditionally known as outsiders to God's kingdom, including Tamar, the Cushites, Rahab, Ruth, Babylonian kings, and the Ninevites through Jonah.

**Tamar.** Genesis 38 reveals a scandalous twist to Israel's descendants. Tamar is known as a Canaanite woman who incestuously prostituted herself with her father-in-law to carry on the line of Judah. A widow motivated by the need to produce an heir for the family, she deceives Judah after losing the opportunity to have children by his three sons. In the end, Tamar is hailed by Judah "as more in the right than I" and she bears twin boys. The older boy becomes an ancestor to Jesus and Tamar is named in Matthew 1:3 as part of Christ's lineage.

**The Cushites.** One prominent group that is mentioned more than fifty times in the Bible but is not part of Israel is the Cushites.<sup>15</sup> Commonly recognized to be from Ethiopia, the Cushites were a powerful kingdom. Moses is known to have married a Cushite woman in Numbers 12:1. Jeremiah is saved by a Cushite (Jeremiah 38:7-13), and the Cushites are later saved by God through the prophecy of Jeremiah because of the Cushites' trust in God (Jeremiah 39:15-18). The New Testament also includes the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion as a prominent story told before the conversion of Paul.<sup>16</sup>

**Rahab.** The book of Joshua includes a story of an unlikely Canaanite woman, Rahab, who saves herself and her family by partnering with Joshua and the Israelites in their conquering of her city, Jericho. Rahab is a known prostitute who collaborates with

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel J. Hays, "6 Ways the Bible Changed My Perspective on Ethnic Diversity," The Gospel Coalition, December 6, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/6-ways-bible-changed-perspective-ethnic-diversity/>.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 8:26-40.

Israel's spies and reveals to them in Joshua 2:9-14 her knowledge of God's work in the exile and her faith in Yahweh. In doing so, she makes a deal with the spies to protect her family when the city is destroyed. Rahab and her family were then welcome to live as part of Israel and are recognized in Joshua 6:25 as being a part of the nation ever since.

**Ruth.** The story of the Ruth comes during the rule of the judges while there was great famine. Ruth is Moabite woman who married an Israelite man who ends up dying (along with his father and brother). Ruth chooses to remain with her widowed mother-in-law rather than return to her people, saying, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, your God my God."<sup>17</sup> Through Ruth's loyalty she meets Boaz, a relative of Naomi, whom she later marries. Ruth and Boaz have a son who becomes the ancestor of King David and Jesus. Ruth is also named in the genealogy of Christ, once again revealing God's intention of including outsiders and women as part of the kingdom of God.

**Ezra-Nehemiah.** While God had created multiple covenants to have his people bless and welcome all people into the kingdom of God, Israel became like many of the other nations, focusing on their own well-being above all others. This is overtly seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. During the period when the books were written, Israel was exiled in Babylon. Three different times, Persian kings allow Israel to worship their God and permit a leader from their people to lead them. The first instance reveals the hopefulness of the text when God spoke directly through King Cyrus to fulfill His promise given by Jeremiah: "the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared: 'Thus

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<sup>17</sup> Ruth 1:16.



says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.”<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, throughout each of the three major sections in the combined books, the leaders face opposition and their time ends in disappointment. The disappointment continually surrounds exclusivity on the part of the leader. Whether sending away Israelites who were never exiled (Ezra 4:1-3), sending away foreign wives and children that have intermarried with the Israelites (Ezra 9:1-4), or building a wall to keep out the foreigners from among Israel (Nehemiah 4:15), they miss the larger vision of God, even when given by gracious foreign kings ruling them, to be people who bring God’s shalom to the world (Genesis 12, Isaiah 2, Jeremiah 29, Zechariah 8).<sup>19</sup>

**Jonah.** The short story of Jonah (only four chapters) is filled with satire, as Jonah is a prophet of God who continually rebels and is angry at God for being merciful with Israel’s enemies. Jonah was called by God to preach a message of destruction to the Ninevites, a nation of pagan outsiders to Israel. Instead of heeding God’s words, Jonah continually deviates from the plan, boarding a ship, asking to be thrown overboard when a storm comes, and continuing to ask God to let him die so he will not have to face God’s mercy on foreigners. Everywhere Jonah goes, God has mercy on the people, including the sailors and the Ninevites, who all repent and turn to God. The message conveyed in Jonah makes clear that despite the perspective of God’s people, God had mercy and welcome for more than just one chosen nation.

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<sup>18</sup> Ezra 1:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> The Bible Project, “Ezra-Nehemiah.” YouTube video, 8:36, July 17, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkETkRv9tG8>.

## New Testament

The New Testament continues to build on the Old Testament's foundation of God's restorative action toward humanity. God's partnership with women and diverse people groups becomes more explicit in the actions of Christ incarnate and the teachings of the apostles. The New Testament also teaches more overtly on humanity's expected partnership with one another in Christ.

### *Gender Inclusion in Leadership*

The New Testament has both implicit and explicit texts about women in leadership in the church. Because of the variety of texts, there are a variety of viewpoints in the church, most notably egalitarian and complementarian. The Wesleyan Tradition has anchored itself in an egalitarian perspective, recognizing the original intent of the Hebrew Scriptures alongside the models of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament. This may seem troubling to some due to the passages from Paul prohibiting women's leadership in the church. Yet the teaching of Wesleyans, as explained by Craig Keener in his defense of women in ministry, is

that the Bible permits women's ministry under normal circumstances and prohibits it only under exceptional circumstances. Because Paul's letters to Timothy address a specific situation (women were, in fact, vehicles for propagating false teaching, as we can demonstrate from the letters themselves), the nature of the exceptional circumstance seems fairly clear.<sup>20</sup>

This section will outline the primary passages held by Wesleyans in affirming women's leadership in the church from the New Testament text.

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<sup>20</sup> Craig Keener, et al., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 207.

*Jesus and Gender Partnership*

The most important figure regarding the treatment of women in the New Testament is Jesus. In both word and deed, Jesus replicates the original intent of God at creation, not speaking against women and including them as participants in the fullness of the kingdom. The Free Methodist Church recognizes that,

According to the Gospels, Jesus taught, disciplined, touched, and healed women; he was himself cared for by women throughout his ministry; they followed him to the cross and to the tomb. Several of these women became apostles, sent by the risen Christ to tell his frightened, grieving friends in hiding that he had come back to life and to meet him in Galilee.<sup>21</sup>

The Nazarene statement on women in ministry leadership utilizes several of Paul's letters to exemplify Jesus' intention for all creation:

The purpose of Christ's redemptive work is to set God's creation free from the curse of the Fall. Those who are "in Christ" are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). In this redemptive community, no human being is to be regarded as inferior on the basis of social status, race, or gender (Galatians 3:26-28). Acknowledging the apparent paradox created by Paul's instruction to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:11-12) and to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:33-34), we believe interpreting these passages as limiting the role of women in ministry presents serious conflicts with specific passages of scripture that commend female participation in spiritual leadership roles (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 21:8-9; Romans 16:1, 3, 7; Philippians 4:2-3), and violates the spirit and practice of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition. Finally, it is incompatible with the character of God presented throughout Scripture, especially as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Karen Strand Winslow, "Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry," Study Commission on Doctrine, Free Methodist Church USA, December 20, 2016, <https://scod.fmcusa.org/545/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Women in Ministry," Church of the Nazarene, Church of the Nazarene Manual 2013-2017, accessed December 15, 2019, <https://www.nazarene.org/theology-women-ministry>.

*Signs of Restoration*

There are many signs of God's restoration of partnership with women, both with Jesus and Paul. The following section will highlight a few poignant examples from the New Testament.

**Samaritan Woman**

Jesus' interaction in John 4:1-42 with the Samaritan woman breaks gender and cultural boundaries of the day. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews as they were descendants of Jacob from the northern tribes of Israel and had intermarried with Assyrians. Known by the Jews as half-Jew half-Gentile, they were considered unclean and an enemy.

The Samaritan woman was an outsider because of her ethnic diversity as well as being a woman in a patriarchal culture. Jesus and the woman are the only ones present when they meet at a well in the middle of the day. Because of the gender and ethnicity of the woman, Jesus should have kept to himself, avoiding contact and conversation with the woman. However, Jesus does not do this. He asks for a drink of water, which includes dialogue and a point of contact. The conversation is rich with questions and discovery. The woman moves from suspicion to intrigue to insight as she is welcomed by Jesus. Once the disciples arrive, Jesus has confirmed he is the Messiah and the woman is on her way to the city to tell others about him. By the end of the story, many Samaritans believed Jesus is the Messiah because of the testimony of a poor, nameless woman.

The mission of Jesus did not overlook the realities of the woman. He specifically went to the woman and engaged her in dialogue, knowing her gender, ethnicity, and background. In addition, John the apostle spends a significant amount of time, forty-two

verses, conveying the interaction and the outcomes of the woman and the impact on her city.

### **Women Partners in Leadership**

Women were often found in proximity to Jesus, as mentioned in the opening to this section. The women still have a role with the disciples after Jesus' ascension, as Acts 1:14 specifies the believers "were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus." As the church began to be empowered by the Spirit, women were also permitted as leaders.

The apostle Paul promoted women alongside men in leadership for the church. One of the most well-known women leaders and apostles was Junia. Junia is recognized alongside Andronicus in Romans 16:7 as an apostle of the church. Among the New Testament church, apostles and prophets had the most authority; they were, as Keener deems them, "the highest-ranking ministers," since Paul listed these gifts and ministries often first.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, women, including Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Julia, Euodia, Syntyche, and Lydia, are reported by Paul in roles of leadership also commonly used for men in Romans 16:1-12, Philippians 4:3, and Acts 16:11-15.

Phoebe is named in Romans 16:1 as the person who carried the letter to the church. Paul commended her as a deacon, according her the same standard as other deacons. Nowhere does Paul describe Phoebe as a deaconess.

Priscilla and Junia in Romans 16, and Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4, are all commended by Paul and described as co-workers who risked their lives, were

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<sup>23</sup> Keener, *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 214.

imprisoned, and struggled alongside Paul for the sake of the gospel. Their leadership was evident and is reaffirmed by Paul's explicit communication to them in his letters.

Lydia was a prominent business owner who would pray with other God-fearing women at the river, recognized in Acts 16. Paul goes to the women, as he strategically met with Jews who might be open to the gospel before going to Gentiles. Lydia was open to the testimony of Paul and was baptized along with her whole family. Soon after, a congregation began to gather at Lydia's home.<sup>24</sup>

### **Inclusion and Exclusion of Women in Paul's Letters**

While many will utilize Paul's writings to Timothy and the Ephesians to dismiss women's roles in the church, the same will utilize Paul's writings to recognize the welcome of all people into the kingdom. Galatians 3:28, which reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," has become a hallmark Scripture for Wesleyans, as it speaks to unity in Christ for all people. The text is recognized as designating equality for all under the gospel, without exception of background, status, or gender. Karen Winslow comments that the text does not merely provide a salvation equality, but rather speaks to full equality in Christ, citing how some New Testament leaders, including Peter, believed Gentiles and slaves were not included in salvation, though "all regarded women as included in the general provisions of salvation."<sup>25</sup> Adam Clarke, a Methodist biblical scholar, through writing in the 1800s, substantiates Winslow's perspective of women's

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<sup>24</sup> Acts 16:11-15, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Winslow, "Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry."

leadership on the basis of the Galatians passage: “Under the blessed spirit of Christianity they have equal rights, equal privileges, and equal blessings, and, let me add, they are equally useful.”<sup>26</sup> The impacts of Galatians 3:28 will be further explored in chapter three.

Two primary texts used to prohibit women preaching and ministering today among complementarian churches are 1 Timothy 2:12-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 which say, respectively,

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

and

Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

The passages are a “radical departure from everything else Paul taught on the subject—and it would restrict women even more than today’s most conservative voices on the subject do,”<sup>27</sup> disallowing women to sing as part of the congregation or choir, prophesy, or pray out loud. To make accommodation for women to sing, pray, or hold any office in a church, such as children’s pastor or director, or women’s ministry leader, makes an accommodation the text does not give. “Notice, preaching is not specified. It is forbidden only as it is one method of breaking the silence, one mode of teaching.”<sup>28</sup> Also,

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Clark, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments...with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1837) 6:402.

<sup>27</sup> Keener, *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 224.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, 51.

if continuing with the Timothy passage literally, women must become biological mothers to enter the kingdom of God.

Wesleyans land firmly on the situational nature of the texts as they negate Paul's words and posture toward women and ministry in every other New Testament text. While "all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," as Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, it is also written in a way that is linguistically and culturally specific to the initial recipients.

1 Timothy 3 has one other comment worth noting, as some in the Wesleyan Tradition, namely The Evangelical Church, have used the text to prohibit women from becoming elders. 1 Timothy 3:2 states, "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach."<sup>29</sup> Because of the marital relationship specified, those in the church have determined that the overseer or elder, must be male. What is not considered, however, is that all elders must be married, or that women may not be overseers of children or any other authoritative post in the church. Again, accommodation is being made.

B.T. Roberts concludes his exegesis of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy with the following exhortation to the church:

We must either go back or we must go ahead. We must either give her equal rights with men or we must reduce her to the servitude of by-gone ages. Either we must be governed by the Christian law of love and equity, or we must take a step back into barbarism and be governed by the law of brute force. Which shall it be? The present position of the churches is not only wrong, but inconsistent. They concede to woman too much, if Paul's words restricting her are taken literally; they concede too little, if these words are to be so understood as to harmonize with the rest of the Bible.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> NASB, as the NRSV has removed the spousal title.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, 55.



## Patriarchy in the Bible

It is important to recognize that the Bible, from Genesis 3 on, is set in a patriarchal society, led by men and supported by women. This is evidenced by the fact that women speak just over one percent of the entire words of the Bible.<sup>31</sup> In a recent blog on patriarchy in the Bible, New Testament scholar Nijay Gupta writes, “But ‘what is’ is not always ‘what should be.’ Just because something *happens* in Scripture, doesn’t mean that is the way it ought to be. Jesus makes this clear when he *allows* divorce, but points out that it is a concession, not a new standard (Matt 19:8).”<sup>32</sup> Jesus began to act on what should be while still living in what was, as Keener points out. “Jesus was indeed countercultural in advancing the status of women (Luke 8:1–3; 10:38–42), but even Jesus did not directly challenge every detail of his culture, choosing his closest workers most strategically for the culture he intended to reach.”<sup>33</sup>

The case for what should be is supported by the original creation stories and the vision of the gospel fully realized in Christ. In other words, the original design of God and the fullness of Christ’s redemption that is unfolding as progressive revelation. As

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<sup>31</sup> Lindsay Hardin Freeman, *Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement, 2016), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Nijay Gupta, “Why I Believe in Women in Ministry: Part 6,” *Crux Sola*, emphasis in original, May 23, 2019, <https://cruxsolablog.com/2019/05/23/why-i-believe-in-women-in-ministry-part-6-gupta/>.

<sup>33</sup> Zondervan, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 223. (Luke 8:1-3 “The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.” And Luke 10:38-42 “Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”)

Gupta explains, “Progressive revelation means that God does not reveal his full will all at once, but allows it to unfold over time. In the middle of the story, we cannot expect to see what the fullness of new creation looks like (so 2 Cor 4:17).”<sup>34</sup> Lisa Sharon Harper recognizes what should be and what will be in her text: “At the heart of the very good news of the gospel is the reversal of the Fall. With that reversal, Jesus’s death and resurrection paved the way for patriarchy to be crushed.”<sup>35</sup>

### *Ethnic Inclusion in Leadership*

While the Old Testament primarily focuses on Israel as a nation designed to bring blessing to the world, The New Testament has an overt shift toward inclusion of all people into the kingdom of God. The embodiment of Jesus, the movement of the Spirit at Pentecost, the transformation of Paul’s life and theology, the inclusion of the uncircumcised, and the prophecy of John in Revelation all speak to God’s plan for the restoration of all people in relationship to God and one another.

### *Jesus and Ethnic Partnership*

By the time of the incarnation, the prophets had been silent for more than 400 years. The nation of Israel had become less focused on the Abrahamic covenant and looked toward being a pure religion amidst their many foreign and, often, oppressive neighbors.<sup>36</sup> In addition, many were intermarrying, which was causing the Jews to lose

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<sup>34</sup> Gupta, “Why I Believe in Women in Ministry: Part 6.”

<sup>35</sup> Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (Colorado Spring, CO: Waterbrook, 2018), 98.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 48.

their sense of uniqueness in the world. The expectation of the Jewish king to come was to overthrow subjugation and politically lead the nation of Israel. However, the plan of God remained the same as it was at creation, to bring all of humanity into partnership with God and one another. “Jesus (especially in Luke) claimed an imminent reversal in cultural systems of hierarchy—the humble would be exalted, the mighty laid low.”<sup>37</sup> This lowliness would allow those from outside the Jewish culture and political system to be welcome.

Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection would all include accounts of ethnic inclusivity and reconciliation. Royalty from the East would worship him alongside the devout Jewish community. Roman leadership would recognize his divinity alongside Samaritans. He would heal and welcome both Jew and Gentile. And he would command his followers to love their neighbor and their enemy and to make disciples of all nations.

### *Signs of Restoration*

Restoration of partnership from God to the nations is evidenced throughout the New Testament. The following section includes salient examples of welcome and inclusion from Jesus’ birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

### **Birth of Jesus**

The gospel of Luke places Jesus in the context of the broader world, opening the birth narrative with Caesar Augustus, the Roman ruler of the day, and Quirinius, the governor of Syria. “This signaled the readers of Luke that the arrival of Jesus also

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<sup>37</sup> Winslow, “Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry.”

impacted a world beyond Israel.”<sup>38</sup> The confirmation of Jesus’ global presence and mission is made clear upon his presentation in the temple. Simeon, a Spirit-led devout Jew, took the infant in his arms, announcing, “my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to all the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”<sup>39</sup>

Jesus is connected to outsiders in multiple ways through Matthew’s gospel. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, outsiders come to honor him and become part of the story. Matthew 2 recounts wise men from another country to the East coming to pay homage to a “child who has been born king of the Jews.”<sup>40</sup> Once the Gentile men reach the Jewish baby, they are overcome with joy, kneel before the child, and offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Beyond the wise men’s visit, Matthew points out Jesus’ family fled to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod until a few years later when Herod died. Thus, Jesus would have spent his first few years among a culture outside of Israel before moving to Galilee as a child and living among another diverse Gentile community.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Centurion’s Servant**

In Luke 7:1-10, Jesus chooses to heal a Gentile leader’s servant. In the account, a Roman centurion sends Jewish elders to Jesus to see if Jesus will heal a servant who is close to death. The elders speak highly of the centurion and Jesus sets out to the home of the man. Jesus is interrupted by another group sent by the centurion saying that Jesus

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<sup>38</sup> Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 2:30-32.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 2:2.

<sup>41</sup> DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 15.

does not need to take the care to travel all that way, but rather say the word and the servant will be healed. The centurion has recognized Jesus' spiritual authority and cultural distance in sending Jews to meet the Jewish leader and in sending others to allow Jesus to simply say a word, rather than to travel all the way to meet with them. In turn, Jesus both heals the servant and commends the Gentile for his faith that is greater than Jesus has seen in Israel. The centurion is not segregated, but welcomed by Jesus.

### **Parable of the Banquet**

In Luke 14:15-24, Jesus shares a parable about the great banquet, inclusive of Jews and Gentiles. For his hearers, this idea would not have been new, as Isaiah had prophesied about the banquet 700 years prior, saying in Isaiah 25:6-9:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.  
And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.  
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

By the time of Jesus' words about the feast, Israel had three other working translations of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Talmud, Book of Enoch, and The Messianic Rule by the Qumran community.<sup>42</sup> Each of these had eliminated the Gentiles from fully participating as part of God's people. Jesus, while eating with Jewish religious leaders, reminds them of the inclusiveness of God's invitation, especially of those who were not

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<sup>42</sup> Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 310-311.

originally invited but take the place of the first guests who make excuses for not attending.

Table fellowship was a core part of social and religious life. Those included at a meal were those worthy of invitation. The meal also represented one's status by their relationships. Jesus disrupted the exclusivity of table fellowship in his willingness to go beyond the guests of his social circle to include the poor, sinners, and Gentiles. Jesus not only dines with but continually reminds outsiders their acceptable status with him in his touching, healing, and speaking to those who should have been avoided. Jesus' presence and welcome did not taint him, but rather purified and affirmed them (as seen in Mark 5 with Jairus' daughter, and the bleeding woman).

### **Death of Jesus**

The death of Jesus was also inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles. While many disciples had abandoned Jesus, some of the Jewish women remained. One Gentile outsider is prominently recognized in caring for Jesus as he approached his death. As Harper highlights, "An African named Simon of Cyrene carried his cross (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26)."<sup>43</sup> Harper notes the inclusion of language in Jesus' death: "On the cross, the tablet above Jesus's head—King of the Jews—was written in several languages as a taunt, mocking a supposed king. But the tablet actually made it possible for Jesus to cross ethnic and lingual barriers even in death."<sup>44</sup> A Roman

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<sup>43</sup> DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Harper, *The Very Good Gospel*, 143.

centurion guard among a group of others at the cross remarked upon his death, “Truly, this man was God’s son!” (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39).

### **Resurrection**

After Jesus is raised, he makes himself known to the disciples and many others. Matthew ends his gospel with the final words of Jesus being an inclusive message to the disciples, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”<sup>45</sup> Luke opens the book of Acts with Jesus’ last words to the disciples before his ascension. Jesus is consistent in communicating the good news for all: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>46</sup> The final words of Jesus become the foreshadowing of the rest of the New Testament, as the apostles go and proclaim the message of reconciliation to Jews and Gentiles alike.

### *Radical Inclusion of the Nations*

After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples continue gathering in anticipation of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, it is apparent that by the power of the Spirit, God is going to reach the nations. In a great reversal of the rebellion at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11), God brings together Jews from the diaspora in Jerusalem through the disciples each being empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak in the languages of each

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<sup>45</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 1:8.

group. “God was indicting imperial rule, which demands the exclusion of ethnic identity to consolidate a dominant culture. Instead, the Spirit of God maintained lingual and thus cultural and ethnic diversity while at the same time making it possible for disparate groups to understand one another.”<sup>47</sup>

In the time following the Holy Spirit’s arrival in Acts 3-5, the church began forming with Jews in Jerusalem, as followers of Jesus met in the temple courts and in homes. It was not until the stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem, when the disciples began to face intense persecution, that they were forced to scatter beyond the city. The disciples go on to Judea and Samaria and a multi-ethnic, international movement is initiated with Philip preaching in Samaria (Acts 8:4-40), Saul’s conversion by being confronted by Jesus himself (Acts 9), and Peter’s vision and subsequent ministry to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family (Acts 10). Shortly after Peter’s transformation by the Spirit to welcome the uncircumcised by saying, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him,”<sup>48</sup> the Holy Spirit came upon the new Gentile believers and they were baptized.

Chapter 11 of Acts begins with Peter’s report to the church in Jerusalem of God’s inclusion of the Gentiles. After praising God for the new work of the Spirit among the churches, the church plant in Antioch is introduced. Antioch was a city of over five hundred thousand made up of “Syrians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Parthians, Cappadocians, and Jews.”<sup>49</sup> The church of Antioch is multi-ethnic from its

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<sup>47</sup> Harper, *The Very Good Gospel*, 143.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 10:34-35.

<sup>49</sup> DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 27.



birth. The five chosen leaders in Acts 13:1 were also diverse: Paul of Tarsus and Barnabas of Jerusalem, who were both Jewish; Manean, who grew up with Herod Antipas; Lucias of Cyrene from Northern Africa; and Simeon, also called Niger, meaning “black,” was likely African.<sup>50</sup>

Acts 11:26 reveals that the disciples were first called “Christians” while in Antioch. This is foundational, as what distinguished the people was their faith rather than their ethnicity. The members of the church, as observed by DeYoung, “did not practice pagan rites or emperor worship. Nor did they all live by Jewish cultural and religious standards.”<sup>51</sup> The Christians were bound together as a social group that conformed to the pattern of Christ over and above their heritage or previous belief systems.

Paul and Barnabas were commissioned in Acts 13 and go throughout Asia Minor and Greece on three different missionary journeys, preaching to the Jews and then the Gentiles that Jesus is Lord over all the nations, and that in Him all people were treated as equals.<sup>52</sup> By Acts 15, there is a council at Jerusalem because of the scandalous nature of the gospel being available to Gentiles without their need to convert to Judaism. James then reminds the council of God’s inclusive plan for all people by recounting the prophet Amos’ words, “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may

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<sup>50</sup> Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> “Acts Overview Poster” The Bible Project, accessed on November 5, 2019, <https://thebibleproject.com/view-resource/253/>.

seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Future and Final Restoration of Culture*

The final book in the New Testament is a prophecy to the church on what followers of Christ should look forward to in God’s kingdom. The apostle John writes a cohesive narrative with the message of Jesus, Paul and the disciples, and the whole of God’s overarching plan from the Old Testament. God has defeated evil in the death and resurrection of Jesus and Jesus will return once more as King to end the death and destruction caused by sin and unite heaven and earth to rule over all the nations (Revelation 5:9-10). Jesus will bring together “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” who proclaim “salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7:9-10). Again, the nations are brought into focus in Revelation 15:4: “All nations will come and worship before you.” The final word of the nations rests in their walking by the light of God’s glory through the Lamb in the new Jerusalem. The partnership of Christ with his bride, the church, rests in the church made up of people from all nations, together.

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<sup>53</sup> Acts 15:16-17, Amos 9:11-12.

## Conclusion

As BT Roberts explains, “Christ came to repair the ruin wrought by the fall. In Him, and in Him only, is Paradise restored.”<sup>54</sup> The Wesleyan perspective of the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation is full of God’s design, human compromise, and God’s restoration. Contextual realities of patriarchy and oppression do not thwart God’s inclusive mission of creation restored in Christ and, finally, in Revelation. Humanity is made in the image of God, as seen in Genesis. The Lord continually partners with and redeems broken and sinful humanity, including women and the nations, to bring about God’s kingdom on earth. While not fully realized, the reconciling of all people and creation into equitable and inclusive partnership with God and one another is the central theme of Scripture.

The following chapter will unpack the history of the Wesleyan Tradition. Beginning with John Wesley and extending through the twentieth century, the history was anchored in a conviction to live the biblical text as a social witness to reform culture. While a valiant start was made by several denominations, their current status is not nearly as inclusive.

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<sup>54</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, 44.

## CHAPTER 3: THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

To best understand the origins of inclusion for people of color and women in the Wesleyan heritage, it is necessary to review its historical theology, including the contributions of key historical figures. Their history and lived theology create a framework for how the modern church has been shaped. In addition, gaps are revealed between theology and practice.

### **Wesley and Wesleyans**

The Wesleyan Holiness movement began in the 1700s with John Wesley, an England-born son of a minister in the Church of England. Although Wesley had no intention of beginning a new denomination of the church, his personal transformation, education, and drive propelled him to preach the gospel far and wide from the countryside of England to Savannah, Georgia and beyond. Wesley's disciples would eventually begin ministries that would grow into a set of denominations based on the theology and methodology Wesley had taught in applying Scripture.

One of the primary practices for understanding Scripture from Wesley is defined today as the Wesleyan quadrilateral, including Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience in theological understanding. The quadrilateral is often considered synonymous with the term "Wesleyan," as Wesley utilized this method for contextualizing and applying truth. Old Testament and Wesleyan scholar Karen Winslow explains, "The term 'Wesleyan' means a holistic methodology that widely embraces Scripture, tradition, reason, and

experience and evaluates the applicability of each point of the quadrilateral to present concerns, such as women in ministry.”<sup>1</sup>

The Wesleyan quadrilateral, or Wesleyan method of theology, has been applied since the time of Wesley by his disciples. In the Wesleyan Tradition, reformers such as Orange Scott, Luther Lee, B.T. Roberts, and Phoebe Palmer utilized the quadrilateral to further the gospel and kingdom of God in prophetic ways. In particular, Wesley and those who succeeded him sought to bring justice in their spheres of influence through revealing the oneness of all people as made in the image of God and of equal worth in the eyes of God. Issues such as slavery and the oppression of women were contrary to the message of Scripture, and they actively opposed them in both word and deed.

From the beginning of the Wesleyan Holiness movement, two strong beliefs took shape: first, slavery was evil, and second, women ought to serve in any capacity to which they were called. Wesley and his band of “Methodists,” being given the term as they were disciplined in their approach to holiness,<sup>2</sup> had included in their general rules a strong statement in opposition to “buying and selling the bodies and souls of men, women, and children, with an intention to enslave them.”<sup>3</sup>

Craig Adams notes the respect of Wesleyans for the “progressive nature of God’s revelation in Scripture” with regard to the moral principles reflecting God’s character, beginning with Wesley. “To John Wesley and Adam Clarke and other early Methodists

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Winslow, “Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry,” FMCUSA, July 1, 2005, <http://fmcusa.org/blog/2005/07/01/wesleyan-perspectives-on-women-in-ministry/>.

<sup>2</sup> “The History of Methodism,” Methodist Heritage, accessed November 20, 2019, <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/heritageofmethodism.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Donald W. Dayton with Douglas M. Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 120.

(not to mention William Wilberforce, of course) [slavery was] a no-brainer. People are created in God's image. Christ died for all, therefore God values all. They shouldn't be treated as property. End of issue."<sup>4</sup> Wesley's final letter was to William Wilberforce, exhorting him to "Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."<sup>5</sup>

Adams also saw a similar ethic applied among the Wesleyans with regard to women in leadership and the reexamination of previous boundary markers limiting women's roles in the church.<sup>6</sup> While he recognized Paul's position of forbidding women to preach in the Scripture, Wesley saw that women were included in prayer and prophesying. Wesley would later remark that "women were some of the best preachers and pastors" and rather than have them merely testify, he "claimed the movement of God of his day was an extraordinary situation similar to the Acts 2 narrative where God was clearly no respecter of persons in pouring out the Spirit. He began encouraging women to preach in society meetings."<sup>7</sup> And finally, near the end of his life, Wesley began ordaining preachers, including two women, Sarah Mallet and Sarah Crosby. Wesley supported and advised women preachers and felt opposition to them was decreasing. Unfortunately, opportunities for women diminished shortly after Wesley's death.

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<sup>4</sup> Craig Adams, "Evangelical, Wesleyan, Egalitarian," *Commonplace Holiness*, December 2012, <http://www.craigladams.com/archive/files/evangelical-wesleyan-egalitarian2.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 120.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, "Evangelical, Wesleyan, Egalitarian."

<sup>7</sup> Winslow, "Wesleyan Perspectives On Women in Ministry."

### Wesleyans as Abolitionists

Although Wesley died in 1791, the spirit of the Methodists continued. Returning to the prophetic voice of Wesley was a young preacher, Orange Scott, who was an elder in the Methodist Episcopal church. In 1835, Scott was taken by a “crisis of conscience” after spending more than a year quietly studying the abolitionist movement. He was then converted to abolitionism. Because of his conviction, he was unwilling to stop preaching against slavery and was shortly after removed from his post as presiding elder (equivalent to an area superintendent today).<sup>8</sup> Scott later began the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which merged with the Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1968 to become the Wesleyan Church.<sup>9</sup>

Joining Orange Scott in his mission toward abolition was Luther Lee. Lee was a powerful revivalist and debater who used his skills toward serving the church in defending ministers who had been on trial as agitators against slavery. Lee not only served the Massachusetts Abolition Society but later founded the Wesleyan Methodists with Scott, became a professor of theology, and wrote several volumes of sermons for the church largely focused on the social gospel.<sup>10</sup>

Another group born of the Methodist Episcopal church’s unwillingness to denounce slavery was the Free Methodists. The Free Methodists picked up their name from the Methodism of Wesley, with an explicit emphasis on freedom, particularly for

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<sup>8</sup> Lucius C. Matlack, ed., *The Life of Reverend Orange Scott* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010), 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 126-7.

slaves and the poor. Founded in 1860 by Benjamin Titus Roberts (known primarily as B.T. Roberts), the Free Methodist Church focused on social holiness. “Roberts did not come late to these convictions. Immediately after his conversion, he took the risk of social censure by teaching a Sunday school class for young black women.”<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, the Free Methodist Church opposed slavery, with their first church ever organized in St. Louis, a slaveholding city. The church made non-slaveholding a requirement for membership, prohibiting the “buying, selling or holding a human being as a slave.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, African-American women and men were attracted to the movement.

Beyond the baseline of equality for people of all races with regard to their humanity, Roberts led the way in removing racial discrimination with regard to leadership in the church. James Suggs was one of the early ministers of the Free Methodist Church, ordained deacon by B.T. Roberts in 1879 and elder in 1884.<sup>13</sup> Suggs and his wife Malinda had both been slaves.

Also given a role within the early life of the Free Methodists was Emma (Smith) Ray, who was a revivalist and active member of the Free Methodist Church beginning in 1890 with her husband. Neither were formally ordained in the church, but served in ministry for more than thirty years. Both had been former slaves.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David L. McKenna and John E. Van Valin, *A Future with a History: The Wesleyan Witness of the Free Methodist Church 1960 to 1995 Volume I A History with Promise* (Indianapolis, IN: First Fruits Press, 2016), 252.

<sup>12</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B.T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 694.

<sup>13</sup> Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 695.

<sup>14</sup> “Free Methodist Historical Society Newsletter,” FMCUSA 6, no. 3 (Spring 2006), <https://historical.fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Spring2006.pdf>.



For all of the emphasis on abolition and attempts at inclusion for people of color early in the church, the denomination was not extremely successful with the African-American population. As David McKenna articulates in his historical account of the Free Methodist Church, “Although the FMC took a strong stand against human slavery as a part of its founding principles, the church did not follow through with equally aggressive action to bring the newly emancipated people into the fellowship of the church.”<sup>15</sup> Some speculation has concluded too few Free Methodist churches in the south, along with the growth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which by 1880 had grown to 400,000 members, caused the Free Methodist Church to fade in its initial inclusive practice.<sup>16</sup>

Continuing into the twentieth century, the Free Methodists continued to struggle to integrate the diverse groups of American culture. As McKenna notes, “At best, the history of the church between 1960 and 1995 was a story of starts and stops, gains and reversals, action and inaction in relationships with racial and ethnic minorities, especially members of the African-American community.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Wesleyans and Women’s Rights**

From the abolitionist movement began the woman’s rights movement. “In seeking to abolish [slavery], women discovered their rights. In the bonds of slavery, they

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<sup>15</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 254.

<sup>16</sup> “Free Methodist Historical Society Newsletter,” FMCUSA, Summer 2016, 16, no.1, [https://historical.fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Summer\\_2016online.pdf](https://historical.fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Summer_2016online.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 252.

recognized their own bondage.”<sup>18</sup> The two were tied together as white women, not permitted a voice in other spheres, were drawing large crowds to speak in churches and conferences against slavery. Some had audiences of fifty thousand through speaking and leading organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (of which, Free Methodist revivalist Emma Ray was an active member). One female abolitionist, Angelina Grimké, wrote to a friend in 1837, “the rights of the slave and woman blend like the colors of the rainbow.”<sup>19</sup> Her sister Sarah wrote less than a month after, “if we are to do any good in the Anti Slavery cause, our right to labor in it must be firmly established...we cannot push Abolitionism forward with all our might until we take up the stumbling block out of the road.”<sup>20</sup>

B. T. Roberts saw the barring of women from ordination as analogous to racism. Racism and the prohibition of women’s ordination were for Roberts two glaring contradictions of the gospel. He reasoned, “All restrictions to positions in the church based on race have been abolished; it is time then that those based on sex were also abolished.”<sup>21</sup>

One of the primary texts used by B.T. Roberts and Luther Lee in the proclamation of the gospel and the defense of the equality of all people, particularly women and people of color, was Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

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<sup>18</sup> Nancy A. Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 115.

<sup>19</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 121.

<sup>20</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, 112.

In Roberts's iconic text, *Ordaining Women*, he utilizes Galatians as the foundation for the requirement for equality, championing, and ordination for women. Ben Wayman affirms Roberts's work in his updated edition of the original and adds, "Galatians 3:28 is the key text because this text epitomizes for Roberts the limitless range of the good news that in Christ, God has changed everything."<sup>22</sup>

In Lee's most famous sermon, "Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel: A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Miss Antoinette L. Brown" in September of 1853, he reasons in a twenty-one-page document of the call of women, using Galatians 3:28 as a guiding hermeneutic.

I cannot see how text can be explained so as to exclude females from any right, office, work, privilege, or immunity which males enjoy, hold or perform. If the text means anything, it means that males and females are equal in rights, privileges, and responsibilities on the Christian platform. If I deny her the right to exercise her gifts as a Christian minister, I virtually affirm that there is male and female, and that we are not all one in Christ Jesus, by which I shall contradict St. Paul... If males may belong to a Christian church, so may females; if male members may vote in the church, so may females. If males may preach the gospel, so may females; and if males may receive ordination by the imposition of hands, so may females. The reason being Galatians 3:28.<sup>23</sup>

Further, Karen Winslow supports Roberts's and Lee's reading of the text with regard to women, adding,

We must understand Galatians 3:28 to teach, as it actually does, the perfect equality of all, under the Gospel, in rights and privileges, without respect to nationality, condition, or sex. It cannot apply only to salvation or the female would not have been mentioned, for all regarded women as included in the general provisions of salvation of humankind, though all (like Peter) did not regard Greeks and slaves in these provisions from the outset.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>23</sup> Luther Lee, "National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection Copy," Library of Congress, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbnawsa.n9911/?sp=1>.

<sup>24</sup> Winslow, "Wesleyan Perspectives On Women in Ministry."

Although Roberts, Lee, and others held a strong affirming stance for women's ordination, they were in the minority. Among Roberts's own denomination, he was unable to pass a resolution in favor of ordaining women. To the General Conference of 1890, he had submitted the following:

That the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provision which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of nationality, condition [or] sex: therefore, no person who is called of God, and who is duly qualified, should be refused ordination on account of sex, or race or condition.<sup>25</sup>

When voted on, the resolution in favor of women's ordination nearly passed. Defeated by a small margin of four total votes, at 41 to 37, the clergy representation had voted against it, 26 to 16, while the lay members had supported women's ordination, 21 to 15.<sup>26</sup> Women were permitted as evangelists and, in fact, the majority of Free Methodist evangelists were women. Women were also being recognized as revivalists and church planters. However, "many opposed permitting women to be ordained as elders, which would grant them equal status and authority with men."<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1911 that women were ordained as deacons. Finally, in 1974, women had the full rights of men in ordination, being ordained as elders as well.

In a 1995 statement adopted by the Free Methodists as a reflection on the affirmation of women's ability to lead from the outset of the denomination, women were viewed as "not officially limited...except in the case of ordination."<sup>28</sup> The statement

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<sup>25</sup> Roberts and Wayman, *Ordaining Women*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 864.

<sup>27</sup> Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 858.

<sup>28</sup> Winslow, "Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry."

references Bishop Wilson Hogue's words from the 1894 gathering, "When women have been licensed by the Annual Conference, and have served two successive years under appointment as pastors, they may...have a voice and vote in the Annual Conference; and in the transaction of Conference business they shall be counted with the preachers."<sup>29</sup>

While the statement grants women to participate, it also reveals the expectation of women to prove their equality to men in ministering over a period of at least two years as an evangelist and pastor. Then, once having passed the expected extension, they would receive a voice and a vote alongside their peers.

Although intending to reflect an inclusive history with regard to women, the denomination did not officially agree with its founder. In McKenna's writing on the history, he likens the treatment of women as "the same injustice of *de facto* discrimination against ordination as elders and ministerial leaders as African-Americans did in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation."<sup>30</sup>

Not all groups struggled to ordain women. Though a small number of women were ordained in the Presbyterian church and a growing number among the Unitarians in the 1860s, few other denominations were as active as the Wesleyan Holiness churches in recognizing the equality of women ministers. Nancy Hardesty, in her text, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, recognizes the history of women's ordination across traditions.

Among the groups teaching holiness, however, the ordination of women was rather widespread. Women appear to have been fully ordained among the Wesleyan Methodists as early as the 1860s...Women were ordained in such Holiness and Pentecostal denominations as the Salvation Army (founded in

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church of North America: Volume 1* (Chicago: First Fruits Press, 2016), 218.

<sup>30</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 256.

1865), Church of God (Anderson, Indiana, 1880), Primitive Methodist Church (1895), Pilgrim Holiness Church (1897, now merged with the Wesleyan Methodist Church), Pillar of Fire (1901), Church of the Nazarene (1908), and the Assemblies of God (1914).<sup>31</sup>

The Salvation Army, the Anderson Church of God, and the Church of the Nazarene ordained women since their beginnings.<sup>32</sup>

### **Wesleyan Women**

The 1800s saw many notable women leaders emerge as ministers regardless of their status within a denomination. Phoebe Palmer, born in 1807, is largely considered one of the founders of the Holiness movement as an evangelist, author, and teacher. Palmer wrote *The Way of Holiness* after being entirely sanctified in 1837 and later wrote six other texts in relation to her ministry. She is known to have converts in the range of twenty-five thousand.<sup>33</sup>

Born in 1825, Antoinette L. Brown is known as the first ordained woman, with Luther Lee preaching at her service in defense of women's ordination. Shortly after Brown came Catherine and William Booth, who co-founded the Salvation Army. Catherine was timid to speak at first, but eventually exceeded her husband in popularity and conversions. She later published the pamphlet *Female Teaching*.<sup>34</sup>

Amanda Berry Smith was a famous black holiness preacher and evangelist as part of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Smith was born a slave in 1837 and received

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<sup>31</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 98.

<sup>32</sup> "FMC Statement On Women in Ministry."

<sup>33</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 100.

<sup>34</sup> Various, *The Salvation Army Year Book 2018* (London: Salvation Books, 2017), 21.

her freedom as a young girl through her father's employment. Never ordained, she sang and preached in the U.S. and abroad. She also founded an orphanage for African-American children.

Although women did not necessarily seek out ordination and were often accepted as evangelists, some reasoned the inequality made the church unacceptable in its presentation of the gospel. In Sarah Grimké's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, she writes, "It is manifest that if women were permitted to be ministers of the gospel, as they unquestionably were in primitive ages of the Christian church, it would interfere materially with the present organized system of spiritual power and ecclesiastical authority, which is now vested solely in the hands of men."<sup>35</sup>

### **Changes in U.S. Policy and Records**

Civil rights for people of color and women in the church paced alongside the abolitionist movement and women's rights movement in the United States. While the country was in the midst of the Civil War, the Wesleyan Holiness church was advocating social holiness.<sup>36</sup> As the church pursued abolition for slaves and equality for all people in the nineteenth century, the Civil War ended and laws were being added to protect the basic rights of citizens. In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment was added prohibiting slavery. Only three years later (1868), the Fourteenth Amendment defined citizenship for

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<sup>35</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 98.

<sup>36</sup> Wesleyan historian Randy Maddox explains Wesley's term of "social holiness" as the ability for one to be holy only within the context of a community. As Wesley wrote, "The gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness." And as he further clarified, "I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with [others]."

all born or naturalized in the U.S. and gave equal protection to all citizens. In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment gave African-American males the right to vote.

While a portion of the population had equal rights, women, regardless of race, were unable to participate at the full level of citizenship as men. “The slaves were emancipated, but the women who had worked so long in their behalf, as well as that half of the slaves who were women, were asked to step back to let the black man step forward.”<sup>37</sup> It was 1918 when the Nineteenth Amendment was written, giving women the right to vote alongside males. At long last, all people had been given the right to a voice under the Constitution.

When considering human rights in the history of the United States and the church, the conversation tends to revolve around race as a bilateral issue, including only black and white men and women. Latin, Asian, and Native American demographics are not written into the history of the American Wesleyan church, nor is their story told in the general scope of U.S. history during the nineteenth century. To more concretely understand the reasons for this, a snapshot of the history of the U.S. Census gives insight into the general perspective of the country.

The U.S. census began in 1790. It was not until 1860 that any other groups besides white or black were recognized, and even then, only “American Indians” were added. “Mexican” was not added as a choice of race until 1930, and was dropped again until 1970, after several Asian populations had been recognized for more than fifty years. It was not until 1960 that people could choose their own race and 2000 when people

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<sup>37</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 34.



could designate more than one race as their ethnic or racial background.<sup>38</sup> This is important to add to the conversation when looking at the U.S. history of the church, as the only designation for people of color were slaves (later having the term changed to colored, black, negro, then finally African-American in 2000) until 1860. The broad range of racial backgrounds recognized in society and the church today has only been in effect since the 1970s.

### **The Twentieth Century**

Although the laws determining how people could act and measurements as to who counted in the U.S. began to change by the early twentieth century, people of color and women continued to experience systemic inequality in society. As Dayton explains, “Historians have wondered what happened to the abolitionist impulse after the Civil War. To some extent it died out with the emancipation of the slaves, though many Christians, sensitive to the broader problems of prejudice and injustice, devoted their lives to work among the freedmen.”<sup>39</sup> A similar loss of momentum was true for the women’s movement.

The crusade for women’s rights seemed to die out after women received the vote. Women continued to struggle for equality with regard to “race or class, property rights, equal pay, divorce, the right to their own bodies, rights to their children, equal opportunities in careers, full equality in church or synagogue.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “What Census Calls Us: A Historical Timeline,” Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends, June 10, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/interactives/multiracial-timeline/>.

<sup>39</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 156.

The revivalist movement of the nineteenth century, beginning with abolition and progressing toward equality for women, all set in the Galatians 3:28 passage, devolved over time into a conservative Christianity. As Hardesty puts it, several factors were at play, but a few major world events shaped the focus of women by the middle of the twentieth century. “Having survived World War I, Americans had to cope with the growing failure of Prohibition, the Great Depression, World War II, and Korea. By the 1950s the ideal of the middle-class home served by a nurturing wife and mother became a national symbol of normalcy.”<sup>41</sup> In the 1960s, the women’s movement began to wake up and react to the icons they were being conformed into, once again following the civil rights movement of African-Americans in the ’60s. However, this time the movement of women leading for equality was largely outside the church and more closely aligned with politics.

The 1970s saw the growth of women’s rights with the Feminist Papers, a diversity of demographics being recognized in the United States, and further equality for women in the Wesleyan Holiness church through more denominations ordaining women as elders. Yet, at the same time, evangelical culture was against women’s liberation and ordination. Popular evangelistic voices, such as Billy Graham, called for traditional roles for women, emphasizing subordination and the submergence of personality and aspirations to their male counterparts.<sup>42</sup>

In writing for *Ladies’ Home Journal*, Graham affirmed “the biological assignment was basic and simple: Eve was to be the child-bearer, and Adam was to be the

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<sup>41</sup> Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 135.

breadwinner... Wife, mother, homemaker—this is the appointed destiny of real womanhood.”<sup>43</sup> Church historian Donald Dayton remarks about Graham’s perspective, “The irony of such statements is that modern revivalism gave birth to the women’s rights movement.”<sup>44</sup>

In a 1991 issue of *Christianity Today*, J.I. Packer explained the interest of women in being ordained was a modern issue resulting from World War I progressive social change. He also believed that “Bible-based evangelical communities of all denominational stripes within Protestantism agree in opposing this trend.”<sup>45</sup> Packer, like many others, has a short memory of the church, with no sense of the rich Wesleyan Holiness history only one century before his time.

By the end of the twentieth century, most of the Wesleyan churches, though supporting men and women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds for ordained ministry, would see their original numbers of female ministers and evangelists fade. The Church of the Nazarene and Church of God denominations were thought to have had a minimum of twenty percent of their preachers as females in their beginnings. By 1973, the Church of the Nazarene only had six percent. Dayton ends his section on women ministers with, “What was no doubt the most massive effort to incorporate women into the life of the Christian church has faded away and today is not even remembered.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Billy Graham, “Jesus and the Liberated Woman,” *Ladies Home Journal* (December 1970): 42.

<sup>44</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 136.

<sup>45</sup> “FMC Statement On Women in Ministry.”

<sup>46</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 149.

By 1997, one of the primary weaknesses within the Free Methodist Church with regard to its prophetic voice was “the lack of diversity in the leadership of the church, particularly with regard to women, minorities and youth.”<sup>47</sup> Although steps were being taken at the time to change policies and patterns to diversify, the structures continue, 23 years later, to perpetuate leadership and congregations, reflecting majority-white communities, gapping further from the growing diverse U.S. population.

It is notable that Wesleyan denominations have little explanation of the drop in equality and diversity efforts throughout the twentieth century. The barriers faced for women and people of color within the Wesleyan Tradition during the mid- to late twentieth century will be assessed in the following chapter.

### **Conclusion**

The Wesleyan Holiness Tradition has all it needs to make a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive tradition. History and theological support for including women and people of color in leadership are a robust part of the Wesleyan DNA. Unfortunately, soon after abolition and women’s rights became legal mandates, denominational history does not report more data on the work toward equitably including women and people of color. Chapter four will review key historical and present barriers keeping the church from diversity and inclusion of women and people of color at every level of the Wesleyan denominations.

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<sup>47</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 313.

## CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL BARRIERS

The previous chapters have substantiated the claim that Wesleyans are rooted in a Scriptural perspective of diversity, equity, and inclusion with regard to women and people of color in leadership. The biblical foundation gave rise to Wesleyan denominations that believed in women in ministry and racial and ethnic diversity in leadership. Reviewing the history of the Wesleyan Tradition in chapter three, it is clear that biblical and theological belief did not lead the church into actively diversifying throughout its history as originally intended. This chapter will focus on contemporary barriers causing setbacks in fully living the biblical theology of the Wesleyan Tradition.

In considering the challenges in the current culture of the Wesleyan Tradition, it is helpful to briefly revisit the terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion as defined in chapter one. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are the primary terms used to explain the holistic practice of who participates and how they participate in organizational leadership. Diversity recognizes the presence of people within a group that maintain a spectrum of characteristics that differentiate them from one another. Equity focuses on replacing barriers that keep a group from effectively diversifying with equal access and impartial treatment. Inclusion is the organizational practice of making members of a group welcome with in their diverse characteristics at every level of the organization.

The challenges for women and people of color within Wesleyan Holiness denominations today fall primarily within diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and practices. These hurdles include but are not limited to

- The loss of historical memory and the biblical theological mandate of inclusion

- Catering to social norms of evangelical and broader culture
- Exclusion of numerous diverse voices in decision-making spheres
- Absence of equitable practice addressing barriers and bias of clergy and laity
- Lack of vision for the future set against the backdrop of cultural demographic shifts

The following content will illuminate barriers through a sociological analysis for why Wesleyan churches are not practicing their theological heritage. In substantiating the research on barriers experienced by people within the Wesleyan Tradition, member checking among Wesleyan leaders was conducted. To protect respondent privacy, forum names will not be identified and member names have been changed.

Those who participated in the member checking were asked the following questions, “With a history of inclusion and no current theological obstacles, what is causing the lack of people of color and women remaining in leadership among Wesleyan denominations? What are the primary barriers you and those you work with face?”<sup>1</sup> The responses to the query were overwhelming. Within a few hours, multiple people had responded, which initiated online and phone conversations from more than two dozen leaders.

This chapter is organized from a vantage point of barriers reflecting on history, current practice, and perspectives of the future. Respondent feedback from lived experience is mingled with research in each section of the barriers presented. While individuals were surveyed, the comments received fill out much of the challenges faced by Wesleyan denomination as listed above. While some of the responses went beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Trisha Welstad, questions to private forums, November 14, 2019.

scope of what can be examined in this research, most fit within the larger picture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Wesleyan Tradition. Thus, the following sections will assess the real barriers in Wesleyan denominations inclusive of the Wesleyan memory of history, cultural accommodation, current internal culture, and loss of future vision. These barriers are addressed with the intention of determining what solutions have yet to be implemented toward regaining a distinctly Wesleyan influence in the world.

The final section of this chapter will incorporate an assessment of recent attempts at overcoming barriers of diversity and inclusion through Deloitte Insight's model categorizing organizational maturity of equitable diversity.

### **The Wesleyan Memory**

As was examined in the previous chapter, the movement of the Spirit through John Wesley and several of his successors who founded the Wesleyan denominations known today included the belief that *all* were made in the image of God. This belief propelled them into radical action, advocating for the abolition of slavery and for women's rights, among many other profound causes of the time.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the prophetic spirit that began the social reform of the Wesleyan movement was like that of many evangelical groups who tamed as the denominations "grew up."<sup>3</sup> In organizing into stable institutional bodies, the denominations lost focus on their dissent from culture and missionary attention. McKenna argues, they instead gave primary consideration to

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<sup>2</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 131.

<sup>3</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 168.

inwardly creating “a denominational culture. While turning away from interaction with the social culture, Free Methodism [among others] turned toward the religious culture seeking legitimacy of a full-fledged denomination.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, the first nearly seventy years of the twentieth century reveal a loss in Wesleyan denomination’s original focus on being a prophetic witness through advocating for the marginalized. This period became one of silence for the Wesleyan movement. Though evangelism would regain attention in the United States in the 1960s, the convictions of equality would not have the same thrust as at their founding.

From the first generation of Wesleyans into the succeeding generations, there was a subtle erosion of memory. By moving away from social reform efforts in the early 1900s, the group of leaders in the succeeding generations had less interest or understanding for the need for the prophetic voice around gendered and diverse leadership. As Dayton substantiated, this, coupled with a rise in fundamentalism, would cause a move “toward more traditional patterns of church life and social views” by the mid-twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Dayton explains further:

In the fundamentalist/modernist controversy and in succeeding decades, the sociological, theological, and historical currents produced a movement that in many ways stood for the opposite of what an earlier generation of evangelicals had affirmed. What had begun as a Christian egalitarianism was transformed into a type of Christian elitism. Revivalistic currents that had once been bent to the liberation of the slave now allied themselves with wealth and power against the civil rights movement. Churches and movements that had pioneered a new role for women became the most resistant to contemporary movements seeking the same goals.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 78.

<sup>5</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 184.

<sup>6</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 179-180.



Dayton's analysis is reflective of the questions of Wesleyan leaders today and brings up the questions of a revised memory, also known as revisionist history. While the Five Freedoms<sup>7</sup> are beginning to be touted by the Free Methodists and the Foursquare can boast of being founded by Amy Semple McPherson, neither group reflects outwardly on the recent past within the denomination with regard to reform of society based on these beliefs. Leaders wonder where the Wesleyan abolitionists were during the civil rights movement. When looking through the primary historical texts of the Free Methodist, Evangelical Church of North America, and the Nazarenes, there are no comments on the place of the church during civil rights. While all mention the reality of the civil rights movement and the turbulence of the 1960s with war, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., and Woodstock, there is a gap in the literature regarding activism in the social sphere. Instead, one text recognizes the social trends from homogeneity to demographic diversity as a challenge for the denomination,<sup>8</sup> while another focuses solely on the happenings on the inside of the denominational structure and those who participated, without any mention of societal forces at work.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, there have been no comments made either in the online forums or in the denominational history books reviewed about the silence of the denomination during the period of the suffragettes and the women's rights movement of the 1960s. Could it be

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<sup>7</sup> The Five Freedoms of the Free Methodist Church, as listed in chapter one, are 1) Freedom of all ethnicities to worship and live together; 2) Freedom of women to be treated as equals in the church, at home, and in the world; 3) Freedom of the poor to be treated with dignity and equity in the church and in the world; 4) Freedom of the laity to be given voice and shared leadership within the church; 5) Freedom of the Holy Spirit in worship.

<sup>8</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 102.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Hotrum, *The Evangelical Story: The History of the Evangelical Church* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2006).

possible that a return to traditional patriarchal roles in the church influenced the expectations of women to the point that even Wesleyans would not wonder at the lack of involvement in civil equality for women?

The barrier of historical memory loss through the organizational life stage transitions also made way for cultural accommodation in ways Wesleyans had not anticipated.

### *Cultural Accommodation*

While Wesleyans may speak of the Wesleyan quadrilateral and entire sanctification in membership courses, they have not done well in differentiating themselves from the broader evangelical movement primarily made up of reformed congregations throughout the U.S. Examples of rapprochement with evangelicalism include similar values on evangelism and the church growth movement, ascent to the middle class, sympathy with the moralism of the religious right, and a largely segregated culture with a loss of women in the pulpit.

The accommodation of Wesleyans to the larger cultural movement of evangelicals became visible during the civil rights movement. When looking at the primary Christian figures of the time, Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr., Wesleyans had shifted to favor evangelistic efforts and personal holiness rather than the struggle for equality and social holiness.<sup>10</sup> Jemar Tisby examines the participation with one movement over the other, describing the response as demonstrative of “the gulf between approaches taken by

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Walter Wall, “The Embourgeoisement of the Free Methodist Ethos: A Content-Analysis of the Free Methodist Discipline’s Idea of the ‘Christian Life,’” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 25 (1990): 127, <http://docplayer.net/144278592-The-embourgeoisement-of-the-free-methodist-ethos.html>.

Christian activists and Christian moderates,”<sup>11</sup> which also largely categorized the black church and the white church, respectively, regardless of denomination.

The evangelistic thrust of Billy Graham and his contemporaries led mainstream evangelicalism into the church growth movement. Spearheaded in the 1970s by Robert Schuler and C. Peter Wagner, the movement would later influence key leaders, including Rick Warren and Bill Hybels. Motivated by the great commission and the promise of quantitative growth, Wesleyans joined the movement to save souls and grow their churches.<sup>12</sup> Recognized as a defining moment, churches began to adopt the principles of church growth.<sup>13</sup> Yet, what was not examined was the continued reduction of theological and social priorities, as the church growth movement was led strictly by white males with reformed theology who promoted “homogeneous units” of race and culture.<sup>14</sup> Besides the theology, the movement closely aligned in promoting predominantly white male leadership in the Wesleyan church.

With the continued progression toward becoming evangelical, Wesleyans largely moved care for the poor and marginalized into the global mission field and adapted worship practices that were seeker-friendly, primarily focusing on the middle class. One respondent observed that the church is becoming more generic, with a disposition toward

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<sup>11</sup> Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity of Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 140.

<sup>12</sup> Howard Snyder, “A Wesleyan Perspective on Church Growth?” *Asbury Seminary Journal*, October 1978, 6-10, <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1688&context=asburyjournal>.

<sup>13</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 112.

<sup>14</sup> Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 165.

fundamentalism from a predominantly white evangelical base, using holiness as a catch-all for treating social ills in a personal manner.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, the evangelical church stepped into the political arena with the “rise of the Religious Right” and the forming of the “Moral Majority.”<sup>16</sup> Originally organized by fundamentalists, Jerry Fallwell, Pat Robertson, and Jim Bakker, who later rebranded themselves evangelicals, the group promoted a religious-political perspective as socially conservative.<sup>17</sup> Because Wesleyans identified in practice with much of the activities of the evangelical church, they became less distinguished from the socially conservative arm of new evangelicals. Further, this caused a blurring of the lines that continued into the theological and practical realm, particularly for “seekers” who would not be able to tell the difference between Wesleyan and reformed communities based on language, lived values, or even church name.<sup>18</sup> The broadening evangelical spectrum allowed an ever-widening chasm from the original beliefs and practice of Wesleyans. With more emphasis on church growth and a loss of social distinctiveness, issues of diversity in leadership regarding gender and race received diminished support and emphasis. This has been evident in recent years, as churches remain predominantly pastored by white men, though more women and people of color are being ordained. The percentage of diversity in leadership and membership has increased marginally. Further, though there are Wesleyan denominations that are

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<sup>15</sup> Keith Dannon, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 154.

<sup>17</sup> Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 188.

<sup>18</sup> McKenna and Van Valin, *A Future with a History*, 108.

historically non-white, including the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), beyond the primarily online recognition in the Wesleyan Holiness Connection, the groups largely do not partner with or work cross-denominationally to support diversity efforts.

One respondent to the question posed in the online forum lives and pastored in a multi-cultural urban context. They recognized the influence of culture on the church, from the complementarian voice as well as from mainstream culture, noting that at one point in the recent past it was believed that women could not run marathons and how a church in their city influenced thousands to believe that female aspirations to work were problematic. Thus, they observed that the larger church had a hand in the trauma of those who moved into membership and ordination while actively resisting women and people of color in leadership.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Complementarian/Non-Wesleyan Infiltration*

Respondents also recognized the confusion and damage of non-Wesleyan theology being taught in discipleship through complementarian curriculum for marriage, women's and men's studies, and counseling. Looking for a place to land, one respondent asserted, "We are either egalitarian and support women in all levels or we don't."<sup>20</sup> The pervasiveness of content in opposition to the Wesleyan message of equality for women causes the church to need to work harder to allow women to lead.

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<sup>19</sup> Joanna Simpson, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Dawn Clarkson, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

Another effect of the religious accommodation to evangelical culture is seen in the loss of stated theology outside of membership classes. One pastor who responded to the online survey said they did not know that leading as a woman or person of color was welcomed or that social justice was part of Wesleyan history, as it was never taught until they took a membership class. Further, there was no communicated interest for the expansion of diversity in the church.<sup>21</sup>

The ordination of pastors who do not theologically fit with regard to women's equality has also become a problem. An example of this in the response on the forum was the personal experience of a woman passing her ordination interview with men on the ordaining board who did not affirm women's ordination but were merely open to exploring the matter of women in ministry.<sup>22</sup> The lack of firm support creates a ripple effect into the church and does not guarantee a minister who will equip women, much less teach a biblical perspective of partnership from a Wesleyan theological foundation.

### *Current Internal Culture*

As seen in the previous sections, history and culture have deeply affected the happenings inside of Wesleyan Holiness churches. These barriers have caused internal obstacles for diversity, equity, and inclusion with regard to bias of clergy and laity, exclusion of diverse voices in decision-making, and the absence of equitable systems affecting practice.

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<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Crawford, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Pat Fromme, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

## **Bias in Clergy and Laity**

Surveying leaders on the barriers inside the institution, a number referenced the difficulty of women and people of color to break into a system dominated by white men. Both implicit and explicit bias from clergy and laity was widespread in accepting and promoting women and people of color in leadership. This bias undermines the theology and stated practice of Wesleyan denominations, with reference to the dissonant behavior modeled by Jesus or operative with the Spirit as seen in the New Testament, nor is it part of their kingdom perspective with regard to equality.

Bias, as defined by the Cambridge dictionary, is “the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment.”<sup>23</sup> Unconscious bias refers to partialities or resistances that one is not cognitively aware they have, though they still influence their decisions and actions. Explicit bias includes the overt and recognizable prejudices of a person. The term “attitude” is also used in place of bias in many studies.<sup>24</sup>

Joseba Toribio writes about implicit bias and its movement from social structure to representational format. In her article she explains that even those who earnestly seek to be unprejudiced and equitable toward all people still hold beliefs that betray explicitly stated attitudes. Toribio clarifies,

Implicit attitudes reflect constant exposure to stereotypical portrayals of members of, and items in, all kinds of different categories: racial groups, professions, women, nationalities, members of the LGBTQ community, moral and political values, etc. We may thus very well find that we are better and faster categorizers when e.g. female names are paired with family-oriented tasks or when negative

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<sup>23</sup> “Bias,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed November 17, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/bias>.

<sup>24</sup> “Project Implicit,” Harvard, accessed November 18, 2019, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html>.

words are paired with pictures of black faces even if we disavow sexism and racism—and even when we ourselves are female or black.<sup>25</sup>

In an effort to understand implicit social cognition, Harvard began Project Implicit in 1998. Through their Implicit Association Tests (IAT), including fourteen different assessments comparing various groups of people with one another, they found the groups that are more preferable and those that are more stigmatized. With more than eleven million IATs completed, they explain the outcomes of their data about the attitudes of various groups:

Results from this website consistently show that members of stigmatized groups (e.g., Black people, gay people, older people) tend to have more positive implicit attitudes toward their groups than do people who are not in the group, but that there is still a moderate preference for the more socially valued group... We think that this is because stigmatized group members develop negative associations about their group from their cultural environments, but also have some positive associations because of their own group membership and that of close others.<sup>26</sup>

After completing the assessment on “Gender and Career,” the study explains that the majority of people have a moderate to high association of males with career and females with family, at fifty-six percent, as the following diagram reflects (see Figure 2).<sup>27</sup> This upholds the findings of Toribio’s research.

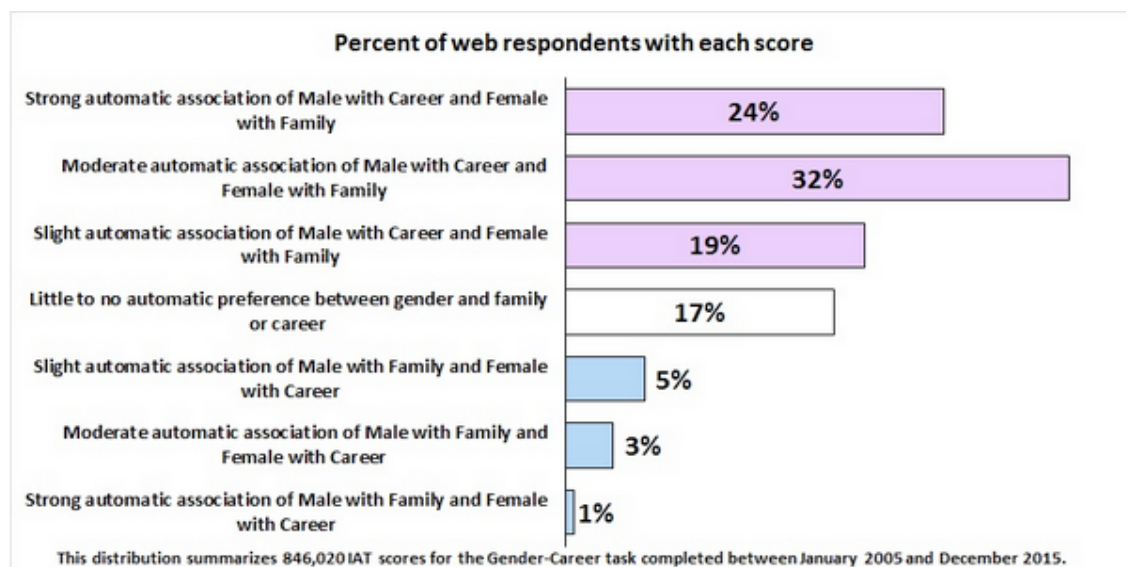
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<sup>25</sup> Josefa Toribio. “Implicit Bias: From Social Structure to Representational Format,” *Theoria: An International Journal for Theory, History and Foundations of Science* 33, no. 1 (January 2018): 41, <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/145797/1/676385.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> “Project Implicit.”

<sup>27</sup> “Project Implicit.”





*Figure 2 – Gender and Career Bias Percentages*

Preferences, attitudes, and biases are not easily changed. As Project Implicit explains, “there is not enough research to say for sure that implicit biases can be reduced, let alone eliminated.”<sup>28</sup> They also recognize the reality that implicit preference has an effect on behavior and relates to “discrimination in hiring and promotion.”<sup>29</sup>

Deloitte research has examined reasons for bias against women in hiring, retention, and leadership, much of which can speak to bias against any group, in their article “Designing Equality: How Design Thinking Can Help Tackle Gender Bias in the Workplace.”<sup>30</sup> With regard to hiring practice, they posit, “Research shows that certain hiring practices, such as unstructured interviews or gendered job descriptions, can lead to

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<sup>28</sup> “Project Implicit.”

<sup>29</sup> “Project Implicit.”

<sup>30</sup> Alex Frank, Kelly Connors, and Michelle Cho, “Designing Equality: How Design Thinking Can Help Tackle Gender Bias in the Workplace,” Deloitte Insights, May 16, 2018, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion/design-thinking-business-gender-bias-workplace.html>.

unequal employment of women.”<sup>31</sup> Considering leadership in an organization, Deloitte clarifies, “Even when women obtain leadership positions and opportunities, they may face further barriers due to gendered stereotypes associated with leadership, leading to biased perceptions of competence and double standards regarding women and leadership.”<sup>32</sup>

Another factor in bias is the presence of “groupthink.” Groupthink, as described by Diane Zemke in her text *Being Smart About Congregational Change*, happens when “decision-makers are unable to gather all the appropriate information, assess risks and consequences appropriately, and make a good decision for the current situation.”<sup>33</sup> With a widespread homogeneity of belief, class, and cultural background, many congregations, and their leadership boards, think and act similarly. The practice of groupthink sets groups up for failure because uniformity is mistaken for unity, which then biases a group toward presence of more people who think and look like them. Thus, diversity in a non-conforming person’s presence, methodology, problem-solving, or approach to leadership is not welcomed. Groupthink may also limit the ability to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit among the group.<sup>34</sup>

The gaps in leadership diversity in the Wesleyan Tradition may be, in large part, related to explicit and implicit bias. This is easily linked to the recent history of cultural accommodation and memory loss within the Wesleyan Tradition. The preferential group

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<sup>31</sup> Frank, Connors, and Cho, “Designing Equality.”

<sup>32</sup> Frank, Connors, and Cho, “Designing Equality.”

<sup>33</sup> Diane Zemke, PhD, *Being SMART about Congregational Change* (Zemke, 2014), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Zemke, *Being SMART about Congregational Change*, 2.

in all Wesleyan denominations is white men, as evidenced by the dominant majority within each Wesleyan Holiness group's senior leadership. To change the bias may be extremely difficult, as internal structures must change to rewire outcomes. This becomes poignant when considering the following research from Harvard Business Review against the election of the Foursquare president and the Free Methodist bishops in 2019, as highlighted in chapter one.

Harvard Business Review did several studies on bias and found that in choosing a candidate for a position, if only one woman or person of color was being evaluated next to one white male for the same position, the white male would always be chosen. However, when more than one minority makes it to the final candidacy, their chances of being chosen dramatically increase.<sup>35</sup> As they explain further,

Why does being the only woman in a pool of finalists matter? For one thing, it highlights how different she is from the norm. And deviating from the norm can be risky for decision-makers, as people tend to ostracize people who are different from the group. For women and minorities, having your differences made salient can also lead to inferences of incompetence (see Figure 3 for details).<sup>36</sup>

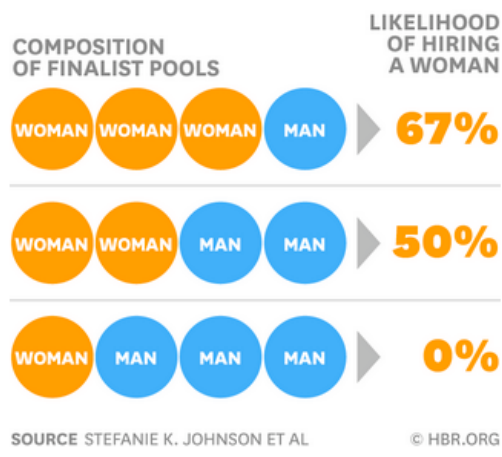
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<sup>35</sup> Stefanie K. Johnson, David R. Hekman, and Elsa T. Chan, "If There's Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There's Statistically No Chance She'll Be Hired," Harvard Business Review, April 26, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, Hekman, and Chan, "If There's Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There's Statistically No Chance She'll Be Hired."

### The Relationship Between Finalist Pools and Actual Hiring Decisions

According to one study of 598 finalists for university teaching positions.



*Figure 3 – The Relationship Between Finalist Pools and Actual Hiring Decisions*

In MaryKate Morse’s article focusing on racism and the white Church, she writes, “There is no separate but equal state. Explicitly or implicitly categorizing people’s potential and worth by how white they are distorts our God-breathed identity, so that in doing so, we cannot be whole.”<sup>37</sup> Yet, many respondents to the online forum explained issues of bias and stigmatization of race and gender by the lack of placement of people of color in leadership in Wesleyan Holiness churches.

One leader explained, the barrier of the

Need for people of color to be exceptional to be considered for the ordinary. [There are] frustrating examples of ministry positions going to leaders who are simply well known and well connected but lack in fruitfulness. Yet, high

<sup>37</sup> MaryKate Morse, “The Greatest Obstacle to the Gospel Today: Racism and the White Church,” Missio Alliance, December 14, 2018, <https://www.missioalliance.org/the-greatest-obstacle-to-the-gospel-today-racism-and-the-white-church/>.

potential/capacity leaders of color have to have demonstrated above and beyond and know the “right” people to even be in consideration.<sup>38</sup>

Another recognized that unless people of color were planting new churches or coming into the denomination with their own established church, there was little likelihood of placing them successfully in historically white congregations.<sup>39</sup> A third male pastor of color explained that despite his calling to a lead pastor role and being told he was gifted, he was continually type-cast as a pastor for the Latino community or for youth.<sup>40</sup>

Several women recognized bias and systemic brokenness in their forum responses over intention and theology, with an emphasis on the need for impetus to do the work of equity and inclusion to create change. One female respondent explained the need for motivation among those in leadership to be willing and motivated to creatively and actively advocate for women,<sup>41</sup> while another acknowledged that male leaders in her context did not place women in leadership positions because of their own bias and the perception that the subject of women in leadership is not worth their engaging.<sup>42</sup>

In speaking of the work of inclusion, it was recognized by multiple leaders that there is a group that is known (white male leaders) and they continue to be chosen and given preferential treatment over minority groups. If leaders are not part of the dominant, and thus known networks, they lack access by the inconvenience in expanding the networks that exclude them. The effort by white male leaders to grow beyond their

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<sup>38</sup> Bryson Hampton, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Dannon, post to online forum.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Ibarra, telephone interview by author, November 19, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Simpson, post to online forum.

<sup>42</sup> Irma Donnelly, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

network requires more time and effort, which may not seem like a viable option for leaders with multiple responsibilities.<sup>43</sup>

Another set of women related to being misplaced because of their gender. When called into administrative or senior leadership roles, they were perpetually placed in other positions that were deemed as less significant. One woman was supported by her pastor and led in the church in every capacity besides preaching. She reports, when she asked to preach, he responded with, “‘I can’t just let anybody in the pulpit.’ This led to a discussion of those who would walk out or cause [a] raucous if he let a woman preach.”<sup>44</sup>

Another reported her skills were not qualification enough, but needed to be backed by experience in roles to which she had not been granted equal access.<sup>45</sup> Jeffery Harrold, lead pastor of New Beginnings Community Church in Ypsilanti, Michigan, affirmed many women’s experience of being overlooked for ministry regardless of their superior resume. At a gathering to promote diverse leadership, Harrold advocated, “There are these sisters that God has placed here that really need to be able to exercise their gifts, and men just need to be able to check their privilege and check their ego.”<sup>46</sup>

In considering the leadership of denominations, one leader’s comment resonated with the research found by Deloitte, that cultural resets, or a change of the systems and ways of being within the organization (as will be further discussed in chapter 6), must be recognized and transformed from those who hold the most power. She says,

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<sup>43</sup> Yvette Fenderson, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Rema, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, post to online forum.

<sup>46</sup> Jeff Finley, quoting Jeffery Harrold, “Answering the Call to Embrace All,” *Light & Life Magazine*, December 2018, <https://lightandlifemagazine.com/answering-the-call-to-embrace-all/>.

When leaders at the top who believe in the equality of women have not done the work to shift the culture of bias against women that is widespread in the pews, it makes appointing women very risky. If churches won't embrace the leadership of women, appointing bodies may be concerned about those churches splitting or shrinking, or being abusive to the woman appointed. Attendance numbers and apportionment dollars have big implications in those decisions. Or, as it was put to me, "I have several churches that need pastors right now, but none of them would accept your leadership as a woman."<sup>47</sup>

When leadership does not actively lead toward diversity with teaching the theology and embodying the practice of the Wesleyan Tradition, churches will not accept a person who does not seem to fit their culture. Thus, one respondent remarked, "I have seen people walk out of a service (lay people) when a woman is preaching and the male leaders do not call them out on it."<sup>48</sup> The bias of a congregation is built by the lack of explicit teaching and leadership forming people in Wesleyan theology and practice. When gaps exist, or worse, when leaders practice a non-Wesleyan theology, congregations are led into belief that only some people may lead in certain roles. Often seen with women, because of complementarian views, churches will not accept a female voice as a lead pastor or a consistent preacher unless educated by the existing male leadership.

### **Exclusion of Diverse Voices in Decision-Making**

History and bias lead to a second aspect of the current internal culture, namely exclusion. Exclusion of diverse voices can happen at all levels of an organization. However, in Wesleyan circles, this is especially true in regard to diversity where decisions on policy, finance, mission strategies, contextual theology, and leadership

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<sup>47</sup> Robyn Woodward, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>48</sup> Rema, post to online forum.

culture are made. These national, regional, and local decision-making spaces determine the future of the organization through presence and voice. When voices that embody the fullness of the theology and values of the denomination are not equally present, the opportunity for gaps in practice of belief become likely. This is evidenced in the leadership challenges presented in chapter one's scenario as well as the history of the Wesleyan Tradition mentioned in section one of this chapter.

When both women and people of color are excluded from leadership in Wesleyan churches, Anglo males are compelled to make decisions that create implications for all. The presumption that white men know what is best for all of the people in the church reaches beyond a Wesleyan theology. Unfortunately, because white men have dominated the pastoral leadership of the church, they have also created a culture that discerns through a white male filter and gives further advantage and preference to white men.<sup>49</sup>

Female respondents to the online forum recognized their exclusion if their voices contradicted dominant male voices. One female leader shared that she strategically works to include women and people of color in ministry leadership, but because of the long history of white male leadership, it is exceedingly difficult. She reasoned that, on the whole, the opportunities for women and people of color were drastically smaller than for white men. In particular, she was unable to place women at churches with over a hundred attendants as lead pastor and has more difficulty placing ethnic leaders at any church.

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<sup>49</sup> Dannon, telephone interview by author. Also, Laura R. Olson and Melissa Deckman, "The Times, Are They A-Changin'?" PRRI, April 10, 2013, <https://www.prii.org/spotlight/the-times-are-they-a-changin/>.



This is the case where there is both a female national leader and a female regional leader.<sup>50</sup>

Tokenism is sometimes used as an option to opt out of equitable practices of inclusion. Tokenism, as defined by Miriam Webster and explained by a panel of African-American business women of Vanderbilt University, is “the practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly.”<sup>51</sup> Tokenism is based on intent and can be navigated in multiple ways. Often seen as negative, people do not want to be singled out to represent and speak for a group. Yet, if leaders do the work to make their environment equitable, then minority leaders will not be merely a token, but rather a beginning to embody the values they are working toward as a group. The panel explained further, “companies can help forestall tokenism by making sure there’s more than one person from each demographic in a group” and affirmed that “there are three components to preventing tokenism: diversity, equity, and inclusion.”<sup>52</sup>

If no diverse leaders are invited into church leadership because of tokenism, then homogeneity is to be expected. Thus, if there are no women in visible leadership, women will not know it is possible or welcomed. Similarly, if there are no leaders of color, those who are racially diverse will not know if there is a desire for their presence at the leadership table.

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<sup>50</sup> Renee Nichols, post to online forum, November 14, 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Kara Sherrer, “What Is Tokenism, and Why Does It Matter in the Workplace?” Vanderbilt University, February 26, 2018, <https://business.vanderbilt.edu/news/2018/02/26/tokenism-in-the-workplace/>.

<sup>52</sup> Sherrer, “What Is Tokenism, and Why Does It Matter in the Workplace?”

One woman of color recognized the lack of visibility in her discernment for ordination. She shared, “Before entering the ordination process, I had never seen a female pastor, let alone a woman of color, so I never knew that I could. I had seen women and minorities in support positions...I had seen male minorities with pastoral titles but not lead and no women.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Absence of Equitable Systems**

Finally, the internal culture of Wesleyan denominations has not removed barriers that prevent diversity and provide equal access and impartial treatment for women and people of color. Equitable systems include actively blocking bias from functioning and inclusion of diverse people in leadership as valuable contributors. This is done through revising procedural change that actively gives access to and benefits all leaders in alignment with Wesleyan theology.

Providing statements like the “Five Freedoms” that speak of equality and dignity are an important first step, but they fall far short of enacting equitable practice. Lack of equity includes missing policies and training to identify, equip, and hire women and people of color at the same rate as white males. It may be perceived that more white men are interested in positions of leadership in the church by the numbers of white men currently in leadership. Yet the bias has so strongly favored them that the removal of inequities may prove there are as many women and people of color who are as interested and as capable of leading every aspect of the church.

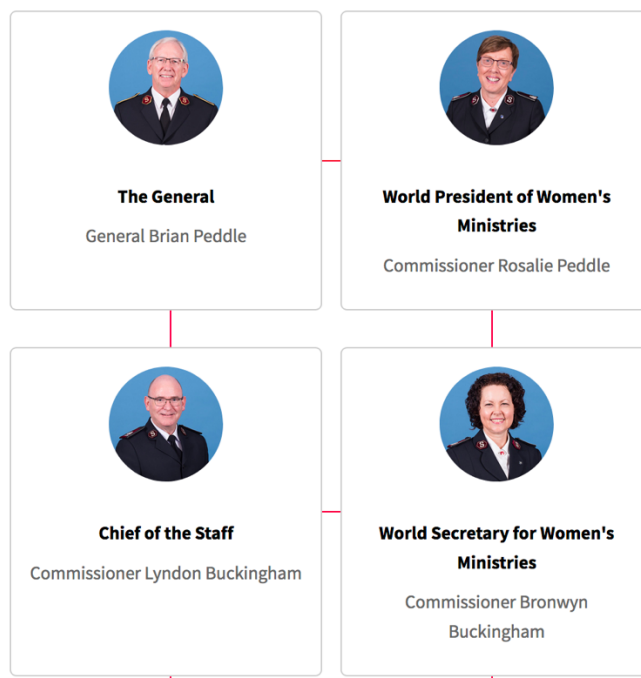
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<sup>53</sup> Crawford, post to online forum.

The Salvation Army is an example of systems not fully implemented toward diversity at every level for women and people of color. Salvationists have statements online directly condemning sexism and racism, with pathways toward action. The statement on sexism, which acknowledges the founder's words on equal treatment of women, says, "The Salvation Army believes that both male and female are made in the image of God and are equal in value and therefore is opposed to sexism. We reject any view that subordinates women to men, or men to women."<sup>54</sup> Yet, the Salvation Army leadership has women serving in "women's ministries" roles, while men serve over the whole church (Figure 4). The only link on the website for women in leadership is through the Women's Ministries page online.

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<sup>54</sup> "Sexism" The Salvation Army, International Positional Statement, May 2019, accessed November 27, 2019, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/a8b057c3-634c-4ce9-a074-52b8ce6f2dc8\\_IPS-Sexism.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/a8b057c3-634c-4ce9-a074-52b8ce6f2dc8_IPS-Sexism.pdf).



*Figure 4 – Leadership of the Salvation Army International*

Systemic issues of silence, complicity, or overt prejudice against minority leaders harm the very theology the church is attempting to practice. In the absence of support systems to embody stated values, leaders feel they are going against the grain to be able to live out their calling in ministry. When member checking on research, the following inequities were voiced:

- White male leaders only choosing to mentor other white male leaders
- Upholding of the “Billy Graham Rule” as an excuse to dismiss women<sup>55</sup>
- Lack of ordaining boards explicitly asking about the egalitarian experience of all candidates and then waiting to ordain until results of demonstrated fruitfulness are evident

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<sup>55</sup> The “Billy Graham Rule” is defined as “The practice of not being alone with a member of the opposite sex other than one’s spouse,” as explained by Christianity Today, which was founded by Graham, August 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/august/billy-graham-rule-sheriff-north-carolina-lawsuit.html>.

- Educational texts and educators for ordination and leadership training that are gender and ethnically exclusive to the dominant culture
- Non-removal of board members and chairs who are complementarian
- Homogeneous boards exclusive of women and people of color
- Use of the term “token” to prevent the first woman or person of color in nominations for leadership positions
- Bias in nominations, interviews, and placement of candidates based on their embodiment rather than their character, gifts and graces for ministry, and demonstrated skillset
- Unspoken expectations that all leaders will function with the same priorities, practices, and presence as those in historic roles, also known as “coding white” or “being qualified”
- Shaming, blaming, and/or removing those who challenge the norms<sup>56</sup>

### **Loss of Future Vision**

It is well-known that society is undergoing a significant demographic shift toward a white minority culture by 2050.<sup>57</sup> With this shift, the PEW Forum’s analysis reveals, “data suggests that Christians are declining not just as a share of the U.S. adult population, but also in absolute numbers.”<sup>58</sup> Not only are Christians in decline, but fewer

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<sup>56</sup> Compiled lists from forums, November 15, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> “2017 National Population Projections Tables,” United States Census Bureau, Table 4. Projected race and Hispanic origin, September 6, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html>.

<sup>58</sup> “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

white Protestants attend church services that those who do not. Additionally, younger generations of the population are less inclined to participate in any form of Christianity, as visible in Figure 5.<sup>59</sup>

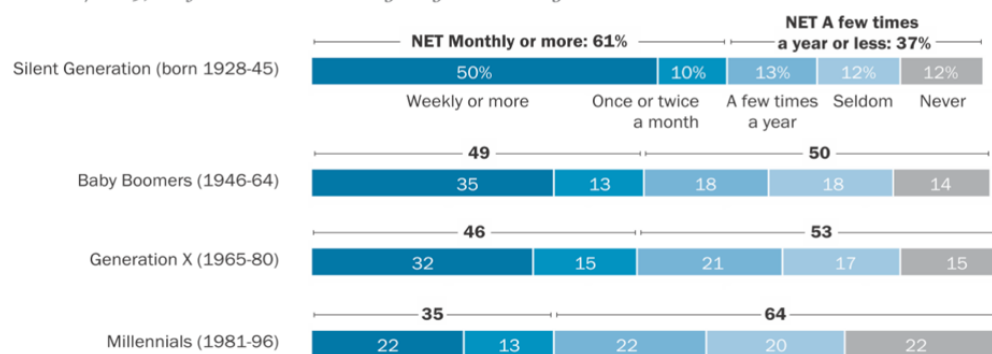
## Large generation gap in American religion

### Large generation gap in American religion

In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who identify as ...



In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services ...



Note: Don't know/refused not shown.

Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted January 2018-July 2019 on the telephone.

"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 5 – The Generation Gap in American Religion

The lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion of theology and practice for women and people of color in Wesleyan denominations is preventing the church from the fullness of its calling and mission in the world. With denominations in rapid decline across the U.S., many are scrambling to recalibrate, revitalize, and reproduce churches.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace."

<sup>60</sup> "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace."

These focused efforts are important, yet they often fail to include integration of language, systems, and practice that align with the unique Wesleyan identity to speak to the future of the church.

The prophetic voice and the social witness that moved Wesley and his theological descendants has nearly been forgotten, as evidenced by the forum responses and recent history of the church. If the Wesleyan Tradition continues to follow evangelicalism in its theology to grow and plant churches, the original Wesleyan identity will be lost and the future of the church will be diminished to a small subset of the population. Barriers to equitable access and inclusion, from laity to leadership, for women and men of all races and ethnicities are causing the next generation of young leaders to reconsider participation and leadership in the church.

MaryKate Morse, a scholar and advocate for women and people of color in the church, contends that the future of the church is centered on confronting racism. Morse, in an article for Missio Alliance, writes,

Churches such as these have little concern for the problem of racism and the reality of black pain. Because of this, the white church is a hard swallow for people of color and an offensive church to many in the younger generations. A sobering consequence is that many young people are not interested in a faith that has no room for people of color and racial justice. Young people do not understand a church that dismisses, minimizes, or compartmentalizes the truth of the racial divide in this country.<sup>61</sup>

Numerous voices are speaking to the future of the church and the urgency for which change toward inclusion of all people is needed. Ken Van Vliet, pastor of Monte Vista Chapel, a megachurch in central California, has spent the past ten years shepherding his church toward an inclusive place for women in leadership. Van Vliet

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<sup>61</sup> Morse, “The Greatest Obstacle to the Gospel Today.”

recognized the inability for women to lead as a loss for the future of the church through the loss of the witness of the gospel. Van Vliet explains, “If we don’t have women leading, we won’t have the ability to reach half of our population or more.”<sup>62</sup> Seeing gender as a first step, his congregation is currently working toward diversity of race and ethnicity in their context as well.

Jemar Tisby reflects at the end of *The Color of Compromise*, “If the twenty-first century is to be different from the previous four centuries, then the American church must exercise even more creativity and effort to break down racial barriers than it took to erect them in the first place.”<sup>63</sup> His sentiments are echoed by many in the church. Morse concurs, as she closes her article with an urgent appeal for the church to realign with the gospel:

If we are to have any good news to tell the next generation, and if we are to become mature disciples of God’s kingdom, racism cannot be an occasional concern of “other” people. It must become the central concern of all people. It is the great injustice of the centuries, and Rachel is wailing for her children—First Nations peoples, Asians, Latinxs, Blacks, all ethnicities.<sup>64</sup>

### **Recent Attempts at Diversity and Inclusion**

An increased perspective on the need for diversity has surfaced among some Wesleyan denominations over the last two decades. With a growing presence of diverse community members, churches (primarily in more racially diverse areas) have begun to focus on inclusive practice. This section will utilize the model set forth by Deloitte

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<sup>62</sup> Ken Van Vliet, telephone interview by author, November 22, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 193.

<sup>64</sup> Morse, “The Greatest Obstacle to the Gospel Today.”



Insights to categorize and analyze the inclusivity of diverse demographics by Wesleyan denominations. The four categories of maturity toward equitable inclusion of diversity are (1) compliance, (2) programmatic, (3) leader-led, and (4) integrated.<sup>65</sup> Each category will be defined and include an example of both effective assimilation and ineffective assimilation (or ignorance) within Wesleyan denominations.

Deloitte explains that the first level of maturity toward diversity and inclusion is the baseline of compliance and “is predicated on the belief that diversity is a problem to be managed, with actions generally a consequence of external mandates or undertaken as a response to complaints.”<sup>66</sup> Compliance aims focus on equal opportunity and affirmative action and is largely reactive, maintaining a predominantly homogenous workforce.<sup>67</sup>

Due to its abolitionist heritage and inclusive theology for women and people of color, many Wesleyan groups see diversity as a command of God to implement. The external mandate comes from God and, thus, is incorporated into the manual of policy for operation by the denomination. However, inclusive practice is largely reactive or non-existent.

In response to discrimination in the United States, the General Superintendents of the Nazarene Church published a statement in 2017, reminding their churches of their stance against racism and desire for reconciliation.

Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or

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<sup>65</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>66</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>67</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional, and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.<sup>68</sup>

Multiple Wesleyan denominations have similar stances to the Nazarene's. While reacting to the oppression of marginalized people, the Wesleyan church remains at compliance level with a largely homogenous workforce. In the Northwest alone, more than eighty percent of pastors are white males with primarily white congregations, led by regional leaders who are also all white males.<sup>69</sup>

It is at the programmatic level that “the value of diversity starts to be recognized, with this stage often characterized by grassroots initiatives (such as employee resource groups), a calendar of events, and other HR-led activities (such as mentoring or unconscious bias training).”<sup>70</sup> Programmatic diversity and inclusion focuses on increasing the representation of specific demographic groups, through use of goal setting, training, and resource presentation.

Programming is the primary method Wesleyan denominations have utilized to become more diverse and inclusive. Networks, training programs, councils, online resources, and some diverse hiring has been integrated toward more inclusive practice.

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<sup>68</sup> “Board of General Superintendents Affirms Manual Statement on Discrimination,” Church of the Nazarene, January 17, 2018, <http://www.nazarene.org/article/board-general-superintendents-affirms-manual-statement-discrimination>.

<sup>69</sup> Bud Pugh, “Women and WOC in ORPAC,” e-mail, December 6, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

Nazarene, Foursquare, and the Wesleyan Church have multiethnic networks for pastors to join. “Each network serves to link ministers currently in the field with others doing ministry who share the same ethnic background.”<sup>71</sup> The Wesleyan Church has a robust resource and training site, including several webinars for leaders interested in planting multiethnic congregations, becoming more diverse, or having conversations with women who are multiethnic. In addition, the denomination offers multiethnic leadership cohorts, training and assessments on cultural intelligence, unconscious bias, racial reconciliation, and a “Colors Inventory.”<sup>72</sup>

While able to raise awareness, the Wesleyan denominational progress in creating change is limited. This limitation becomes clear when looking more closely at the content on the national websites. Almost all the websites are out of date (change of leadership, dates, conferences), not well-organized for effective use, or simply have little to no traffic. A quick view of the webinars on the Wesleyan multiethnic page reveals that only one of fourteen videos has more than one hundred views. The majority have less than ten views, with content that has been online for nearly two years.

In addition to the limitations of awareness and training, only the Nazarene website for multicultural leaders has a stated target of planting one hundred new multiethnic congregations by 2020.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, “Multiethnic Networks,” The Foursquare Church, accessed April 25, 2019, [https://thehub.foursquare.org/Prod/FoursquareLeader/Content/Ministries/Multiethnic\\_Networks.aspx](https://thehub.foursquare.org/Prod/FoursquareLeader/Content/Ministries/Multiethnic_Networks.aspx)

<sup>72</sup> “Multiethnic Ministries,” The Wesleyan Church, accessed April 25, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/cmadv/multiethnic-ministry>.

<sup>73</sup> “Multicultural Congregations,” USA/Canada Region - Church of the Nazarene, accessed April 27, 2019, <http://www.usacanadaregion.org/multicultural-congregations>.

The third level of diverse and inclusive organizational maturity incorporates leadership. Leadership encompasses “leveling the playing field for all employees by addressing systemic cultural barriers.”<sup>74</sup> At this point, substantial change is able to develop. It becomes the point of transformation for a denomination “when the CEO and other influential business leaders step up, challenge the status quo, and address barriers to inclusion.”<sup>75</sup> Deloitte goes on to explain that leaders who are “role-modeling inclusive behaviors and aligning and adapting organizational systems (for example, by tying rewards and recognition to inclusive behavior), create the conditions that influence employee behaviors and mind-sets.”<sup>76</sup>

In seeking to empower diverse leadership, the Bishops of the Free Methodist Church gathered a small set of leaders from diverse backgrounds for a two-day conference twice in the past four years. Their intention was to listen to leaders to understand how to best serve, while also offering insight toward the direction of the denomination as a whole. The Bishops, while three white males, were invited by female pastors and pastors of color to continue to mentor them outside of the occasional gatherings, which they have integrated.<sup>77</sup>

Beyond practices, the embodiment of diversity in the key denominational leaders is a crucial factor in transitioning denominations toward equitable and inclusive practice. As noted in the story of chapter one about the Free Methodist Bishop election and the

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<sup>74</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>75</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>76</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>77</sup> Bishop Matt Thomas, e-mail message to author, “ODI,” January 27, 2017.

Foursquare presidential election in the summer of 2019, each post was held by white males and transitioned to new slates of white males, with the exception of one white female. The Wesleyans, Church of God, and Salvation Army<sup>78</sup> all have white male leadership. The only exception is the Nazarene Church, with a board of six General Superintendents, one a Caucasian woman, three men of color, and two Caucasian men.<sup>79</sup> The continued practice of empowering primarily white leaders reveals the probability of cultural barriers as implicit in the lack of opportunity for leaders of color.

The fourth level of maturity for an organization is integration of diversity and inclusivity, where the organization leverages cognitive and demographic diversity to create value. “And at level 4, diversity and inclusion are fully integrated into employee and other business processes such as innovation, customer experience, and workplace design.”<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, there are no examples of Wesleyan denominations being fully integrated in their leadership, behaviors, structures, and systems. While individual churches may practice diversity and inclusion, the whole of the organization does not carry the ethos of equity and inclusivity of diversity, whether with women or people of color, in leadership or membership. A sweep of denominational leadership from core leaders, boards, pastoral groups, and overall news and training focus quickly reveals the lack of integration.

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<sup>78</sup> The Salvation Army does have females in their highest ranks, but as the counter-part to their spouse, and either assistant roles or in ministry to women. <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/leadership>

<sup>79</sup> “Board of General Superintendents,” Church of the Nazarene, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.nazarene.org/organization/board-general-superintendents>.

<sup>80</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

## **Conclusion**

The barriers presented from history, present-day circumstance, and future vision all affect the ability for women and people of color to live inclusively and equitably within the Wesleyan Tradition. Only in the last twenty-years have Wesleyan denominations begun to reclaim efforts to diversify, with minimal success, primarily at the programmatic level. As the research reveals, programs and compliance alone will not propel the integration of the whole gospel in the modern era.

Although there is much disappointment, heartache, frustration, and challenge, there are also pockets of hope. The following chapter will examine the ways in which attempts are being made to address discrimination against and oppression of women and people of color toward a return to Wesleyan belief and practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## CHAPTER 5: POCKETS OF HOPE

Alongside the challenges in the Wesleyan Tradition, there are reasons to be hopeful. Denominations are not in the dark about the changing demographics of the culture and how those are affecting the inside of the church. In an effort to inhabit foundational Wesleyan beliefs, groups are organizing internally and cross-denominationally. Online and local networks, conferences, publications, denominational leadership, regional and local leaders, and churches are coming together to bring inclusion of diverse people and equitable practice. A sampling of hopeful pockets from each of these areas will be identified, explained, and assessed based on their strengths and weaknesses.

Member checking to verify research was also conducted for this chapter. Specifically, the question was posed, “Where do you see pockets of hope/areas where we are living out diversity, equity, inclusion (or at least attempting) for women and people of color in our Wesleyan spheres? This could be conferences, networks, gatherings, trainings, particular churches, leadership...whatever comes to mind that is hopeful for our future in this arena.”<sup>1</sup> Responses were, on the whole, more vague or unanswered unless a scheduled conversation was made, with the exception of a few who gave in-depth commentary. The content herein is a compilation from responses, research online from Wesleyan Tradition denominations, and known content from Wesleyan sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Forum Post, by the author, November 14, 2019.

Similar to the end of chapter four, pockets of hope will be organized in accordance to the categories of Deloitte Insight’s model for organizational maturity of diversity and inclusion. The four categories of diversity and inclusion (which are embedded in equitable policy and practice), from least to greatest maturity, involve compliance, programming, leadership, and integration.

### **Publications**

Online publications create access for potential members and leaders of the church to understand and engage in the beliefs and possible practice of the church. As basic compliance and programmatic forms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, public statements within denominational websites, as well as websites dedicated to the promotion of women and people of color, exist to promote a common language and communication about diversity in leadership.

#### *Online Statements*

#### **Promoting Gender Equity**

The majority of Wesleyan denominations hold public position statements on women in leadership. Foursquares, Wesleyans, Nazarenes, Free Methodists, and Salvationists are explicit about their inclusion of partnership of women and men in ministry.<sup>2</sup> The Wesleyan Holiness Connection also has a statement on women in

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<sup>2</sup> “Women in Ministry,” Wesleyan Church, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/ecd/women-ministry-leadership>. “Women Clergy,” Church of the Nazarene, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://nazarene.org/women-clergy>. “Sexism,” The Salvation Army. Winslow, “Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry.” “Women in Leadership,” The Foursquare Church, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://thehub.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/FoursquareLeader/Content/Ministries/Diversity.aspx>.



leadership, as it serves to create content for communication on beliefs held by its affiliate groups.<sup>3</sup> Two explicit online statements model language of equality and inclusion of women in leadership, namely the Salvation Army and the Church of the Nazarene.

The Salvation Army developed a positional statement on sexism online expressing their commitment to “model the equitable valuing, equipping and mobilizing of men and women” as equally being made in the image of God.<sup>4</sup> The statement includes acknowledgment of complicity in sexism: “The Salvation Army acknowledges with regret that Salvationists have sometimes conformed to societal and organizational norms that perpetuate sexism”<sup>5</sup> alongside the perils, biblical grounds for equity, and practical responses for the church and society. The statement creates important language for men and women on how to treat women and move toward a more equitable society. It also recommends women equally serve in the church, “An important principle in the government of the Army is the right of men and women to share equally in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Both men and women Salvationists, married or single, can hold any rank, responsibility or position of authority in the Army from that of local officer to that of General” as recognized in the Salvation Army officers handbook.<sup>6</sup> The position statement’s weakness lies in its application, as the only outward facing link on their website focusing on women in leadership is “Revive,” a

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<sup>3</sup> “Resources,” Wesleyan Holiness Connection, accessed November 27, 2019, <http://www.holinessandunity.org/resources>.

<sup>4</sup> “Sexism,” The Salvation Army.

<sup>5</sup> “Sexism,” The Salvation Army.

<sup>6</sup> “Sexism,” The Salvation Army.

quarterly magazine for women in ministry.<sup>7</sup> The positional leadership of the denomination also reveals inequity of position and language by core female leadership being titled with a focus on women's ministry rather than ministry for the whole of the church.<sup>8</sup>

### **Promoting Equity for People of Color**

Few denominations have overt positional statements on the value of all people as made in the image of God beyond a short belief statement from Genesis 1.<sup>9</sup> The assumed value from the belief statements, while important, communicate little on standards for practice. However, the Salvation Army has also created a quality statement on racism, in an effort to promote language, belief, and practice of equity and inclusion of all people in the kingdom of God.<sup>10</sup> Similar to the statement on sexism, the report unpacks the history of racism, the biblical basis for equity, and the response of the church in society. The church also laments their complicity, stating, "while many Salvationists have acted firmly and courageously against racism, The Salvation Army acknowledges with regret, that Salvationists have sometimes shared in the sins of racism and conformed to economic, organizational and social pressures that perpetuate racism."<sup>11</sup> The recognition of history

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<sup>7</sup> "Revive," The Salvation Army International, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/revive>.

<sup>8</sup> "Leadership," The Salvation Army, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/leadership>.

<sup>9</sup> "FM Articles of Religion: From the Free Methodist Book of Discipline," Free Methodist Church USA, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://fmcusa.org/resources/fm-articles-of-religion>.

<sup>10</sup> "Racism," The Salvation Army, November 25, 2019, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/7d3c015c-1af5-4211-830f-b7b0c6a65898\\_English+Racism+IPS.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/7d3c015c-1af5-4211-830f-b7b0c6a65898_English+Racism+IPS.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> "Racism," The Salvation Army.

while determining an equitable pathway forward strengthens the voice and action of the church, as no obscurity exists. The weakness, like the statement on sexism, is in the follow-through of practice. It is not known if Salvationists actively implement compliance statements within programs, leadership development, or systems of creating policy.

### *Websites*

The creation of websites for equitable and inclusive practice of belief in a distinctly Wesleyan tone has grown in recent years. Online sources not directly run or funded by Wesleyan denominations include The Junia Project,<sup>12</sup> Seedbed,<sup>13</sup> and The Sacred Alliance.<sup>14</sup> All offer Wesleyan resources on biblical teaching, theology, and methods for practice. The Junia Project and The Sacred Alliance are nuanced toward women with the belief, as stated on The Junia Project home page, “that when interpreted correctly, the Bible teaches that both men and women are called to serve at all levels of the Church, and that leadership should be based primarily on gifting and not on gender.”<sup>15</sup> Seedbed has a broader scope for their publications, being a “media platform whose mission is to gather, connect, and resource the people of God to sow for a great awakening.”<sup>16</sup> Seedbed publishes texts, curriculum, training courses, podcasts, and articles. The strength of these websites is their ability to engage a broader audience with

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<sup>12</sup> The Junia Project, 2013, juniaproject.com, also <https://www.facebook.com/juniaproject/>.

<sup>13</sup> Seedbed, 2012, <https://www.seedbed.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> The Sacred Alliance, 2018, <https://www.thesacredalliance.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> The Junia Project.

<sup>16</sup> “About Seedbed,” Seedbed, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.seedbed.com/about/>.

timeless, yet relevant, teaching through harnessing a community of authors in alignment with Wesleyan theology. Weaknesses include the organization of content (Seedbed), the ability to access the site beyond Facebook (currently, The Junia Project does not have a dedicated website), and brand recognition for use beyond the denomination (The Sacred Alliance). Websites also function as online statements with some programming perks for leadership and laity, though they do not directly influence leadership practice or integration into denominational structures.

### **Networks**

Within the Wesleyan Tradition, multiple grassroots networks exist to support women, people of color, and general practice of Wesleyan belief, which encompasses both. These networks primarily function online, but occasionally hold conferences and seminars to gather members, bolstering action through further education and practical equipping.

The largest network advocating for Wesleyan thought and action is the Wesleyan Holiness Connection (WHC). What is known today as the Wesleyan Holiness Connection began as the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (WHSP) in 2004. In an effort to capture the historical message of holiness in a modern context of practice, Wesleyan leadership convened via a series of several events. The result was a two-page document titled “The Holiness Manifesto”<sup>17</sup> and an emerging set of regional networks for Wesleyan Holiness

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<sup>17</sup> “English Holiness Manifesto,” Wesleyan Holiness Connection, February 2006, <https://www.holinessandunity.org/resources/miscellaneous-documents/holiness-manifesto/english-holiness-manifesto>.

pastors. The manifesto shared a fresh take on the message of holiness for today, defining the presence and practice of holiness as follows:

God wants us to be, think, speak, and act in the world in a Christ-like manner. We invite all to embrace God's call to:

- be filled with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ—Holy Spirit-endowed co-workers for the reign of God;
- live lives that are devout, pure, and reconciled, thereby being Jesus Christ's agents of transformation in the world;
- live as a faithful covenant people, building accountable community, growing up into Jesus Christ, embodying the spirit of God's law in holy love;
- exercise for the common good an effective array of ministries and callings, according to the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- practice compassionate ministries, solidarity with the poor, advocacy for equality, justice, reconciliation and peace; and
- care for the earth, God's gift in trust to us, working in faith, hope, and confidence for the healing and care of all creation.<sup>18</sup>

The network has continued to expand, including regional networks of Wesleyan pastors from eighteen different Wesleyan denominations throughout the U.S. and beyond. Regional networks meet annually to network cross-denominationally and engage topics of particular importance to Wesleyans. Through the network, statements on women in leadership, immigration, and human rights have emerged.<sup>19</sup>

The greatest strengths of the WHC have been the gathering of superintendents within their regions to relate to one another on key issues, alongside the gatherings of pastors from the various denominations within their region to engage with one another for the annual Pastor's Holiness Days. These networks create a place for pastors who do not normally work together to engage relationally and strategically in an attempt to live the holiness message in their community. Weaknesses of the network surround the

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<sup>18</sup> "English Holiness Manifesto," Wesleyan Holiness Connection.

<sup>19</sup> "Resources," Wesleyan Holiness Connection.

interest of those within each region. Depending on the value key stakeholders have for the network, they will access it for resourcing, thought, and educational best practices. Also, while the language around holiness and the “holiness message” fit loosely within diversity, equity, and inclusion, no overt conversations are being forged on how diversity, equity, and inclusion fit within the message or can bring further levels of holiness into the denominations. Rather, local leadership tend to focus on the particular resources needed for their churches, which often trickles down to the priority and urgency among the contextual issues of the day.

### **Promoting Gender Equity**

Networks supporting women ministers reach women throughout the world via online access. Private Facebook groups such as Nazarene Women Clergy and Free Methodist Women Clergy are two known groups where women can ask questions about ministry support, offer practical tips to one another, process discrimination, celebrate one another’s success, offer prayer, and include discussions on any subject that is applicable to women leaders. As the Nazarene Women Clergy page says in their public-facing content, the network is “a closed group as it is intended to a give safe space for conversation and support of clergy women in their ministry journey. All information shared in this group should be considered confidential.”<sup>20</sup> The greatest value in these groups is the confidential nature that promotes candid reflection and dialogue on topics of theology and practice as women leaders in their context. The greatest weakness may be

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<sup>20</sup> “Women Clergy,” Church of the Nazarene, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.usacanadaregion.org/women-clergy>.

the inverse of the strength, in that women have a safe space to process, but the conversation may not be heard by male leaders who need to support and promote equity and inclusion of the women in their denomination.

Two other known networks, Arise and The Sacred Alliance, exist for women clergy, in connection with the Church of God, Anderson and Wesleyan Church, respectively. Formerly named the Center for Women in Ministry, The Sacred Alliance is “a community of women and men co-laboring for equity and wholeness,”<sup>21</sup> while Arise focuses on inspiring “women to discover their call in ministry, to develop their gifts, and to grow and thrive in their call.”<sup>22</sup>

The Sacred Alliance launched in March of 2018, followed by the initiation of Arise in the spring of 2019. Both groups advocate for women clergy within their denomination (though Sacred Alliance expands to women outside the Wesleyan church as well) through occasional events, mentoring, online video, and written publications on theology, biblical study, and practical ministry application. A weakness of The Sacred Alliance network is access. Not being housed on the Wesleyan denominational site or linked to on the women in ministry page, which is itself three links from the main page, makes it difficult to find unless directly looking. Arise is much more centrally located when looking for content on women in ministry, as it is the first dropdown in the resources link on the main Church of God webpage. It is not known how effective either group is in promoting equity and inclusion within the greater denominational structures,

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<sup>21</sup> “The Sacred Alliance.”

<sup>22</sup> “Arise,” Church of God, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.arisechog.org/aboutus>.

but being that they are groups centrally located with the denominations, there is communicated legitimacy and support.

### **Promoting Equity for People of Color**

Multiple networks have developed to support ethnic and multicultural ministries. The Free Methodist Church alone has developed FMs for Justice, La Red Latina,<sup>23</sup> the African Heritage Network,<sup>24</sup> and RIZE Church Planting Network.<sup>25</sup> These groups all serve different functions. The FMs for Justice is a private Facebook page serving to promote conversation and organizing efforts around justice in a protected and non-threatening space. The African Heritage Network and La Red Latina both have online components and occasional events to foster support for those of African descent and Spanish speakers in their ministry contexts. The African Heritage Network also serves to speak to issues of equitable practice within the denomination on justice and inclusion of people of color. The RIZE Church Planting Network seeks to develop multiethnic churches along the entire west coast out of the Southern California Pacific Coast Japanese Conference, led by a Latino male superintendent.

The significance of the groups that meet in person is in their reach to diverse populations. They communicate with, culturally represent, and attempt to adequately resource the ministries within their network. The value of the FMs for Justice is captured

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<sup>23</sup> “Red Latina FMC-USA,” Free Methodist Church USA, accessed November 27, 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/pg/RED-Latina-Fmc-USA-198897136876466/community/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/RED-Latina-Fmc-USA-198897136876466/community/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>24</sup> “African Heritage Network,” accessed November 27, 2019, <http://myahn.org/index.html>.

<sup>25</sup> “Rize Church Planting,” accessed November 27, 2019, <http://www.rizechurchplanting.com/welcome>.



in its ability to present important topics and content on matters of social holiness and be able to discuss action for implementation within the denomination. Weaknesses of the various networks lies in the lack of support and integration of individual networks with the whole of the denomination, as well as wide-range participation of members that would benefit from the networks but may not know about them because of lack of communication. Also, some of the networks promoting equity of race and ethnicity in ministry do not communicate inclusion of women clearly in their online communication.

The networks mentioned in this section have significant resources and support systems for aiding leaders in their work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are limited, however, as they do not speak directly to the leadership or integration of policy and systems that will continue to equitable diversify and include women and people of color.

### **Conferences**

Conferences continue to be a popular programmatic opportunity for church leadership across the U.S. Gathering every one to four years, several conferences with an emphasis on women, reconciliation, and diversity have developed. Within the Wesleyan stream, a few conferences focused on women and people of color (often focused on multicultural ministry) have been established. This section includes a known sample of conferences promoting equity for women and people of color.

#### *Promoting Gender Equity*

The primary conference promoting equity and inclusion of women in ministry leadership across Wesleyan denominations is the Wesleyan Holiness Women's Clergy

Conference.<sup>26</sup> Gathering every two years for a national conference since 1994, women from denominations including Church of God, Anderson, the Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, the Brethren in Christ, and the Evangelical Friends gather to encourage and prepare women to lead in the church at every level. Providing a diverse set of leaders and presentations, active women clergy and those still discerning are able to collaborate, network, and be resourced toward effectively living the holiness message. Male advocates of women clergy are also invited to the conference. Most valuable for leaders is the event itself, whereby leaders convene for four days for teaching, networking, and the ability for women and men to see women presently serving as pastors and leaders in a variety of roles in the church. It is also affirming for women leaders present to see male leadership willing to invest their time at the gathering in support of female leaders. Drawbacks include the infrequency of gathering and the small number of men participating as champions of women pastors from key leadership roles throughout the Wesleyan denominations, as it is the largest cross-denominational event for women clergy in the Wesleyan Tradition.

### *Promoting Equity for People of Color*

Conferences promoting diversity with regard to race and ethnicity tend toward non-Wesleyan-exclusive gatherings, such as Mosaix,<sup>27</sup> which is sponsored by several churches and denominations both within and beyond the Wesleyan movement. Deemed a network by its founders, Mosaix functions in the gathering of its triennial conference with

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<sup>26</sup> Wesleyan Holiness Women's Clergy, accessed November 27, 2019, <http://www.whwomensclergy.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> Mosaix, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.mosaix2019.com/>.

additional support through coaching from the founder and text publications. Originating in Southern California in 2010, the conference has grown from 400 to more than 1,500 at the gathering in Dallas, Texas in the fall of 2019.<sup>28</sup> The “Mosaix Global Network,” as the organization is officially titled, is committed to both unity and diversity in the local church. The conference specifically enacts the mission through convening pastors and leaders to both celebrate the growth of the multicultural church and help them strategize best practices for growth in diverse ministry. Strengths include a wide network of presenters, inclusive of women and men of various cultural backgrounds, as well as the opportunity for leaders to see the visual and practical representations of multiethnic ministry. Also, the website provides resources for coaching, diverse staff placement, leadership cohorts, and small group study.<sup>29</sup> Weaknesses include a lack of communication outside the website and grassroots communication, with no future value via the network for diversity, equity, and inclusion unless groups or individuals purchase a resource package from the founder.<sup>30</sup>

A more denominationally focused group for diversity, equity, and inclusion of race, ethnicity, and gender is the annual Embrace All conference. The Embrace All conference is centered in the Free Methodist denomination with the aim of “improving our ability to embrace people across race, class and gender.”<sup>31</sup> The gathering originated

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<sup>28</sup> “Conference History,” Mosaix, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.mosaix2019.com/general-info/conference-history/>.

<sup>29</sup> “Professional Services,” Mosaix, accessed November 27, 2019, [https://www.mosaix.info/Services/professional-services\\_copy](https://www.mosaix.info/Services/professional-services_copy).

<sup>30</sup> “Church Economic Accelerator,” Mosaix, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.mosaix.info/#>

<sup>31</sup> “Embrace All Conference,” Genesis FMC, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.genesisfmc.com/event/embrace-all-conference/>.

as one of the nine strategies of the bishops at the 2015 Free Methodist General Conference to bring all people into the body of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Strengths of the conference include a participation of some key leaders and a focused Wesleyan message of inclusion, collaboration, and strategies on how to practice embracing all people within the Free Methodist Church. With less than one hundred people in attendance, weaknesses tend toward cross-regional communication and value for content, along with lack of integration in the whole of the denomination for support on a larger scale.

### **Denominational Structures**

The organization of a movement also includes the creation of structures for support of beliefs and practice. Throughout the previous three centuries, as evidenced in chapters three and four, Wesleyan denominations developed as an answer to the radical call of people led by the Spirit to live holiness in the world. To continue to remain in service to the belief of the organization, structures must undergo critical analysis and revision. This section reveals ways Wesleyan groups are enacting that analysis and revision, with hopes of revival and future sustainability.

#### *Diversity Initiatives*

Both the Church of the Nazarene and the Wesleyan Church have a significant emphasis on multicultural ministries through their denominations. Multicultural ministry is both programmatic and leader-focused within the structures of the denominations. The Nazarenes have eighteen multicultural ministry areas, inclusive of ethnic leadership

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<sup>32</sup> Finley, "Answering the Call to Embrace All."

development, specific ethnic ministry groups, and multicultural congregations (Figure 6).<sup>33</sup> The Wesleyans showcase five multicultural ministry areas on their website, with an emphasis on growing multiethnic congregations (Figure 7). Each aims to reflect the diversity of the kingdom of God through supporting “districts, pastors, local churches, and leaders in the task of making Christ-like disciples among all ethnic groups.”<sup>34</sup> The vision of the Wesleyans is more explicitly focused on diverse inclusion throughout the denomination though they do not directly include and compare all ethnicities, particularly not including white congregations, in their statistics in the included figure. As their website explains, the Wesleyans aim to “create a denomination-wide culture of multiethnic ministry that is reflected in leadership at every-level, in discipleship and multiplication within our churches across every district and in outreach to every people group.”<sup>35</sup>

The inclusion of multicultural and multiethnic ministries within the denominational structures shows the growing interest and awareness of the denominations to reflect Wesleyan theology in practice. Limitations include an ethnically diverse set of mostly male leadership in the Church of the Nazarene, and a lack of integration and accountability throughout their structures for implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly as multicultural ministries are a subset of the denominations and not necessarily stressed within all ministry areas.

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<sup>33</sup> “Multicultural Ministries,” Church of the Nazarene, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.usacanadaregion.org/ministries/multicultural-ministries>.

<sup>34</sup> “Multicultural Ministries,” Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>35</sup> “Multiethnic Ministries,” The Wesleyan Church, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/cmadv/multiethnic-ministry>.

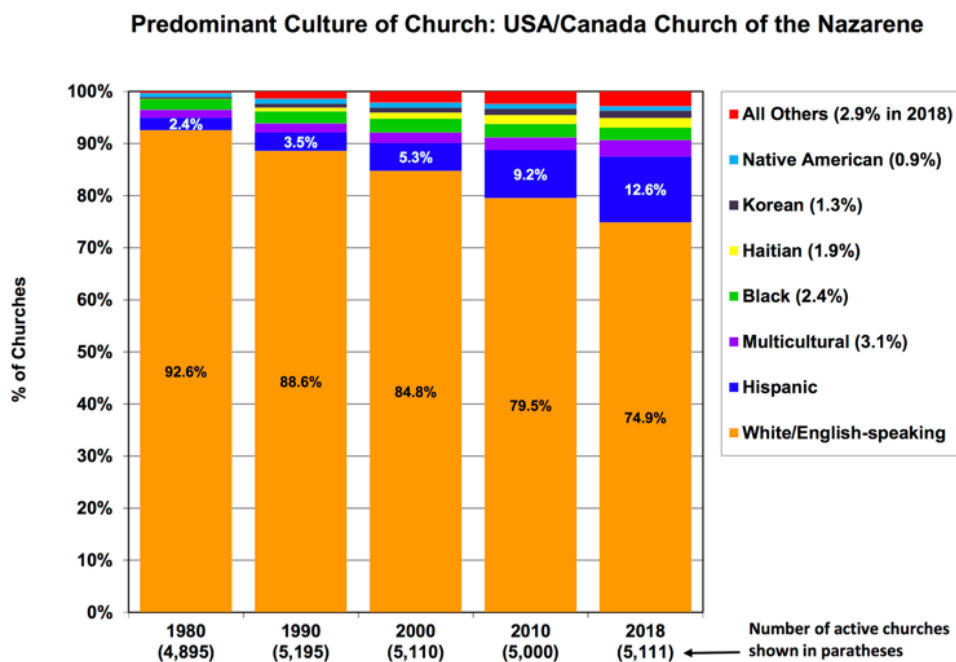


Figure 6 – Predominant Culture of the Nazarene Church

## Wesleyan Church Statistics

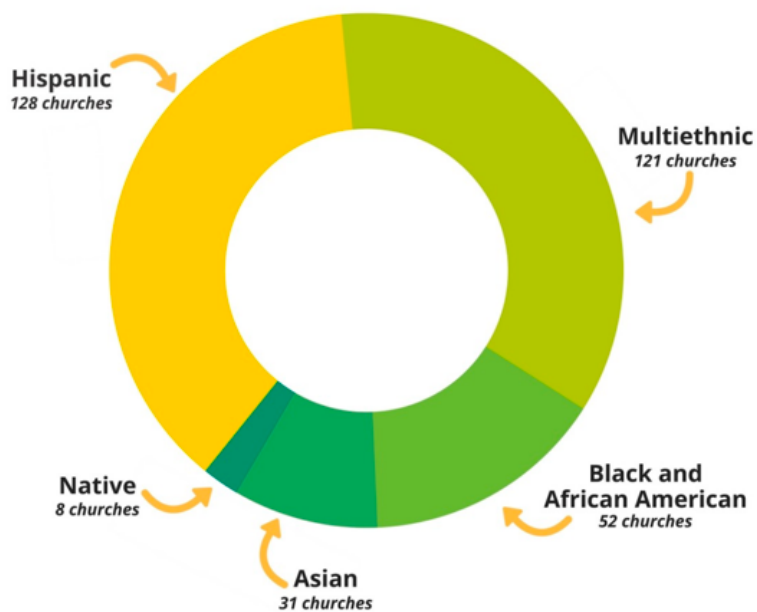


Figure 7 – Wesleyan Church Statistics

Months prior to the election of the bishops and national board of administration in the Free Methodist Church, a “diversity task force to advise the [board of administration] toward promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equity throughout the Free Methodist Church USA” was created.<sup>36</sup> The group is focused on three strategies toward systematically “introducing processes that build cultural literacy, cultural competence, and cultural intelligence”<sup>37</sup> with an end goal of diverse and equitable participation at all organizational levels. Strategic first steps include developing common language with an intent to survey diversity, produce tools on cultural intelligence and bias, and develop equity programs for inclusion of underrepresented leadership. The task force is made up of fourteen leaders, including the three bishops. Of the task force, 40% are women and 40% are persons of color, with two women of color represented.<sup>38</sup> The strengths of the task force involve an inclusive participation from a diverse cross-section of leadership, and a strong emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion for the entirety of the denomination, with direct access to and participation from those in the greatest positions of authority in the denomination. A further insight and strength is the addition of an outside expert consultant to help the group navigate its current practice and implement the strategic plan over time. A primary weakness exists in the lack of equal voices, particularly with regard the balance of power with three white bishops serving on the board and only two women of color, the most marginalized and affected group. Other strengths and weaknesses may be present, though not yet known, as the group is in the beginning stages of its development.

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Traylor, “Diversity Task Force Report,” e-mail to author, November 26, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Traylor, “Diversity Task Force Report.”

<sup>38</sup> Traylor, “Diversity Task Force Report.”

Little is known about official equity work currently being done among denominational leadership to promote women in leadership by Wesleyan denominations, though the Foursquare Church has just concluded an 18-month “High Capacity Leadership Cohort” made up of women leaders from the denomination and conducted by denominational executives.<sup>39</sup> The denomination has also gathered a Women in Leadership Taskforce made up of male and female leaders to begin to create equitable and sustainable changes. The strengths and weaknesses of both are not fully known, though both have high potential, being led by denominational executives with high buy-in from male leadership. One potential threat to the continued movement of these groups to empower women is the loss of key executive Tammy Dunahoo, as she has stepped down from her vice-presidency role.

#### *Leadership Board Transitions*

The Church of the Nazarene has made strides in recent years to diversify their core leadership team for the denomination. In 2017, Carla Sunberg was the second woman in Nazarene history elected to the board of General Superintendents. In addition, Filimao M. Chambo from the denomination’s Africa region was elected in 2017. Sunberg and Chambo joined an ethnically diverse male board of four others, including non-North-American-born African Eugenio Duarte, Guatemalan Gustavo A. Crocker, and two white males, David W. Graves and David A. Busic. The embodiment of both women and men from diverse backgrounds leading the global Nazarene church allows for a further holistic world perspective and strategy as they lead the denomination’s more than 2.5 million

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<sup>39</sup> Tammy Dunahoo, “Leadership Cohort,” e-mail to author, October 31, 2018.



members.<sup>40</sup> While important and potentially impactful, there were no direct sources found in this study on the value and extent of change happening toward diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the rest of the Church of the Nazarene, including the administrative board and impact on local U.S. pastors.

The Free Methodist Church USA recently underwent a transition of leadership, as noted in chapter one, with the election of its new board of bishops. With two white males and one white female, the denomination saw its first move toward diversity in its history. Within an hour of the results from the bishop election, a new national board of administration was also elected, half of which had not served on the board previously. Through a potential mix of encouragement and disappointment of the bishops' election, the board elected also made history, becoming the most diversified board in the history of the church, with nine females, four of which are women of color, and twelve males, half of whom are men of color. Including the three bishops who participate in the board, just over 40% of the board is ethnically diverse and 40% is made up of female leaders. The board is also chaired by a woman, another historical marker for the denomination.<sup>41</sup> Limitations include the lack of equal representation of women and people of color.

Pam Braman, Superintendent for the Genesis Conference and a member of the national board of administration for the Free Methodist Church, recognized the transition of the board and pockets of hope for the denomination. She shared in an interview about the enthusiasm of the new board and the embodiment that fits so well with the denominational values. In addition, Pam explained that women and people of color were

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<sup>40</sup> "Board of General Superintendents," Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>41</sup> Pam Braman, telephone interview by author, November 22, 2019.

continuing to grow among the global overseers team, a group made up of regional superintendents and world areas. From a group including nearly thirty people with only one woman of color and one white woman in 2015, to one woman of color, two white women, and five men of color in 2019, Braman noted that the transitions were steps in the right direction and a cause for hope among the denomination.<sup>42</sup>

### *Denominational Leadership*

#### **Gender Diversity**

Within Wesleyan denominations, a number of leaders who are women and people of color stand out. While diverse leaders are present, the opportunities for full integration of diversity and inclusion practice awaits them and their colleagues. Those who have been elected into leadership roles as regional leaders and denominational administrators have unique opportunities to transform the culture and practice into a more fully embodied presence of the Wesleyan Holiness Tradition in a twenty-first-century context.

A sample of the known Wesleyan women serving in denominational leadership positions include Nazarene General Superintendent Carla Sunberg, Free Methodist Bishop Linda Adams, Foursquare Vice President Tammy Dunahoo (stepping down from her role in January 2020), Church of God, Anderson Chief of Staff Natalie Farmer, Salvation Army World President of Women's Ministries Commissioner Rosalie Peddle, Wesleyan Church Multiplications and Discipleship Executive Director Anita Eastlack, and Wesleyan Director of Discipleship Kim Gladden.

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<sup>42</sup> Braman, telephone interview.

The range of female leaders in these denominations varies in regional leadership. While all married Salvation Army ministers serve together with their spouse regardless of post as a regional or local leader, other Wesleyan denominations do not have this policy. Some regional leaders have chosen to serve as co-superintendents with their spouse. Regardless of women's leadership with their spouse or on their own, the presence of women at all levels of an organization provides a vision to other women of what is possible. Within the Evangelical Church and the Wesleyan denomination, no female regional supervisors are active as of 2019.<sup>43</sup>

### **Ethnic Diversity**

Racially and ethnically diverse leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition is less present but still exists in some groups. Diverse leadership often is categorized into a subset of ethnic ministries or multicultural or multiethnic ministries. However, as noted above, the Church of the Nazarene has three non-white men as General Superintendents, Filimao M. Chambo, Gustavo A. Crocker, and Eugenio Duarte.<sup>44</sup> Handel Smith is the Executive Director in The Church of God, Anderson for U.S. and Canada Strategy.<sup>45</sup> Ron Thiempenn is the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for the Foursquare Church.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Regional Conferences," The Evangelical Church, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://theevangelicalchurch.org/conferences>. "Districts," The Wesleyan Church, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/about/districts>.

<sup>44</sup> "Board of General Superintendents," Church of the Nazarene. It should be recognized that these General Superintendents are leading the entirety of the Nazarene Church, not only the U.S.

<sup>45</sup> "Staff Directory," Church of God, Anderson, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.jesusisthesubject.org/staff/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Leadership," The Foursquare Church, accessed December 1, 2019, [https://leader.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/About\\_Us/Leadership/FoursquareLeader/Content/About\\_Us/Executive\\_Leadership.aspx](https://leader.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/About_Us/Leadership/FoursquareLeader/Content/About_Us/Executive_Leadership.aspx).

The Wesleyan Church involves people of color in their denominational leadership in the church multiplication and discipleship leadership, including Director of Multiethnic Ministries Santes Beatty, and Director of Discipleship Kim Gladden.<sup>47</sup>

Within regional leadership, there are also glimmers of hope, as the Nazarenes, Free Methodists, and Foursquare all have a small but growing number of leaders of color. When surveying leaders in forum groups, multiple people responded that their regional leader was actively recruiting, equipping, and placing women and people of color. Respondents recognized there was still much work to be done, but saw the possibility for culture change in the efforts of the regional leaders and their ordaining boards.<sup>48</sup>

### **Congregations**

Within Wesleyan denominations, pockets of hope can be found when surveying local churches, both in clergy and laity. Nazarenes, Free Methodists, Wesleyans, and Foursquare churches all have congregations they look to as the frontrunners with women and people of color in key roles. There are also smaller churches that have been effectively empowering women and people of color to lead, including both in every aspect of ministry. Churches such as Pasadena Nazarene Church in Pasadena, California,<sup>49</sup> Kentwood Community Church in Kentwood, Michigan,<sup>50</sup> Rainier Avenue

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<sup>47</sup> “Our Team,” The Wesleyan Church, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/team>.

<sup>48</sup> Forum respondents, response to author questions.

<sup>49</sup> Pasadena Nazarene Church, Pasadena, CA, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.paznaz.org/>.

<sup>50</sup> Kentwood Community Church, Kentwood, MI, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://www.kentwoodcommunitychurch.com/>.

Free Methodist Church in Seattle, Washington,<sup>51</sup> and Restoration Church (Huntsville Foursquare Church) in Madison, Alabama<sup>52</sup> are examples of diversity in leadership and congregations, actively involving both women and people of color. Though not necessarily changing the systems of their denomination, these congregations are, to a reasonable extent, embodying the diversity of Wesleyan theology.

### *Two Examples of Strategic Inclusion*

The purpose of organizing networks, conferences, publications, denominational structures of leadership, and policy is all in an effort to filter back to the local church. Without the local church, the rest of the denominational hierarchy and administration would not exist. For this reason, this chapter is concluding with two stories of hopeful cultural congregational change. The first story is that of a Free Methodist pastoral couple in Southern California. The second is a non-denominational church in Turlock, California.

### **California Avenue Church**

Soo Ji and Joe Alvarez are a biracial couple co-pastoring in Riverside, California at the California Avenue Free Methodist Church.<sup>53</sup> The Alvarezes were the first people of color in leadership in the history of the century-old church. Their appointment to the church came through an openness from the couple, and the regional leadership of the

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<sup>51</sup> Rainier Avenue Church, Seattle, WA, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://www.rainieravenuechurch.org/>.

<sup>52</sup> Restoration Foursquare Church, Madison, AL, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://r4sq.org/>.

<sup>53</sup> California Avenue Church, Riverside, CA, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.theavenue.life/>.

denomination, who were willing to risk on their behalf, a belief in them not had in their previous ministerial posts. Upon their arrival at the church in 2016, after serving nine years in ministry in Seattle, Washington, the congregation was made up of 98% white people with nearly 80% being over fifty years old.<sup>54</sup> The surrounding community of Riverside reflected a wide range of diversity in age, race, ethnicity, and economics.

The Alvarezes knew from the beginning that change was needed in order to survive and thrive in the community. They spent much of the first year observing and assessing the philosophy and practices within the church while strategically transitioning visible leadership roles. In doing so, they placed people in worship and preaching positions who embodied their values of gender and ethnic diversity and were people of peace. The intentional ministry model was a church plant within the existing church. Their methodology allowed for the old systems and structures to remain while they began to add new leadership primarily through worship and preaching.

Though few of the core structures changed, throughout the first year of transition many challenges arose. Members of the board stepped down when asked to sign a commitment to the five freedoms of the Free Methodist Church. Worship members were not as skilled as the previous all white team. Members of the congregation left because of the Alvarez's stated concern for the marginalized in their community. Some wanted to evangelize those already like themselves that felt safe to have in their congregation. Multiple members struggled with women in leadership and would not talk with Soo Ji directly. Congregants questioned the pastoral couple about their view of white people,

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<sup>54</sup> Joe Alvarez and Soo Ji Alvarez, telephone interview by author, November 18, 2019.

directly asking whether or not they hated white people. Because of the couple's choice to co-lead in a difficult turn-around church, the ministry took a heavy toll on their marriage.

Weathering the difficulties of the first year, the Alvarezes remained at California Avenue and began to implement further structural change. Strategically, they had placed Joe as the lead pastor during the first year, having him be the primary preacher with Soo Ji preaching infrequently and only on the topic of worship. The couple knew their embodiment as co-pastors of color was exceedingly different for the church and to add Soo Ji as the primary pastor may have undone the existing structures altogether.

During the two years that followed, they began to transition into roles that were more in line with their personal gifting and call, with Soo Ji becoming the primary preaching pastor and administrator and Joe facilitating evangelism, community outreach, and discipleship. Their involvement in the community began to result in people identifying their church as a place where diversity was welcome and embodied. They began to see working class and business leaders from a variety of ethnic backgrounds attend and become involved in the church. New people were intentionally invited on to the board who fit the mission of the church. A culture shift began to flow more naturally as those coming into the church reflected the values of the pastors while the older and existing congregation chose to leave, passed away, or began to respect the changes being made through the Alvarez's consistency. One board member who had originally given an ultimatum and stepped down when the board was planning to read Peter Scazzero's text on becoming emotionally healthy leaders later remarked, "if this church has the chance to

change and grow, I believe it's in you two."<sup>55</sup> Though the prior board member could not operate within the new leadership structure, he began to respect it.

Within three years the pastoral couple saw significant change in the congregation through their presence, preaching, worship leadership, outreach, and relationships with members. By the fall of 2019, the church had changed significantly, with 40% of the members being thirty and under and an even divide of Latin and white backgrounds. California Avenue Church has also grown by twenty percent, despite the loss of those who left the church when the Alvarez family began leading.

### **Monte Vista Chapel**

The final account of hope for the Wesleyan Holiness Tradition is that of Monte Vista Chapel in Turlock, California. Monte Vista Chapel is a congregational church, not affiliated with a denomination. The church originated nearly sixty years ago as a predominantly white church with a strong complementarian theology. Though not a Wesleyan congregation, the church is a pocket of hope for Wesleyans as a potential model for becoming actively inclusive of women in leadership. The congregation is also working toward diversity in race and ethnicity. Pastored by Ken Van Vliet for the past eighteen years, the church has dispensational roots and is located in a conservative pocket of California.

When Van Vliet began the role of lead pastor of the church, the perspective on women in leadership was clearly complementarian, with women only serving in areas of

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<sup>55</sup> Joe Alvarez and Soo Ji Alvarez, Zoom interview by author, March 27, 2020.



women's ministry and children, unable to baptize or teach classes in the church.<sup>56</sup> Seeing the potential loss of the witness of the gospel in the community because of the alienation of 55% of the local population, the leadership and the church have worked together for the last ten years to turn the tide with regard to women in ministry leadership. With the board being an even fifty-fifty split on women in leadership and the congregation being opposed to women sixty-forty, the pastor knew they would need to slowly transition toward an equitable and inclusive perspective. Beginning with the biblical and philosophical reasons for not including women in leadership, Van Vliet spent a year teaching through the Bible on the texts applicable to women in leadership. Determining the Bible makes women and men complements of one another from Genesis 2, the church decided to move to a theology of shared leadership, using a semantically different phrasing of "complementarian without hierarchy."

Monte Vista then initiated slowly and consistently raising the public place of women in leadership over a nine-year period to help overcome philosophical disagreements about women in leadership. They built in a quota of eight women preaching from the pulpit every year. To be able to continue the movement toward women in leadership, they recognized the need to have women preach who had solid skills and ability. Over time, people stopped leaving when women preached and those with philosophical disagreements began to hear God speaking through the women preachers. In 2015, Monte Vista Chapel renamed women on staff who were pastoring as "pastors." They also intentionally placed women in positions where they would not only pastor women, but men as well. By the beginning of November 2019, the church took a

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<sup>56</sup> Ken Van Vliet, telephone interview by author, November 22, 2019.

vote, and more than 75% were in favor of women leading in every role in the church including elder and lead pastor.

Following the movement toward gender equity, the church has decided to work toward racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in leadership. Van Vliet acknowledged the importance of breaking through the barriers with women first because of the biblical challenges involved. Now that a pathway of equity and inclusion has been paved, the church senses that the opportunity for more diverse leadership is possible. Again, by opening the pulpit and steadily and strategically placing diverse leaders in prominent roles throughout the church, they aim to equitably diversify.

Van Vliet mentioned a few points of learning for him that made all the difference in challenging the cultural norms of the church and introducing diverse leadership.<sup>57</sup> He recognized the need for a champion from the dominant culture who will lead the way in challenging the cultural norm on an issue such as equality. He also realized Monte Vista Chapel had made significant mistakes not because of the men in the room but because there were *only* men in the room. They did not understand some of the realities of the women in the pews, and, thus, led poorly. Van Vliet believes that if women were in leadership roles as pastors and board members, they would have navigated differently. A third aspect of learning was the need to “sacrifice the queen.” Van Vliet explained the metaphor as shared by a friend in their education on the game of chess. Being mentored to play chess well, they had to sacrifice the queen in order to learn how to play with the rest of the pieces on the board. Van Vliet felt “the queen” was Sunday services, particularly the pulpit. Sunday services were the most segregated and held as the most

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<sup>57</sup> Van Vliet, telephone interview.

important. Thus, the sacrifice of the service to bring an inclusion of the witness of the gospel through diverse voices was worth the education and the risk for Monte Vista Chapel.

### **Conclusion**

As evidenced, pockets of hope exist in the Wesleyan Tradition and beyond for beginning to practice Wesleyan theological belief on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Yet, as is seen through the framing of maturity categories from Deloitte, the majority of the actions taken have been at the programmatic level or less. A few movements are happening where diverse leaders are being placed in roles of leadership within Wesleyan denominations, but it is not known whether equitable practice of diversity and inclusion is being seriously considered by them or their colleagues for policies and implementation at the congregational level. The evidence is more in favor of individuals who champion diversity and inclusion beginning websites, conferences, online forums, or change among their local church. While these are important supports for those involved and may catch the attention of those in positions of authority, it is difficult to change a system, or turn an armada, as it were, from the outside or below. Without men and white people on board, the change becomes exceedingly difficult. As seen with Van Vliet, it took ten years of slow change in his local congregation with persistent and focused energy, even with white male buy-in.

Each pocket of hope remains important. They are hopeful because they are filling a need. But if there were equitable practices in place for the denominations, the stories of barriers from chapter four would not exist and Wesleyan denominations would have more leaders and laity who could freely practice their calling.

Several questions remain with regard to practice of diversity and inclusion. In particular, will leaders see the need to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the whole of their denominations? Is diversity, equity, and inclusion language part of their narrative? Are difficult conversations being had about how to reset culture to more effectively embody the biblical holiness message they helped create? Have leaders examined how their presence affects denominational structures? How will training and practice be done at the local level? Is placement and retention of diverse pastors being examined or accounted? How will denominations and local churches validate women and people of color as welcomed in leadership if they never see one lead? The reality is that structural issues, particularly in denominations that are more than a century old, are extremely difficult to change and, without a focused effort, pockets of hope will remain as such.

## CHAPTER 6: MOVING FORWARD

This research has centered on the Wesleyan Tradition's ability to live into its historical theology of inclusion of women and people of color in leadership in equitable ways. Beginning with an analysis of the current realities in denominations, particularly regarding leadership, problems of inequity were revealed. The small numbers of female and racial and ethnically diverse leadership in the churches do not match Wesleyan values or the changing demographics of society. With more women and people of color interested in faith than Anglo males, and less being included in leadership, homogeneity becomes a cause for continual loss of the benefits of diversity in churches and denominations. Biblical mandates to love one's neighbor and to make disciples of all nations have not been directly applied in the church. By contrast, businesses across the nation have invested time and resources into understanding and employing best practices on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recognizing the changing world, research on diversity, equity, and inclusion reveals their implementation as beneficial for the future health of organizations. The benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion are principals to be followed and are not exclusive to business alone. Thus, the church has the opportunity to reap the same benefits, which largely align with the kingdom of God.

The second chapter analyzes the textual message of the Bible regarding inclusion of women and the nations. From creation, throughout the Old Testament, to Jesus and Paul, and, finally, the prophetic book of Revelation, the Wesleyan perspective of God's design for the biblical narrative is to include both women and men, as created in the

image of God to live in partnership with God and one another, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender.

Chapter three reflects on the history of the Wesleyan Tradition, from its origins with John Wesley to the late 1900s. The rise of radical prophetic movements during the time of abolition grounded the later-formed denominations in social holiness. Hallmarks of equality for women and people of color were core to the holiness message. Engaged in active participation for reform of the U.S. on both fronts, Wesleyans began with an emphasis on practicing their theology. As society put into policy rights for women and people of color, the fervor of the Wesleyan Spirit toward reform would wane. By the end of the twentieth century, evangelism efforts would continue to surge, with marginal emphasis on developing diverse leadership.

Barriers present to diversity, equity, and inclusion of women and people of color in leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition are presented in chapter four. Utilizing Wesleyan member responses to confirm findings in the literature, featured current barriers include the loss of historical Wesleyan memory as reformers creating equality for all people; accommodation of the church to the broader evangelical and secular culture; an internal ethos of inequity, including bias, exclusion, and absence of diverse voices; and a lost Wesleyan vision of inclusion for the ever demographically diversifying future.

The reality of these barriers gives way to the pockets of hope among them in chapter five. Consulting forums, research, and numerous Wesleyan online sources, pockets of hope for women and people of color do exist. Resources for equity and inclusion are revealed in growing online networks and publications, conferences, denominational transitions of leadership, diversity initiatives, inclusive leadership, and

strategically diversifying congregations. If practice of equity and inclusion begin to involve the leadership and integration of all systems within the denominations, real transformation is possible over time.

Finally, this last chapter clarifies the challenges and possibilities for the future of Wesleyan denominations in equitably diversifying and offers guidelines for a pathway forward. Also included will be a personal reflection as a pastor and leader among the Wesleyan community.

### **Challenges and Points of Hope**

It is clear that the Wesleyan Holiness movement faces a turning point in its history. As highly developed organizations who have structured their prophetic voices toward evangelizing and mobilizing leaders throughout the world, the need for continued efforts in diversifying leadership are unavoidable if the denominations are to move into the next millennium. Indeed, a revival of historical theology applied appropriately within a modern context is necessity. However, challenges to revival are always present. Though multiple difficulties could be cited, the following sections will address four, namely the challenges in the admission of a problem, acceptance of Wesleyan theology, ownership of Wesleyan practice, and the individual versus system perspective. For each of these challenges, points of hope toward addressing issues are acknowledged.

#### *Admission of a Problem*

The research of this dissertation, alongside the historical data, reveals the disparity between Wesleyan theology and practice. The Wesleyan movement was established as a radical prophetic voice, speaking truth to society while actively working

toward reform into the biblical model of restoration. The loss of the prophetic witness over time on behalf of women and people of color has caused the Wesleyan traditions to mirror those of other evangelical churches. Largely ethnically and racially segregated, with men as leaders of the local, regional, and national church, the Wesleyan Holiness movement has lost the inclusivity and diversity it sought at its beginning.

Though the truth of the gap between theology and practice has been acknowledged by some, the conversation is largely passive, mentioned in a portion of a conversation, on a comment board, or in an online denominational statement. The relevance and immanence of the inequities for women and people of color in the church in being included in congregational life and leadership are not popular topics, whether at gatherings of Wesleyan pastors or denominational administrators. Bias against women and people of color exists, causing them to continue to be an anomaly in leadership, and far from the norm in congregational boards, the pastorate, or denominational roles. This challenge may remain because of the many barriers, the lack of language, guilt, bias, or blind spots due to privilege. Whatever the reasons for muting the topic of diversity and inclusion, the need to address the issue is a non-negotiable one if denominations plan to authentically evangelize and assimilate the diverse women and men in the largest two generations today, millennials and generation Z.

The greatest challenge is the first challenge, the acknowledgment of reality. To acknowledge the problem of the dissonance between theology and practice is to be able to move into the next steps toward healing and becoming unified in heart, head, and hands. Leaders must honestly and humbly recognize and voice the inequalities toward women and people of color, their exclusion in every level of leadership, and the non-



presence of diversity of race and ethnicity in congregations. Regardless of reasoning, elevating the conversation to platforms of leadership is a challenge for those leaders, often white males, who are seemingly not affected.

While the voice is small in the Wesleyan Tradition, evidence of those interested in the conversation on diversity, equity, and inclusion is there, and this is a point of hope. Networks and conferences gathering leaders for support and dialogue are beginnings. The Free Methodist diversity taskforce and Foursquare women's taskforce cited in chapter five are particular points of hope.

#### *Acceptance of Wesleyan Theology*

While Wesleyans would say they ascribe to Wesleyan theology, the prevalence of non-Wesleyan theology is found throughout current structures of the denomination and its history. The challenge of Wesleyan denominations is to know their historical theology and its biblical roots to be able to practice well. To speak about topics such as social holiness, without the social aspect of those included, disables Wesleyan theology, and thus its practice. As evidenced in the barriers section of chapter four, the church has assimilated traditional views of women based on complementarian theology not found in Wesleyan thought. It has also followed the culture in the ways of continuing a segregated practice not based in the message of Scripture or the theology of the Wesleyan church.

The challenge continues in internalizing Wesleyan theology, thinking critically about how to engage the world based on the that biblical theology, and prophetically teaching it to leaders and congregations. Lack of intentional thought and teaching to Anglo males about the inclusion of women and people of color as full partners and image-bearers in every way has allowed for a theological perspective of openness to

many contradictory streams to the Wesleyan message. Non-Wesleyan leaders, such as Ken Van Vliet at Monte Vista Chapel, understand the time and intention it takes to turn a culture of belief. Yet, with no theological barriers, it seems the Wesleyan movement has not been motivated to actively declare the theology that offers a place for all to equitably belong.

To continue to avoid or forget the historical theology of Wesley and his successors will accentuate the difficulty of the church in living its historical mission of holiness in the world. Thus, a non-Wesleyan theology further relegates those who belong on the inside to the outside. As realized in the history of the Wesleyan denominations in chapter three, those called but limited by inaction of stakeholders began their own denominations, such as the AME church.

Points of hope remain in that Wesleyan theology and history have been integrated into the history books, denominational statements, and theological training requirements for ordination in most Wesleyan groups. Specific points of hope are more difficult to track, as they may happen on a more organic or even programmatic level locally. Evidence of teaching in the demographic makeup of leadership and the potential pipeline of leaders is also a point of hope to look for in the future.

### *Ownership of Wesleyan Practice*

The third challenge is the practice of Wesleyan theology. The missed visibility of diversity and inclusion of women and people of color prompts questions about the acceptance of Wesleyan theological belief and admission of a gap between belief and practice. The lack of fully integrated inclusive practice is demonstrated in the makeup of churches, pastors, regional leaders, and national leaders across all Wesleyan

denominations. The barriers for women and people of color from existing leadership, structures, and laity keep them from participating or thriving in equal roles with their peers. With a trajectory of leaders who primarily look and act like the current leadership, those who do not fit the traditional mold are not often invited or accepted. Those who do not match present leadership demographics may also choose to opt out of leadership to serve in another denomination or ministry where they will be welcomed.

By having a steady supply of homogeneous leadership, the challenge to diversify is exacerbated, making it difficult for leaders to be motivated to change. They may question what problems exist when leadership roles are being filled. Conversely, without pipelines, current leaders may be willing to take what they can get, even if all those feeling called to lead are of a similar background.

In order to confront the challenge of practice, changes will need to be made to reflect a Wesleyan theology which influences decision-making behavior. Transformation of behavior, even with right belief, is exceedingly difficult. Free Methodist Superintendent Amelia Cleveland-Traylor explains the challenge of ownership with regard to practicing racial diversity. Cleveland-Traylor explains, “Many churches and organizations want to promote and facilitate racial reconciliation, but most of them are not actually ready to do it...They’re not prepared for the negative response and the backlash that naturally comes.”<sup>1</sup>

Deloitte Insights speaks to the difficulty of integration of change, articulating that “Cultural change is challenging irrespective of the objective, but it is perhaps even more

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Finley, quoting Amelia Traylor, “Answering the Call to Embrace All,” *Light & Life Magazine*, December 2018, <https://lightandlifemagazine.com/answering-the-call-to-embrace-all/>.

so when the objective is an inclusive culture. Resistance is common: Those who are currently successful are likely to believe the system is based on merit, and change to the status quo feels threatening.”<sup>2</sup>

The fact that diversity, equity, and inclusion for women and people of color are being pursued by grassroots movements, doctoral dissertations, and taskforces are all evidence of the need of practiced theology. With these comes a point of hope as well. Those who are speaking up as voices of dissent have not given up on their denomination or the Wesleyan Tradition as a whole. Indeed, those making waves toward change are deeply invested in the history, theology, and future as incarnational witnesses of God’s kingdom come through these organizations.

#### *Challenge of Changing Both Individuals and Systems*

The fourth challenge is that of systems verses individual change. Deloitte’s model of inclusion and diversity shows individuals and groups leading change, but without the acknowledgment and ownership of stakeholders who are able to make systemic change, no lasting change will happen. As is seen in many bias situations, including sexism and racism, often women and people of color are not viewed as problematic as individuals, but when attempting to create equity of pay, leave, and leadership, systemic injustice begins to be uncovered. From denominational leadership through congregational laity, the challenge lies in rewiring the systems, which is why Deloitte explains that diversity training does not help much: “nearly one-half of the midsize companies in the United States mandate diversity training, as do nearly all the *Fortune* 500... While an

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<sup>2</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

overwhelming majority of organizations (71 percent) aspire to have an ‘inclusive’ culture in the future, survey results have found that actual maturity levels are very low.”<sup>3</sup>

Individual change of theology and inclusion will only go so far. The slowest challenge to overcome is the transformation of the entire system. Again, Monte Vista Chapel, under the leadership of Van Vliet, is an example, with a ten-year process toward change. Though not a Wesleyan congregation, they had the ability to make change within their one congregation, without having to enact change within an entire set of congregations found within century-old denominational structures.

### **Paths Forward**

Moving forward requires addressing each aspect of the challenges, which is beginning to happen on some level. However, more robust strategic planning and action consistently implemented over time will yield greater long-term fruit. The following pathways focus on the two areas least addressed by the current pockets of hope in the Wesleyan Tradition, namely leadership and integration. Being consistent with the model used throughout this research, Deloitte Insights’ work will be utilized regarding these two pieces that transition an organization to diversity and inclusion maturity. To briefly revisit each area, leadership, or being leader-led, requires the leaders in any organization to “step up, challenge the status quo, and address barriers to inclusion. By role-modeling inclusive behaviors and aligning and adapting organizational systems (for example, by

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<sup>3</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

tying rewards and recognition to inclusive behavior), they create the conditions that influence employee behaviors and mind-sets.”<sup>4</sup>

Integration has the potential to make the greatest impact in an organization. At the level of integration, diversity and inclusion are incorporated into decision-making, discipleship, leadership development, structural design, vision and mission strategy, and outreach. “The truth is, significant change will not happen until organizations go beyond tick-the-box programs and invest the appropriate level of effort and resourcing in creating diverse and inclusive cultures.”<sup>5</sup> The following pathways forward address the leadership effort and integrative resourcing needed for success within Wesleyan denominations.

### *Leadership Pathway*

As this research has revealed, leadership is a core component to enacting inclusion and diversity. Without those in positions of authority among the Wesleyan Tradition championing the work of equity for women and people of color, change to the entire network will not happen. Voicing values of diversity and hopes for further inclusion do not go far without behavior demonstrating stated values. The sayings “talk is cheap” and “actions speak louder than words” ring true and should be heeded by leaders across the tradition. It is the responsibility of leadership to take initiative, challenging current practice by their visible representation of Wesleyan beliefs. Though several opportunities may exist for role-modeling inclusive behavior, two foundational pathways, personal transformation and equipping, are central to a leader’s ability to begin to adapt

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<sup>4</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>5</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

organizational systems that then influence the behavior of regional, local, and congregational leadership. Here, personal transformation and equipping will be explored with specific examples of practices that may be employed for each.

### **Personal Transformation**

Until a leader has a personal conviction about diversity, equity, and inclusion of women and people of color in the church, they may take little interest in investing time, finances, and their team to change the status quo. Transformation of one's own heart and mind must occur to become an active champion for women and people of color. Only then will investment into resourcing the equitable development of diverse leaders take place.

Transforming the heart and mind may be separate or simultaneous endeavors. Regardless, there are factors that influence both one's thoughts and feelings, resulting in transformative behavior. For leaders to be influenced to change their heart and mind, they need to have knowledge and proximity to the facts and hear the stories of impact. Facts and stories conveying the truth about the expectations and benefits of diversity and inclusion and the problems with the lack thereof run throughout Scripture, history, and modern church contexts. Time with, study of, and immersion into the biblical, historical, and current contextual content have the ability to shift behavior if there is willingness for adaptation on the part of the leader. Simultaneously knowing the gaps in Wesleyan history and modern practice can begin to reposition leaders. Immersing themselves in diverse contexts where similar challenges have been experienced and transitioned toward equitable and inclusive action will give leaders a picture of what is possible. The formation of this very research is based upon those happenings within the life of the

author through study, travel across the globe, diverse and equitable transitions of employees and programs at a local seminary, and the stories of those in the contexts of the local, regional, and national leadership of the church.

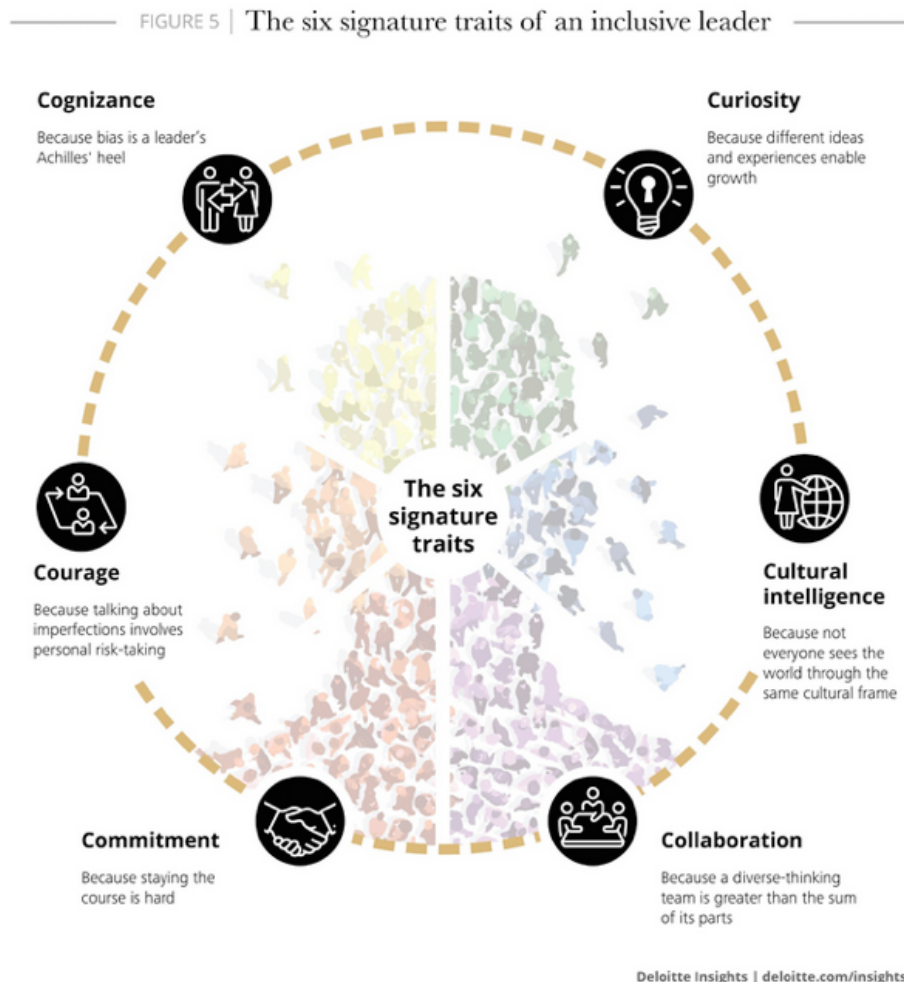
Knowledge and proximity are first steps. Character qualities further transform the leader. Deloitte recognizes the necessity of the alteration of behavior by leadership through the intentional development of specific character traits. Traits including commitment, courage, cognizance of bias, curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration distinguish inclusive leaders from the old “hero” model of leadership that is becoming increasingly irrelevant (Figure 8).<sup>6</sup> Deloitte commends, “Our view is that inclusive leadership is broader and a much more intentional and effortful process. In essence, inclusion of diversity means adaptation. Leaders must alter their behaviors and the surrounding workplace to suit the needs of diverse talent, ideas, customers, and markets.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, transformation toward the future of the leadership of the church and society will demand adaptive and effortful change of those in current leadership positions.

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<sup>6</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>7</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”





*Figure 8 – The Six Signature Traits of an Inclusive Leader*

## Equipping

Transformation toward inclusive leadership of women and people of color is not elusive. Renovation of heart, mind, and practice takes place through practical equipping experiences. Diversity training, cultural intelligence courses, implicit bias tests, texts on courageous leadership, and personal coaching all play a part in developing the skillset of inclusive leaders. For leaders within the Wesleyan Tradition, many formative practices by any number of firms or consultants may yield positive change results. What is most notable is that equipping must include leaders in the most authoritative positions of the

denomination. This initially includes both executive leadership and their decision-making boards. Training programming ought to be integrative into biblical narrative and historical root systems, personally reflective, and contextually evaluative. Training should also provide a uniquely Wesleyan perspective on Scripture and a study of denominational history, identifying gaps between belief and practice toward assessing needed change. Personal reflection hinges upon leaders examining their own cultural background and personal history to better understand their biases, passions for justice, verification of their culture, inclusive or exclusive use of language, and behavior toward diverse people groups. Contextual evaluation further reveals the reality of the Wesleyan status of lived belief. Reflection, including lament, repentance, and renewed vision, are all portions of the equipping process. Transformation and equipping are deeply personal, with an expectation of response through new ways of practice as outcomes.

New vision and practice would include new sets of training for leaders, new hiring practices, new language around leadership, and new standards for equity and inclusion at every level of leadership. Examples may include producing a slate of only females and people of color to balance administrative boards, executive leadership teams, pastoral pulpit supply, and doctrinal and ministerial appointment committees. Though they may be less known or experienced, their character and embodiment of women and people of color will provide a lived practice of leadership that brings benefits to the denomination in alignment with spoken beliefs.

It is significant at this juncture to recognize the necessity of middle leaders in leadership equipping. Outcomes also must include the integration of transformation and equipping practices at the regional and local levels of leadership with their executives and

administrative boards. Deloitte's research explains the hang-up of most change is based on the lack of success at the middle leader level: "Regardless of what high-potential initiative the CEO chooses for the company, the middle management team's performance will determine whether it is a success or a failure."<sup>8</sup> Middle leaders must go through the same transformative and equipping process, whether taught by executive leadership from the organization or by an outside organization. To begin the process of integration at the local congregation, all leaders who have ascended from the congregation into denominational ministry posts will need to have the same heart, mind, and practice of inclusive and equitable Wesleyan theology.

Further, equipping gains long-term results by a connection with models of strategic practice and immersion into diverse groups. Within the Wesleyan Holiness movement, leaders do exist, as the pockets of hope chapter reveals, who embody practices of Wesleyan theology. These leaders may be available for teaching, being shadowed, consulting, and resourcing leaders throughout the organizations in ways that equitably diversify. Regional and local leaders with education and a track record of promoting women and people of color are most readily accessible for supporting colleagues if afforded the opportunity and authority by executives. It may even be reasonable to hold a panel with leaders from various backgrounds sharing their experience and strategies so colleagues can begin to consider ways to adapt their practice in more equitable and inclusive ways.

A final recommendation, of inner group contact theory for equipping leaders, is most easily implemented at the congregational level, though it is valuable at all levels of

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<sup>8</sup> Deloitte, "The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths."

an organization. Inner group contact theory, as explained by Christina Cleveland, is a social psychological practice of bringing two groups together who are very different from one another to do the work of reconciliation and potential integration with one another.<sup>9</sup> Inner group contact is mentioned here as it is strategic and must be facilitated by leadership to work. The outcome of inner group contact is an antidote to homogeneity, disunity, and group separation. While highly effective, it is costly because it reveals bias in a more public and challenging way that requires a laying down of rights and privilege so that all participants (perhaps of two different churches or a group of leaders from diverse backgrounds) are viewed with equal status within the situation. Removal of titles and power sharing are baseline expectations.

A third criterion is interpersonal interaction. Participants come together around a common goal or project that does not benefit one over the other. The activity creates space for participants to relate to one another on topics other than race, ethnicity, and gender. Finally, the fourth expectation is that there would be a larger or superordinate goal, requiring people of diverse groups to work together with others to do something they both deeply care about. For example, two churches of varying ethnic and racial backgrounds could come together in their neighborhood to support a needed project at the local school where children from both congregations attend. At a leadership level, this may look like regional leaders' gathering to dialogue on best practices for supporting congregations in contextual mission integration. Bringing together separate and homogeneous groups in themselves to work on a mutually beneficial goal creates an

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<sup>9</sup> Multnomah University, "Advanced Ministry Lectureship Series: Christina Cleveland," YouTube video, 1:04:26, October 30, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMRqZjZzRxw&feature=youtu.be>.

inner group contact promoting a secondary (though equally important) goal of raising the value of diversity, and thus removing stereotypes, inaccurate perceptions, and marginalization.

### *Integration Pathway*

The final pathway is that of denominational integration. Without integration into the whole of the organization and its structures, Deloitte has found that lasting change toward inclusion and diversity will not occur.<sup>10</sup> The most important step for leaders to take after having their own transformative experience is to strategically act as agents rewiring denominational practices, effectually resetting denominational culture. As seen in the case study of Monte Vista Chapel and Van Vliet in chapter five, the transition of organizational culture takes time. After ten years, one church transitioned on one issue of inclusion. The process of integration for entire denominations may seem implausible, but biblical identity and future survival of the mission and calling of the Wesleyan Holiness movement hangs in the balance. And, as Deloitte has learned,

The truth is, rewiring the system is equally, if not more, important than retraining behaviors...when it comes to behavior change, training is often only a scene-setter. The more complete story is that, to change people's behavior organizations need to adjust the system. Why? First, biases can only be reduced rather than completely eliminated, and it is difficult to control biases that are unconscious. Second, biases can be embedded into the system of work itself, causing suboptimal diversity outcomes. Strategies to rewire the system make it easier to tackle biases and create a more comprehensive and sustainable solution.<sup>11</sup>

To begin the progression toward integration of rewired systems according to Deloitte's research four particular steps will be present:

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<sup>10</sup> Deloitte, "The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths."

<sup>11</sup> Deloitte, "The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths."

- Using data to pinpoint leaks in the talent lifecycle
- Identifying and remodeling vulnerable moments along the talent lifecycle
- Introducing positive behavioral nudges, such as altering the default setting
- Tracking the impact<sup>12</sup>

These four phases will be explained here along with examples for how they may be integrated within the particular structures of Wesleyan denominations.

### **Data Use**

Using data, it will become clear where leadership has and has not focused on diversity and inclusion of women and people of color. Deloitte suggests researching employees to determine how well they have integrated inclusion experiences.<sup>13</sup> For most denominations, the most telling aspects are what is measured. Data reveals number of conversions, baptisms, members at churches, and appointed ministers. Yet, no statistics of clergy or laity exist where diversity regarding women or people of color is specifically counted. What is known by all, is what matters gets measured. In part, statistical data keeping needs revising to reflect denominational values. Further, data could be used to maintain accountability for how congregations and leadership are effectively practicing diversity and inclusion. As leaders are trained and ordained, a simple aspect of their application process could include whether they are male or female, along with racial and ethnic background information.

Data is a baseline to begin to understand the dynamics of an organization and be able to help it activate change for the future. Factual information is one contributing factor moving hearts and minds toward action. At the congregational level, as the

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<sup>12</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

<sup>13</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

Alvarezes explained in their church transition in chapter five, keeping data helped them know how they had transitioned over time, giving them a hopeful perspective, especially as they had recuperated and grown not only in diversity but also beyond their original membership.

### **Identification of Vulnerable Processes**

Detecting and shifting weaknesses among the processes from the development of leaders through their retirement is the second area of rewiring.<sup>14</sup> Identifying areas where bias may be present, especially with decision-makers, is key. Leadership will need training on how to identify bias and actively work to remove systems where bias works against values. Vulnerabilities are rampant within denominations, as bias training is not required for board members, pastors, or executive leaders. To begin to remold weak systems, intentional action should be taken to look at all development processes. This includes leadership training incorporating inclusion and diversity beliefs with demonstrated practice, interviewing all decision-making leaders on how they practice beliefs in alignment with the Wesleyan theology of inclusion, and retooling policies such as elections where bias may easily determine the outcome of an election. Harvard Business Review's recent research reveals bias against women and people of color when placed side by side with a white male candidate for a position. Statistically, they will not

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<sup>14</sup> Deloitte, "The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths."

be chosen unless there is at least one other female or person of color represented in the candidate pool, as was seen in the Foursquare election in 2019.<sup>15</sup>

Rewiring practices to reflect theological belief to be lived within current contexts is not only strategic, but also embodies the prophetic voice of the Wesleyan movement. Maintaining leadership that thoroughly knows and embodies Wesleyan theology toward both protecting and growing the movement is the only means for maintaining theological integrity. A broad evangelical framework will not support Wesleyan structures or DNA long-term.

### **Positive Behavioral Nudges**

Introducing positive behaviors to begin altering the status quo is the third step of integrating organizational change.<sup>16</sup> This step emphasizes equitable practice for all in removing unnecessary barriers limiting women and people of color where no boundary should exist. Language modification is one example, removing exclusive language, terms, training texts, or guides referring to ministers as male or, more commonly, referencing “guys” or “guy” when speaking about ministerial leadership. Providing equal representation of women and people of color in presentations, trainings, and conference settings is another positive nudge. Other implementations of positive inclusive behavior include protecting leaders before being chosen by implementing policies of tiered growth toward equal representation of women and people of color on boards, and in executive

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<sup>15</sup> Stefanie K. Johnson, David R. Hekman, and Elsa T. Chan, “If There’s Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There’s Statistically No Chance She’ll Be Hired,” *Harvard Business Review*, April 26, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>.

<sup>16</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”



nominations and appointments. Further, shared appointments for ministerial couples, or a rotation between them, provides a voice for women in some denominations, such as Foursquare. Inclusive policies around pay, leave, and care for family are equitable movements toward including women and people of color.

### **Tracking Impact**

Relating to the first step, tracking data provides measurable means for how diversity and inclusion are being effectively implemented.<sup>17</sup> Whether annually or more periodically, reviewing the growth or decline of women and people of color in leadership will provide feedback for further process implementation, and analysis of steps one through three. With data revealing decline, evaluations and interviews of outgoing leadership may be conducted to understand why changes are being made and what factors influenced those changes. Reviewing diversity and inclusion data may also encourage further equitable practice, especially as benefits from increased inclusion begin to be revealed.

Local church annual reporting on demographic shifts and leadership of males and females will inform regional leadership on how to further train, resource, and choose leadership for local congregations. These reports of clergy and congregations will also inform executive and national leadership of how the system as a whole is doing and will guide them in future action and understanding of how disciples are being made and the pipeline of future leadership will look.

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<sup>17</sup> Deloitte, “The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths.”

## **Conclusion**

For Wesleyan Holiness leadership to be prophetic shepherding leaders, a resurgence of the original vision of diversity and inclusion for women and people of color will need to be owned and lived out by the individuals and institutional systems and structures of Wesleyan denominations. Challenges of admission of gaps between belief and practice and concerted effort toward renewed belief and integrated behavior will need to be overcome. Leadership will be expected to consistently advocate and practice equitable and inclusive modeling through their own personal conviction and transformation of heart, mind, and character. Further, leaders will be the ones integrating systems of change through rewiring structural practice with regard to data, biased leadership, and implementation of equitable policy and procedures.

## **Personal Reflection**

Writing a dissertation is no small task. The effort to come back to the same topic from different vantage points can be daunting. This is especially true when approaching topics such as patriarchy and racism that have been alive since before the founding of the United States. The history, political slants, and sheer wealth of information on the massive topics of inclusion of women and people of color is enough for several doctoral theses, which are being written. But the glaring issue I have seen over and over in my own tradition of the Free Methodist Church, which is also paralleled in our sister Wesleyan denominations, has a unique tone, especially relevant to us today.

The nearness of the reality of exclusion and my awareness of it became most remarkable to me while facilitating a gathering of pastors for the annual pastor's holiness

day for the Wesleyan Holiness Connection in 2017. We had invited a Nazarene pastor from Los Angeles, Albert Hung, to teach on a modern issue of holiness and its application from the church into its context. During Hung's presentation, he shared a video projecting what the world would be like when the class of kindergarteners graduated in 2028.<sup>18</sup> Projecting dominant languages of Chinese and Spanish, with the majority ethnicity as South Asian, the video was an alert to the predominantly Anglo and male pastors in the room. As a new mother of a white son, I wondered how I would need to be discipling him to be an agent of Christ's love while aware that the privilege afforded to white men (and white people) would be swiftly changing. That same year, I entered the Leadership and Global Perspectives Doctorate of Ministry program at Portland Seminary.

Traveling the world hearing from women and men from a variety of ethnicities and cultures on how they attempt to live the message of the gospel was compelling. After arriving home from one trip and interviewing several pastors in the U.S. on their discipleship practice, which was my original plan for this dissertation, I realized a stark homogeneity in who was being discipled, primarily with men discipling men. As I dug deeper, I saw more disparity in the statistics and the stories of women and men in the Wesleyan Tradition not living out the historical theology of inclusion of women and people of color. There was not only not equity, there was not equality. This was especially seen for women of color, who had a double dose of bias against them in ministry. Thus, my focus began to shift. Knowing women and people of color were two

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<sup>18</sup> The Centre Online, "Did You Know, in 2028..." Center for Research Innovation & Future Development, YouTube video, 3:15, December 29, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpEFjWbXog0>.

large topics in themselves, there was a potential for writing only on women. I had known multiple women who wrote dissertations on the need for equity toward women in the Wesleyan Tradition with little to no change effected among the larger tradition. What I did see as a point of change that would go beyond the gender divide and into the future of the church, and reached right to the heart of the Wesleyan movement, was the social expectation of inclusion for all races and nationalities. To be okay with segregation was not Wesleyan.

Beginning to review literature in the business and non-profit world, a massive amount of content began to emerge on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Seeing that research captured the values of the Wesleyan message without the heart (God) made it all the more appealing. Further, after the events of the Free Methodist General Conference in 2019 (as explained in chapter one), it became apparent there was much room for change.

Immersing oneself in the biblical text alongside cultural texts to examine the state of the church is transformative, to say the least. Examining the biblical message through the lens of inclusion, particularly with women and people of color, I was awed. God's vision for partnership with humanity was in the beginning and will be at the end. The message was particularly clear with Jesus' treatment of women and outsiders and Paul's missionary journeys and letters to the churches. After doing the work myself, I see Scripture in a new, grace-filled, and potentially more authentically Wesleyan, light than I did previously. This does not contradict modern authors and their examination of the church as women and people of color. Their message is the same as the biblical text, as it was of the social reformers in Wesleyan times past.

Knowing the truth of the Scripture and our Wesleyan heritage made me all the more concerned for the future of the church. The barriers are glaring. But I also realize I have a choice as to how I will respond. My response can be individual, or it can be as one working with a system to see change.

The greatest points of learning for me among the work I have done thus far are as follows:

Proximity and curiosity alter my perspective. If a topic or people group does not seem to affect my daily life, as in I do not have a felt proximity to them, I tend not to give them much consideration. When I do not consider them, I will not bother to listen or learn about them, or act in ways that encounter them. I may even relegate subjects to objects, making a topic such as civil rights an “it” topic rather than about a people, thus distancing myself further. But as I was introduced to people around the world who think differently than I do and encountered a variety of challenges, I was given a window into their stories of apartheid, merchant sailing, business as ministry, Brexit, and more. By being near them and asking questions, I was able to encounter threads of similarity between us and further my interest in them. This did wonders to shape my research and ease my fear of being a white female encountering both the dominant male voices as well as the voices of people of color, who I could easily assume have more to say and nullify my need to speak and, thus, listen.

Embodiment of diversity, equity, and inclusion are non-negotiables when pursuing action on theology and values. I as a Caucasian female embody a presence my male colleagues do not. To best understand one another and our ever-changing world, we need to have diversity at the table. This is especially necessary as it relates to leaders who

affect large groups of people through systemic and structural decision-making. I have seen this modeled in our team at Portland Seminary of late, and in our Pastors Thriving cohorts, where we model through our choices of participants an equitable and diverse group of women and men. The dynamic change in those groups is similar to the benefits I have encountered and written about (chapter one) in the research on organizations focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Everyone's voice matters to enact the kingdom of God. To be able to practice theology in culturally nuanced ways that truly impact communities, people from diverse backgrounds and both genders need to be empowered to speak into leadership, programs, and systems. When these voices are filtered through the existing predominant paradigm, the kingdom of God becomes homogeneous, and thus, less than God's intention from Genesis through Revelation.

Systems of oppression are real and need to be changed in systemic ways over time. Hearing Ken Van Vliet's story and the small pockets of hope happening throughout the Wesleyan Tradition, I came to understand the time it takes to enact total change. Reading an abundance on the oppression of African-Americans and indigenous people groups, the history of the West, and stories of women in leadership, it became overwhelmingly evident that rebellion, or leaving the system, would not help the system to change. Knowing the gaps and needed repair makes me a force for good, even if that comes about through agitating what currently exists by being a faithful prophetic witness.

We need God and humanity working in partnership to make the inclusion of all people happen. While obvious, the reality is this is rarely happening. When talking with leaders of the church, it is obvious that God is first; however, the idea of including all

people is primarily a missions objective, rather than within each church. When conversing with those in the public sector, inclusion is a narrative often repeated but without a heartbeat. The more I encountered research and practitioners, the more I recognized diversity, equity, and inclusion as being a spiritual issue, initiated in the godhead. Without God, diversity, equity, and inclusion become rules to enforce rather than God's kingdom made present on earth.

What's next? I have relaunched The Leadership Center with a renewed focus on supporting the church in diversity, equity, and inclusion practice. As a pastor and director for the Institute for Thriving at Portland Seminary, I am working daily with leaders of a variety of ministries to enact the kingdom of God in equitable ways. I plan to utilize this research alongside local tools and other experts to coach and resource denominational leaders, pastors, and their congregations in equitable inclusion of diversity in their contexts. I will continue to research and write to benefit these groups, with the possibility of publishing in the future.

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