

**The Promise of  
United Methodist Campus Ministry:  
THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS**

**Edited by Bridgette D. Young and Hendrik R. Pieterse**

 **GENERAL BOARD OF  
Higher Education & Ministry®**

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# The Promise of United Methodist Campus Ministry: Theological Explorations

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EDITED BY

Bridgette D. Young and Hendrik R. Pieterse



General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
The United Methodist Church  
Nashville, Tennessee

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ISBN 978-0-938162-74-2

Produced by the Office of Interpretation

Manufactured in the United States of America

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## Introduction

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Bridgette D. Young and Hendrik R. Pieterse

The essays that follow have their origin in a consultation on United Methodist campus ministry sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry on October 18–20, 2009, in Nashville, Tennessee. Titled “The Promise of Campus Ministry: Theological Explorations,” the consultation assembled a cadre of United Methodist campus ministers, chaplains, theologians, historians, and agency staff to explore aspects of United Methodist ministry on campus that, we believe, offer vital resources for a vibrant United Methodist Church in the future. Indeed, we are persuaded that campus ministry holds great promise in assisting United Methodists in interpreting and living their mission and ministry faithfully in our rapidly changing world.

Put succinctly, we submit that theological reflection on the nature, experience, and role of campus ministry—situated as it is at the intersection of academy and church, on the frontline of intellectual and cultural change—can be a crucial catalyst in illuminating and clarifying for United Methodists key dimensions of the character, scope, and form of faithful mission and ministry today. As such, campus ministry functions as a barometer of the encounter of faith and culture, church and world, higher education and ministry—often experiencing and wrestling with emerging questions, shifts, and challenges first, as a harbinger of sorts for the church. Given this reality, theological reflection on campus ministry can provide United Methodists with vital insights for reinterpreting our life as global connection, the centrality of vocation for holistic discipleship, the place of reason in Christian faith, the church’s public witness in an increasingly pluralistic world, and more.

The promise of campus ministry, then, lies in the possibility of a conversation that could stimulate deep-running transformation of both church and campus. On the one hand, theological examination of the character and experience of campus ministry reminds the church of central convictions and commitments that are indispensable for a holistic mission today: the unity of reflection and action, discipleship as vocation, the meaning of mission in an increasingly pluralistic world, etc. At the same time, such examination offers those in ministry on campus the opportunity to assess their labor as an integral aspect of the denomination's ministry as a whole. In short, a vibrant, holistic, and fulsome United Methodist witness in our rapidly globalizing world depends vitally on the willingness of church and campus to listen to and learn afresh from the perspectives, experience, and insight that each brings to our shared life and ministry.

We invite campus ministers, chaplains, bishops, cabinets, annual conference boards of higher education and campus ministry, local churches, and others to use this book as a resource for such theological reflection on our common mission today. We suggest that the topics of the essays, while not exhaustive, can serve as important entry points into issues that are essential for an effective United Methodist witness in our emerging twenty-first-century context. The approach to the topics follows the format used in the consultation: One participant presented an essay on a key topic, followed by a response to the essay by another participant. The exchange then became the context for discussion and debate in the whole group. The intent of this exchange was to open up a preliminary framework for dialogue and mutual learning. We invite readers to use the essays and responses similarly, namely, as informed entry points into key topics for individual reflection or group study.

We offer the following questions as one way to prompt theological reflection, either individually or in groups, on the various dimensions of campus ministry addressed in this book. The questions are structured to capture theological themes that resonate throughout the book, but may also profitably be used with individual essays.

1. In his essay, Russell Richey proposes that the history of the relationship between campus ministry and the denomination has evolved through five phases. Do you see parallels in the way local churches may have experienced similar changes in their relationship with the denomination over time? Where can churches and campus ministry units find renewed points of connection based on that history?
2. How do you define "pluralism" on the campus or campuses where you engage in, or partner with, campus ministry? How does this campus context impact the relationship with local churches and the denomination? Do campus ministers experience and negotiate pluralism differently than campus chaplains? If so, why and how?
3. The "Rethink Church" campaign is focused on the idea that "church" happens outside the walls of a building. How can ministries on campus work in partnership with nearby local churches to extend the reach of both?

4. Some of the essayists and respondents state or imply that there is a gap between the leadership skills students are developing on campus and the type of leadership that is affirmed, or not affirmed, when these students return to the local church. Do you agree that this gap exists? If so, how might it be addressed?
5. Much is written about ministry on campus being a place where young adults discern their vocation and how faith will impact their work in the world. Does the denomination recognize the campus as a place for vocational discernment? How can campus ministers and chaplains convey this contribution more effectively to the church?
6. How do campus ministries engage the church's mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (*Book of Discipline*, ¶120) in campus ministry settings in which many participants are not, and may never be, United Methodist?

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Campus Ministry and Denomination in Historical Perspective

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Russell E. Richey

When I remarked on chaplaincy in *Extension Ministers: Mr. Wesley's True Heirs*, I did so primarily with respect to the military and had little to say about college chaplains and campus ministry in general. About the several forms of the church's ministry in higher education, I knew some chapters; but the longer story I did not know very well. The invitation to participate in a consultation to explore "The Promise of Campus Ministry" has allowed me to take a first look at the overall picture. And, frankly, an updating of Donald Shockley's fine study of campus ministry and, in particular, a new history of Methodist and United Methodist ministries to higher education we badly need.<sup>1</sup> I understand Robert Monk to be at work on such, have drawn upon an essay of his produced early in that study, and am indebted to him for a long e-mail that carries the story forward.<sup>2</sup> I have also profited from the coverage of United Methodism and higher education by the *United Methodist Reporter* over the past several years. I depend on these and other earlier treatments to propose a five-fold schematization of Methodism's ministry to the campus—embrace, distance, separation, single parenting, and reinvented home life.<sup>3</sup>

The schema focuses on the relation of Methodism to the campus. As will become more readily apparent as the essay unfolds, the images or metaphors for these several phases convey only imprecisely the relation of church to campus. No small part of the imprecision

derives from the multilayered character of denominational governance, and of Methodism's in this instance. Campus ministries have been and, perhaps, ideally should be related to (1) the congregations near the institution, and particularly to what has been termed the near-campus church; (2) the district and the district superintendent within whose purview the campus and its ministries lie; (3) the annual conference, whose extension ministry structures support and oversee United Methodist religious activities and to whom the ordained campus ministers belong; and (4) the general agency (now the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry) that also resources campus ministry.

The metaphors as proposed suggest a dynamic but unraveling marital saga. More abstract spatial, genetic, relational, and dynamic notions might also work, as for instance, a more spatial rendering of unity, distance, separation, isolation, and self-sufficiency. But the spatial metaphors make it somewhat difficult to treat the relation of campus ministry to the different levels of the church and to explore the implications of the church's varying assignments over time of the lead or predominant support and oversight role to one level or another. And note, this typology pertains not to the larger story of collegiate religious presence and activity but to campus ministry for which Methodism exercises or exercised responsibility. Again, I trace a drama in five acts—embrace, distance, separation, single parenting, and home redefined.

## ■ Embrace

This first phase was epitomized by the colleges themselves. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), in 1820 and 1824, charged annual conferences with the establishment of schools, literary institutions, and colleges. Kentucky Methodists established Augusta College (1822), Virginia Methodists Randolph-Macon (1830), New Englanders Wesleyan University in Connecticut (1831), and Georgia Methodists Emory College and Wesleyan College (for women) in 1836. By the time of the Civil War, Methodism had created or acquired some two hundred such institutions. Lacking adequate funding, staffing, and clientele, many did not survive. But some thirty-four founded before 1861 did.<sup>4</sup>

To these colleges, or better, to the denomination through its colleges belonged the work of today's campus ministers. Once borne by the entire institution and its leadership, the chaplain's duties and responsibilities the colleges delegated and assigned in a gradual process that extended over the century and three quarters since Methodists began their serious college-founding. In what follows, I trace in tentative and sketchy fashion this incredible delegation, hand-off, or should we say, "abandonment," by our colleges of their religious purposes.

Wilbur Fisk (1792–1839) was educated at the universities of Vermont and Brown and studied law before entering the ministry and the New England Conference. He served a circuit, a station, and a term as presiding elder and as head of Wesleyan Academy (MA). Then the denomination elected him as first president of its flagship new college, Wesleyan

University, in 1831.<sup>5</sup> Twice his leadership would be recognized by election to the episcopacy. Insofar as Wesleyan had a chaplain, Fisk occupied that office. It would be more accurate to say, however, that to the whole institution went the chaplain's responsibilities; but they came to focus on him. Fisk and the college then embodied, albeit in quaint nineteenth-century form, the several duties of chaplains today.

Fisk enunciated two purposes in accepting presidency: that "arrangement might be made for the benefit of the sons of his brethren in the ministry, few of whom, on account of the expense, could enjoy the advantages of a liberal education. The other was the necessity of some more efficient measures for the education of young men who might be called to the work of foreign missions."<sup>6</sup> In his inaugural address, he affirmed: "Education should be directed in reference to two objects,—the good of the individual educated, and the good of the world."<sup>7</sup> A Methodist college education ought, he insisted, to effect the reformation of the world. He said:

Education is to be second only to Christianity itself, in carrying on this work. By this the youthful mind is disciplined; the arts and sciences are improved; the world is enlightened; and above all, by this an army of faithful, intelligent, enterprising, benevolent men are trained up, and sent forth to be leaders in the great enterprises of the day. I speak not now of one profession merely; ministers and merchants, lawyers and physicians, teachers and statesmen, farmers and mechanics, authors and artists, all are wanted in this work, and wanted in greater abundance than can be supplied.<sup>8</sup>

Fisk had high aims for students no matter their vocational intentions. "We are hoping they will not be trained to selfishness, to be emulous of earthly honour, and covetous of earthly gain; but will be such as the present circumstances of the world require, men of enlarged philanthropy, of godlike benevolence, who shall go forth in the great work of conquering the world for Christ." In an 1831 letter, he wrote a correspondent in Alabama, "I wish we could fill that new country with sound pious teachers. Indeed, I want to send out enough to set the world on fire! I have done educating youths for THEMSELVES; my sole object, I think, will be, hereafter, to educate all I can get FOR THE WORLD."<sup>9</sup>

Fisk, who held the title of professor of moral science and belles-lettres as well as president, cared for the spiritual disciplines of students and for the integration of knowledge with piety. He preached often, established missionary and temperance societies within the school, led revivals, admonished the wayward, set an example for what he advocated, and in various ways tended the Methodist ethos of Wesleyan University. His biographer affirms, "Dr. Fisk always felt the importance of maintaining an ascendant religious influence in the institution."<sup>10</sup> Pastor, counselor, mentor, exemplar, guide, educator—Fisk performed what we would now take to be the chaplain's functions; additionally, he fulfilled the role of evangelist. When a revival broke out in 1834, Fisk suspended "our regular college duties," wrote to the *Christian Advocate* to celebrate the deepened spirituality, viewed the events as evidence of the Wesleyan bond of knowledge and vital piety, and urged greater Methodist

support for its revivifying educational enterprise. He wrote, “Religion and education, bound together in their native affinities, and their operations in unison, must save the Church and must save the nation.”<sup>11</sup>

The Methodist college could save church and nation—could fulfill the denomination’s mission of reforming the continent and spreading scriptural holiness over these lands<sup>12</sup>—Fisk insisted, by equipping the church’s ministry. The college could do a better job than either the existing course of study or the newfangled theological seminaries that other denominations were then founding. The Methodist college was cheaper, more efficient, and more reliable. For ministers-to-be, it mingled “the study of theology with their other pursuits” and avoided the extremes of “dogmatism” and the “spinning out of new theories, as is the case sometimes in theological seminaries.” Indeed, in the college, vocations would be discerned, as the “young men” were converted as well as cared for. Fisk had seen from his own experience that this training for ministry would work.<sup>13</sup> It proved true for the long haul. Over its first forty years, Wesleyan graduated 919 students. Of these, a third entered the Methodist ministry. Wesleyan alone produced three-quarters of the northern preachers (Methodist Episcopal Church) who earned college degrees.<sup>14</sup> By the 1870s and 1880s, Northern Methodists could call Wesleyan “the mother of our denominational institutions,” “the crown and glory of our Church,” and “mother of us all.”<sup>15</sup> A similar pattern pertained in other of the church’s men’s colleges. At Emory, Dickinson, and Randolph-Macon, the conferences trained their preachers. They constituted the seminaries of their day.

What of the prophetic, intercultural roles now played by chaplains? President Fisk exercised those offices by support of missions, temperance, care for African Americans, and opposition to slavery (though, on the latter, through moderate not the ultra-abolitionist measures advanced by William Lloyd Garrison and among Methodists by Orange Scott). As noted, missions, the most important of these, was one of two primary purposes of the college. Fisk drafted denominational statements on missions, supported the Liberian effort and volunteered to go himself, took an interest in translation of the Bible into Mohawk, supported the mission to Oregon and the Flathead Native Americans, personally recruited Jason Lee to lead that initiative, lobbied for other volunteers, toured with Jason and Daniel Lee money-raising in New England, and assisted in fundraising for the Methodist Missionary Society.<sup>16</sup>

Fisk’s successor at Wesleyan, Stephen Olin, created a mission museum—a missionary hall—which a friend described as a room fitted up by the

liberality and enterprise of Christian friends as a depository for such specimens of art from unevangelized tribes, and for such symbols and implements connected with their religious ideas and worship, as shall aid the inquisitive student in acquiring the most ample information and the most vivid impressions in regard to the heathen world. Here was to be the place of congregation, and consultation, and sympathy, and prayer for pious students whose hearts God may touch with a benevolent concern for the spiritual welfare of pagan natives. [There students would

develop interest, concern, and ambition for missions] to learn to weep over perishing millions.<sup>17</sup>

In every way that the church knew how it embraced the college and made its ministry to higher education a connectional endeavor. Wesleyan University was launched as a joint endeavor of the New York, New England, and New Hampshire-Vermont conferences. Each conference elected visitors who, with Wesleyan trustees, constituted a Joint Board of Trustees and Visitors with responsibilities for inspection, oversight, accountability, and promotion.<sup>18</sup> The incorporating charter equipped the Joint Board with broad powers, including explicitly the election of the president and faculty, prescription of “the course of study,” and approval (with the faculty) of conferring degrees on the graduates. The charter gave trustees a more focused responsibility, namely, to manage the college’s property “in behalf of the Annual Conferences.”<sup>19</sup> Conference visitors took their charge of oversight seriously, reporting back in writing, their review taken up by and made a part of the record of the annual conference. On the local level as well, church embraced the college. On Sundays, students attended the existing Middletown church. By 1836, five years after founding, Wesleyan’s chapel became a regular “station” appointment. Attendance at services of both church and chapel were required.

Methodist schools, like those of most denominations, were state-chartered. They imposed no religious tests. They welcomed students from various (Protestant) denominations. Like Wesleyan, they generally took seriously the imperative of religious and moral character formation, which they undertook through a variety of instruments—formal instruction, modeling, regular worship, annual revivals, and moral codes. Such formation cohered with and was understood in relation to a classical, liberal arts curriculum and capped by moral philosophy. The Methodist—indeed, the denominational—college was a curious hybrid: a public, incorporated institution controlled by administration and trustees accountable in some fashion to a denomination.<sup>20</sup> Though civic, ecumenical, or irenic for their day, the Wesleyans nevertheless stayed close to the church; enjoyed the support of the denomination at both local and regional levels; and drew many of their faculty and, typically, the president from the denomination. In that orientation to its primary constituency, Methodist colleges differed little from their counterparts. Across higher education and up until the Civil War, 262 of 288 college presidents were ordained.<sup>21</sup> The church embraced the campus in its ministry, and campus ministry was part and parcel of the church’s ministry.

On this first of five stages in the evolution of Methodist campus ministry, commentators have had relatively little to say.<sup>22</sup> Donald Shockley jumps over this phase of campus ministry initially, beginning his narrative with Underwood’s second stage but tellingly entitled, “Campus Ministries Begun by Students.”<sup>23</sup> Robert Monk concurs, devoting a short, very general paragraph to “Protestant” colleges before turning to the international, interdenominational, intercollegiate YMCA, YWCA, SVM (Student Volunteer Movement) and WSCF (World Student Christian Federation).<sup>24</sup>

That Methodists participated actively in these student initiatives I do not doubt. That their evangelistic presence on campus oriented Methodists to global horizons and foreign missions can be assumed. That Methodists rose to leadership, indeed with John R. Mott to the very pinnacle of leadership, must be celebrated. But that these youth-led, interdenominational Christian evangelism organizations ought to count as Methodist campus ministry I very much question.<sup>25</sup> The YMCA, YWCA, SVM, WSCF, and the various Dwight L. Moody-led ventures parallel today's parachurch ministries of whose campus presence United Methodist campus ministers are quite aware. They did signal an incredibly important shift from very local to national (even international) and intercollegiate ordering of ministries on campus. And they became important on Methodist campuses *after*, not *before*, the church repositioned its oversight of higher education and ministries in higher education from a local and conference into a national system.

## ■ Distance

Such nationalization, ongoing within denominations generally after the Civil War, gradually but fundamentally altered the church's relation to the campus and put distance between the colleges and the conferences and local churches that defined the life of day-to-day Methodism. The close embrace of the college by contiguous annual conferences gave way to connectional ordering, accountability to General Conference, and delegated oversight to a connectional Board of Education. The reorientation, which changed relations glacially in most places and little in others, began in northern Methodism during Reconstruction. Two dates and creations need mention: In 1868, a Board of Education, providing oversight and support for education generally and an accrediting gesture toward higher education; and, in 1892, the delegation of the accrediting functions to a subsidiary, the University Senate.<sup>26</sup> The enabling legislation spearheading nationalization of all agencies occurred with the 1872 MEC General Conference (1874 in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South [MECS], still later for the Methodist Protestant, United Brethren, and Evangelical Churches).<sup>27</sup> By these legislative actions and subsequent legal reincorporation, Methodism changed supervising responsibilities for its outreach and programming from local trustees of voluntary associations overseen by annual conferences to national denominational agencies legally accountable to General Conference and with boards and general secretaries elected on that level.<sup>28</sup>

The repositioning of relation and support onto a national, or connectional, level—a revolution championed by the agencies and by the colleges—was paralleled in every sector of the church's life. Frances Willard elevated the church's temperance witness onto a national plane. John Vincent put the whole church, at every age level, on the same biblical text; created nationally distributed Sunday school lessons; established national training schools; and institutionalized such programming at Chautauqua. Women's foreign and home mission societies, the Ladies' and Pastors' Christian Union, and the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society mobilized the church for its work, as had similar national

endeavor mobilized northern Methodists and Protestants generally for support of the Civil War. Denominational programming and especially missions prospered.

Initially, the Methodist colleges benefited immensely and financially from Methodism's nationalization or connectionalization of its enterprise and programming. Immediately after the Civil War, northern Methodism committed itself to raising \$2 million in a centenary campaign, primarily for educational institutions but also for Sunday schools and missions. A national Connectional Fund Committee set the first Sunday of January 1866 as a churchwide remembrance and commitment. The *Advocates* promoted the cause and acknowledged gifts and pledges. By the time General Conference convened two years later (in 1868), \$8,709,498 had been raised, with more to come. This nationalization, most dramatically illustrated in northern Methodism, occurred also in other of the United Methodist Church's predecessor churches. In the MECS, for instance, the founding of Vanderbilt in 1872 as a central university represented a similar connectionalizing of the educational agenda. Two decades later, the northern church mounted a several-decade connectional campaign to establish in the nation's capitol a central graduate-level university "to be called The University, which should be the crown of our educational system."<sup>29</sup> With the establishment of the University Senate in 1892 and a mandate for a national fund for the support of students, northern Methodism looked forward to a national educational system. Southern Methodism sustained its own resolve in that direction when, on the loss of Vanderbilt in 1914, it resolved to found two new universities and secure them more tightly to the denomination.

Both of these new institutions—Emory University and Southern Methodist University—featured seminaries. By that point, all predecessor denominations of The United Methodist Church boasted theological schools. These, too, in quite unintended ways put distance between the colleges and contiguous conferences and local churches. Although Methodism did not require seminary attendance and a B.D. (M.Div.) degree for ordination, increasingly the bishops, conferences, and ministers focused their aspirations for the leadership around the seminary.

The notion that ministry required specialized education and formation, beyond or distinct from the colleges, led the women who inspired the deaconess movement to found separate training institutions. In 1885, Lucy Rider Meyer opened the Chicago Training School for City, Home, and Foreign Missions that October and the Chicago Deaconess Home two years later.<sup>30</sup> And three years later, in 1888, the MEC General Conference, which had declined to seat five women elected as delegates, recognized deaconess work as an official ministry of the MEC.<sup>31</sup> In the MECS, Belle Harris Bennett founded Scarritt Bible and Training School in 1892 in Kansas City, Missouri (relocated to Nashville in 1924).<sup>32</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, Methodism was creating or sustaining institutions left and right, all of which demanded the attention, support, and resources of local churches and congregations: hospitals at home and abroad, homes for orphans and the aged, institutional churches and city missions, Epworth Leagues, Sunday schools, Freedmen's Aid, missions everywhere—and, of course, colleges. Conferences had a lot else

on their minds as well—minimum wage, the course of study, temperance, unification, race relations, immigration. On all of these, Methodism's array of *Advocates*, magazines, educational materials, and yearbooks kept the laity and local church informed. The strongest Protestant denomination, albeit divided, nevertheless expected that it should exercise leadership in American society.

The churches' colleges and educational leadership also saw their role expanding and becoming more prominent. Aspiring to the standards of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale and functioning in a growing and ever more competitive higher education environment, northern and southern Methodism's two flagship institutions, Wesleyan and Vanderbilt, put the maximum distance between themselves and the church—they broke the ties completely. Wesleyan did so gradually; Vanderbilt abruptly. In 1907, Wesleyan University secured a revision of its charter that removed the restriction that its president and a majority of its board and faculty must be Methodists. The full break with Methodism, however, came gradually. Until 1925, presidents remained ordained Methodists and, thus, also pastors of the College Church. A non-Methodist, James L. McConaughy, succeeded to the presidency in 1925; but a Methodist, W. G. Changer, served as college pastor from 1928 to 1941. John Gross estimates that, up through 1930, 20 percent of the graduates became ministers. By 1941, however, there was no real relationship. Presbyterian and Episcopal ministers served successively as college pastors. And in 1968–69, the university dissolved the church into a university ministry. Currently that ministry features Muslim, Jewish, and Christian chaplains, the latter the pastor of First Baptist, Middletown.<sup>33</sup>

The break with Vanderbilt came more abruptly, also over constitution of the board of trustees (the church's agency in determining board membership) and whether all or just some of the bishops would be members. The contest pitted the Board of Bishops against university leadership in an ugly affair (with Carnegie funding and recognition apparently playing a very minor role). In 1914, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that "the Board of Trust is a self-perpetuating body and can elect to fill its own vacancies." The MECS General Conference of that year refused to accept what the ruling sustained, namely, a right to confirm the university's nominations; and in a vote of 151–140, severed the tie with Vanderbilt.<sup>34</sup>

The southern church's decision to establish two new universities—not colleges, but universities—ironically signaled a commitment to participate actively in the university-building of the twentieth century. Here, Methodism led Protestantism in creating great universities or in elevating colleges into universities. In so doing, the church exposed its educational establishment to precisely the competitive environment; funding constraints; federal and state jurisdiction; interreligious and nonreligious workforce; diverse student bodies and boards; non-Methodist leadership; and, increasingly, national horizons that led to the secularizations of Wesleyan and Vanderbilt. Not surprisingly, other departures followed. And it is this theme of secularization that looms largest in treatments of religion and higher education. The term covers the several aforementioned trends and, especially, over time, the laicization of the presidency; an increasingly large role of the Federal government

in both funding and policy; the dominance, generally, of the research university and its values; the consequent displacement of the liberal arts ideal as an integrative principle; and the effective marginalization of religion (in religious studies, student groups, chaplaincies and the Christian college).<sup>35</sup>

As the twentieth century wore on, Methodism's universities and its stronger colleges found themselves with student bodies, faculties, administrations, and constituencies quite similar to those in the public sector. The ministry to the campus under such conditions required institutions like that created by James C. Baker at the University of Illinois, Urbana.<sup>36</sup> Appointed to Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church (in 1907, the year Wesleyan altered its charter), with the charge from congregation, district superintendent, and bishop to extend the ministry of Trinity to the campus, and functioning in a new church facility located adjacent to the campus, Baker recreated an "embrace," one that included faculty and staff as well as students. The new embrace, however, was *external* rather than integral to the university.<sup>37</sup> Baker developed over time both the panoply of programs and ministries and a constituency relations system that replicated—albeit in this external, extension, or outside fashion—what Fisk, Wesleyan, and Methodist colleges generally had sought to embody. By 1913, the ministry had been separately incorporated as the Wesley Foundation with its own trustees. Baker also established a commission with representatives from the several conferences. If this networking paralleled what the Methodist colleges once enjoyed, the programming isolated and replicated the explicitly formational, instructional, training, relational, and vocational aspects of the collegiate enterprise. Wesley Foundations should be:

1. A shrine for worship.
2. A school for religious education.
3. A home away from home.
4. A laboratory for training lay leaders in church activities.
5. A recruiting station for the ministry, for missionary work at home and a broad, and for other specialized Kingdom tasks.<sup>38</sup>

As founder Baker and historian Robert Monk note, Wesley Foundations spread rapidly across both northern and southern Methodism. By 1960, when Baker took stock of the movement he had launched, Methodism claimed 181 Wesley Foundations, another 31 on the "united plan," and others in the process of formation.<sup>39</sup> In a few places, Methodists borrowed an idea from the Disciples of Christ and established Bible chairs at state institutions. Even within Methodist institutions, which in many places sustained their nineteenth-century ethos well into the twentieth century, a shift of nomenclature indicated a subtle change of the place and understanding of campus religious leadership. Increasingly, the preacher to the college church claimed the title of *chaplain*. Ministry to the campus would come now from the margins, a distancing even within the church's own schools.

Gradually, church and college came to recognize campus ministry, in its several forms, as a specialty. Increasingly, first informal then more formalized organizations gathered such ministries together; and the denominational boards of education created staff positions to oversee campus ministry. Student conferences brought campus leaders and campus

ministers together in national and regional assemblies. In 1936, that first Wesley Foundation summoned representatives from the whole Foundation network to a conference. The next year a first National Methodist Student Conference brought together leaders and ministers from the MEC, MECS, and Methodist Protestant Church (MPC), who together founded the Methodist Student Movement (MSM).<sup>40</sup> At unification in 1939, a Department of College and University Religious Life was established within the Board of Education. Ten years later, under its auspices, the Religious Workers' Association of The Methodist Church was formed. It held the first of what would be biennial national meetings, in 1951. Its purposes included those featured in professional gatherings, generally: setting standards, nuancing guild purposes, providing mutual support and fellowship, offering continuing education, and pursuing common concerns.<sup>41</sup>

Recognition of professional status for ministers and ministries became one of the responsibilities of a Commission on Standards for Wesley Foundations, established in 1952.<sup>42</sup> By professionalization and expansion, Methodist campus ministries had kept the church on pace with the dramatic post-war expansion of higher education and served its members who returned to school on the G.I. Bill. But professionalization of campus ministry, notwithstanding the church's role in its production and certification, also put distance between church (bishops, conferences, local churches, parish ministers) and campus. Professionalism constitutes guilds whose very wellbeing depends on defining its own sacred lore; identifying guild practices; developing apprenticeship systems; enhancing self-interest; monitoring standards; advocating for pensions, salaries, and health benefits; maintaining boundaries; and, in various other ways, championing guild identity and distinctiveness. Fittingly, the Wesley Foundation's founder, Baker, recognized the "professional" to constitute one of four levels by which the Wesley Foundation Movement sustained itself. The four levels, in order of his presentation, were the connectional or administrative, the student, the professional, and the collegiate or institutional.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps assumed, but certainly not mentioned, were annual conference, district, local church, episcopal, and district superintendent support. That omission or silence concludes act two.

## ■ Separation

If Methodism's campus ministry indeed unfolds in five acts, the third—the radical ministry of the 1960s and early 1970s<sup>44</sup>—enjoyed a quite brief time on stage; but its scenes remain of continuing importance to this day. The radicalization of leading university campuses by the Civil Rights struggle, the Vietnam War, the free-speech movement, the drug scene, Black power, riots, and various radical ideologies swept along some campus ministries, disrupted the Methodist Student Movement, killed the avant-garde college-age magazine  *motive*, ended the University Christian Movement, and created a gulf between the local church and its ministry on one side, and the campus and campus ministry on the other.<sup>45</sup> The unfolding of this phase of the drama was narrated from several vantage points by scholars studying campus ministry up close and catching the wrenching apart of church and

campus as it occurred. This participant-observer and contemporaneous interpretation came through the multi-year and well-funded Danforth Foundation Study of Campus Ministries. Heading the project was Kenneth Underwood, then a faculty member at Wesleyan University and writing as Wesleyan dissolved the college church into a university ministry. Underwood produced the study findings in two massive volumes, entitled *The Church, the University and Social Policy*. A veritable who's who of scholars studying American society, generally, and higher education, particularly, joined in this endeavor. Phillip Hammond and Jeffrey Hadden, two collaborators who elaborated their perspectives into independent books, provide interesting contrasts to the perspective on campus ministry provided by Underwood.

All three presumed that campus ministry operated in the margins, interstitially placed between the university proper and the church—not really a part of the former or firmly anchored in the latter, living and working in an ill-defined boundary area. Underwood, though recognizing campus ministry to be in severe crisis, nevertheless thought it occupied a potentially creative and important location, one that could help the entire church grasp how best to minister in a society increasingly shaped by the knowledge explosion in which the research university was deeply invested. He himself narrated the longer story of campus ministry; examined its present challenges; organized his collaborators' studies of campus ministry; and schematized both volumes around a four-fold mapping of the ministry of the whole church: pastoral roles of faith and ministry, priestly and preaching roles of faith and ministry, teaching and prophetic inquiry roles, and roles of administration and governance.

Underwood took especial interest in the second of these christological offices, that of prophet and teacher. By advocacy and by exhibiting experiments in campus ministry, Underwood imagined something of a reinvention of Baker's Wesley Foundation. In his reimagining, campus ministry became far more than a service center for students. Indeed, in the margin between church and university, Christian faculty, national leadership of the churches, contiguous congregations, judicatory officials, students, and campus ministers would think and act prophetically for the whole church and for the nation. Margin would be elevated to pulpit, campus ministry made into cathedral for twentieth-century society, and the campus minister called to be cathedral dean. The "legitimacy of the campus ministry," he affirmed, "is bound up with its ability to help the whole church appropriate creatively and critically the potentially revolutionizing knowledge of the university."<sup>46</sup>

Phillip Hammond, engaged with Kenneth Underwood in the Danforth Foundation Study of Campus Ministries, rendered his own estimation of the vocation, concurring in viewing it as having utility for the churches but assessing its marginal status more negatively.<sup>47</sup> He concluded, for instance, that the several modes of collegiate religious presence had not institutionalized, matured, and achieved professional status—in large measure because of their interstitial location, two-fold identities and "dual-contingency" positions (here we would differ with regard to Methodists and United Methodists). Campus ministries, he found through surveys, enjoyed varying levels of commitment and support from

the academic and confessional communities but predominantly indifference on the part of the one and neutrality to distrust on the part of the other. The more cosmopolitan and diverse academic settings proved the most indifferent to and least supportive of campus ministry. Those contexts required creativity, innovation, initiative, and interdenominational alliances to function well; and such experimentation and ecumenicity on the part of campus ministers elicited suspicion and distance from ecclesial systems and authority.<sup>48</sup>

The exercise of such roles—however disdained, disapproved, or discounted by the church—nevertheless, Hammond suggested, served to renew the church. Campus ministry was “a means of routing innovation into the church via campus clergymen who return to the parish, students drawn into church life, and the leadership campus ministers can give to ‘radical’ causes such as (in our day) civil rights protests and the ecumenical movement.” Alongside its renewal value, Hammond posited three other functions that campus ministry provides the church: “(1) an additional device for recruiting clergymen, (2) a haven for clergymen too ‘radical’ for the parish structure, (3) another means of alignment (along with seminaries) between church and intellectual centers.”<sup>49</sup> In an essay for the Danforth Foundation Study, Hammond built on his book to sharpen the conflictual and ambiguous status but also the renewing function of campus ministers. Documenting the sharp attitudinal difference between campus and parish ministers and imaging the former as radical, Hammond again posited that campus ministry served as a safety valve “draining off dissidence” and as a leaven “providing a source of new ideas.” Organizations, he insisted, need their radicals for renewal; but “the forces for renewal may also destroy.”<sup>50</sup>

The latter potential—the growing clergy radicalism, its church-destructive capacity, the danger that campus ministers and other non-parish ministers would tear the church apart—impressed another sociologist involved in the study. In “The House Divided,” a chapter for Underwood’s second volume and also in separate book, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches*,<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey Hadden elaborately documented the growing attitudinal clash between lay and clergy attitudes on a wide range of social, political, and theological issues. In the book, Hammond illustrated with 72 tables (charts of attitudes) and described various crises that a new breed of liberal, or radical, clergy posed for themselves and for the church, with which, he insisted, they were out of touch. In the chapter for Underwood, Hammond’s hysteria focused on campus ministers, whose trajectory, he argued, headed them toward “institutionless Christianity”—a “Christianity without an institutional base,” a ministry cut off from its supply lines and support systems.<sup>52</sup>

A separate study, *The Campus Ministry of the Methodist Church*, launched on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the first Wesley Foundation and undertaken with guidance from a committee of persons deeply involved with ministries in Methodist higher education, also reported just as tensions between church and campus were worsening. Among the study’s many orienting questions were “What are the sources of conflict within the campus ministry? Between it and the church? Between it and the university?”<sup>53</sup> Of particular interest are the study’s findings of campus ministers’ attitudes toward the near-campus church, typically the founding and most supportive congregation. Campus ministers complained

that local churches are “often anti-university, anti-intellectual, and anti-Wesley Foundation” and “too much concerned with themselves.” The near-campus or sponsoring church, they insisted, demanded “conventional methods,” resisted experiments in student work, and was in general not supportive. “Often the campus minister feels isolated from members of the annual conference. He may be told he is in ‘detached’ service, and he may lack status.”<sup>54</sup>

Attitudes on the church side—near-campus pastors, district superintendents, bishops, agency officials—proved less strident and conflicted but, nevertheless, often critical. Pastors viewed campus ministry as neglecting the larger population of students, catering to the radicals and malcontents, coddling their hostility to the local church, neglecting its evangelistic and formational responsibilities, and supporting political action.<sup>55</sup> The problems went deeper than attitudes, the study concluded. The connectional system was not geared to render strong engagement with and support of campus ministry. Clergy were not appointed to the near-campus church with a view to their intellectual gifts, concerns for education, understanding of the university, or experience with campus ministries. District superintendents did not, “in practice,” supervise or exercise authority over campus ministers and others in special appointments. Bishops—already becoming essentially diocesan and, therefore, lacking experience with and knowledge of campus ministries across the church—had neither the capacity nor the inclination to exercise their appointive powers to move campus ministers from one Wesley Foundation to another.

The study detailed responsibilities on the connectional level of the Division of Higher Education, Joint Staff on Youth and Student Work, Department of College and University Religious Life, Commission on Standards for Wesley Foundations, Interboard Committee on Campus Ministry (formed only in 1964) and informal Joint Student Staff (from boards of Education, Missions, Christian Social Concerns and Evangelism). But for all of the organization, the study judged the church to have too few persons to exercise the responsibilities; that it deployed them illogically; lacked unity or coordination of effort; and worked insufficiently with “bishops and other officials on problems of long-range strategy, personnel, interpretation, and new ministries to the campus.” Nor did the local body charged with “direct and final responsibility for supervision of the Wesley Foundation”—its board of directors—function effectively to claim the attention and engage the connection at local, district, conference, and national levels. Many boards swelled to include a range of church officials and represent various church bodies and, ironically, proved too large to exercise the intended mediation and members attended too erratically for the board to function effectively. The study charged the Methodist media—*Together*, *Christian Advocate*, and *The Methodist Story*—with too little, uninformative, and insufficiently interpretive coverage of higher education, generally, and campus ministry, particularly.<sup>56</sup>

The first of the study’s fifteen recommendations was that Methodist campus ministry—already highly ecumenical—fully embrace the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the United Ministries in Higher Education. Monk reports that over the next decade, from 1966 to 1975, the number of Methodist-supported ecumenical ministries increased from

43 to 247; and Wesley Foundations declined slightly (from 196 to 179).<sup>57</sup> The timing of the study's counsel and the church's response could not have been worse. Two years after the study appeared, in 1969, the UCM voted itself out of existence, "a calamity of such proportions," Shockley judged two decades later, "that we have yet to recover from it." He continued, bemoaning the collapse of the long tradition of student conferences: "All of what might be thought of as the infrastructure of student Christian organizations in several denominations, built up over decades, was simply gone, and there was no easy way to bring it back."<sup>58</sup> The Methodist Student Movement dissolved as well. Monk concludes, "With no national or state MSM organizations and a reduced staff personnel to foster interconnection through conferences, training events, and service projects, the connectional aspect of campus ministry, traditionally so central to its life, quickly faded into memory."<sup>59</sup>

## ■ Single Parenting

Images, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings do not always coincide with or accurately convey realities but, nevertheless, prove important, motivational, even controlling. Demonstrations, teach-ins, riots, building seizures, and the like, imaged the university for many Americans and affected attitudes toward everything having to do with students, including campus ministry. *Divorce* may be too strong a word for what occurred, and even *separation* needs a little qualification. The boards of directors doubtless remained in some form. And the new church, The United Methodist Church, recreated a connectional apparatus with successor structures (and even greater complexity) to oversee campus ministry. But the 1960s, as these several studies attest, ruptured what had been the thinning and strained relations between campus ministries and the regional connection (bishops, conferences, districts, and local churches). And, perhaps more ominously, the new left's suspicions of authority, elites, power centers, bureaucracy, and national order gave way to a new right's even more resilient and long-lasting paranoias over the same. Campus ministry's most significant support system, its parent—United Methodism's national bureaucracies, its agencies in Nashville, Washington, and New York—was as beleaguered, disdained, and attacked as were the campuses. A Methodism that had prospered by creating institutions; that, alone among the Protestant mainline, had been a university-creating and not just a college-founding church; that had filled the nation with hospitals and homes, camps and conference centers, cathedral churches and towers like the Chicago Temple, boasting the highest cross in the world, or the fourteen-story Wesley Building in Philadelphia—had given way to a United Methodism which, at times and in places, seemingly could not care less about or take pride in what it owned. And as those attitudes crystallized, the new United Methodism chose to entrust campus ministry to one of the major attitudinal sources, the annual conferences.

An early intervention to counter such attitudinal drift, effectively conveyed with the title of its first book, *A College-Related Church*,<sup>60</sup> came with the 1975 establishment by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of a National Commission on United

Methodist Higher Education. Chaired by President of Drew University Paul Hardin, its sixteen members included other presidents (among them John Silber of Boston University), a congressman, the U.S. Comptroller General, the Vice President of Danforth, several heads of national educational-policy organizations, academics, a state and a federal executive—and no campus ministers. Its mandate was to review, assess, and provide guidance on all aspects of United Methodist higher education policy. The fifth and last of these charges was “An analysis of the current system of campus ministries, including goals, problems, organizational relationships and support structures.”

To that latter task, the Commission devoted a separate volume, its fourth, *Ministry on Campus: A United Methodist Mission Statement and Survey Report*.<sup>61</sup> The staff drew on counsel from Allan Burry, then university minister at Wesleyan University, and others, in crafting a questionnaire, a policy statement (“The Mission of The United Methodist Church in its Campus Ministry”), and a multi-point resolution for the 1980 General Conference calling for “Churchwide Support for Campus Ministries.” The study, featuring 31 tables of findings and accompanying analysis, drew on a 107-item questionnaire that elicited 222 responses from 404 Wesley Foundation directors, persons in ecumenical ministries, local church staff in campus ministries, and chaplains. Although the prophetic orientation of a decade prior remained important, campus ministers in the mid-1970s identified pastoral care as their top priority and registered a different tone in their responses than had their counterparts ten years earlier. Nevertheless, although annual conference provided much of the financial support for campus ministries, the trajectories of support were level or declining, having to compete with other apportionment causes. And while accountability to conferences was primary for Wesley Foundation directors (and important for others), only 15 percent of campus ministers (24.4 percent of Wesley Foundation directors) identified other conference members as their professional peers. And a small number, 16.4 percent, saw themselves definitely leaving campus ministry in five years. Close to 33 percent imagined the campus as their ministry for the remainder of their career, and 44 percent were uncertain about their tenure.<sup>62</sup>

As Monk notes, in making conference boards of higher education and campus ministry the primary support, financial resource, governance, and oversight system, The United Methodist Church reoriented campus ministry from its local base and national networking and connections. The changes, Monk affirms, undermined campus ministers’ “traditional understanding of campus ministry as a distinctive, specialized ministry” and, along with changes in the student population and significant modification in college and university curriculums and programs, compounded their sense of working in a different world.<sup>63</sup> In this hand-off of responsibility, GBHEM let staffing and budgeting for campus ministry decline in the late 1970s. And in Texas, once boasting the strongest connectional support system for the Methodist Student Movement, a similar reduction and staffing occurred. The church’s decision to refashion its campus ministry machinery and the suspicions of campuses occasioned by the radicalisms of the 1960s ill prepared United Methodism to establish and implement strategies for a changing higher education environment.

Lodging support and interpretation for campus ministries with conference boards of higher education and campus ministry set up possibilities for subtle competition for attention, visibility, support, and resources between and among campus ministries at Methodism's own colleges, these institutions as a whole, and the dramatically expanding public sector—state universities and community colleges. The latter, which increasingly was enrolling the church's own youth, presented challenges and opportunities for both the connection and local churches. When the little teacher's or agriculture college with its compact footprint transformed itself into a huge state university and its campus sprawled across the city or enveloped the college community, would a near-campus church rise to the occasion? Indeed, when the state university became like a city itself, how many near-campus churches did it create? And how many such proximate churches actually embraced such a new and demanding identity? And where in the exploding state university was the coterie of United Methodist faculty and staff who, amid the new pressures to publish and to teach, would rise to the occasion and play their part in creating a support system for campus ministry?

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, campus ministers must have felt very much like single parents, alone with their collegiate brood, in a new place, as it were, and needing to start over in building the relations (the campus equivalents to grocer, dentist, barber or hair dresser, doctor, insurance agent) that make life manageable. Two of my predecessor fellow Emory University employees, Jack Boozer and Donald Shockley, depict campus ministry feeling its way from radicalized alienation toward home-life stability. Boozer's 1980s assessment of United Methodist campus ministry captures the situation with his titles. He called the book *Edge of Ministry . . . The Chaplain Story*<sup>64</sup>; and he entitled Chapter 2 "The Turbulent Years, 1945–1980: From Triumph to Vertigo" and Chapter 5 "Chaplains and the Church: Is Reconciliation Possible?" Shockley saw beyond divorce and custody battles to a newly ordered sense of campus ministry defining its own existence and environment. The subtitle of his book *Campus Ministry: The Church Beyond Itself*, as well as chapter titles, prove telling: "Overcoming Our Fear of Otherness: A Theology of Campus Ministry"; "Gathering the Church Beyond the Church"; "Campus Ministry as Mission"; "Getting Beyond the Sixties"; and "Missionary Metaphors for Campus Ministry."<sup>65</sup>

Shockley and Monk credit Allan Burry, who assumed the post of Assistant General Secretary for Campus Ministry, with charting the way back to a more connected and networked system.<sup>66</sup> Burry had served as director of Wesley Foundations at the universities of Miami and South Florida in the early 1960s, before going to Wesleyan University in 1966. He was named university minister there in 1971, leaving Wesleyan for GBHEM in 1983. (After Burry's death, in 1990, GBHEM established a scholarship in his memory.) Helen Neinast joined the staff at the same time and Richard Hicks four years later, the latter to care for ethnic concerns in campus ministry. From interviews with Neinast, Monk suggests that their agenda was two-fold: "(1) to change the public image of campus ministry among the local churches and conferences, and (2) to encourage campus ministers to understand their work as an important and productive ministry."<sup>67</sup> Under their leadership, national student events resumed after a two-decade lapse—a Jubilee Conference to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary

of the MSM and, building on its success, a delegated, national United Methodist Student Movement.<sup>68</sup> Under Shockley, who succeeded to the post of Assistant General Secretary for Campus Ministry, training events and Summer Companies to identify, nurture, support, inspire, and stimulate campus leaders followed. And in 1995, after a three-decade lapse, United Methodists in campus ministry formed a professional networking and training organization, the United Methodist Campus Ministry Association ([www.umcma.org](http://www.umcma.org)).

## ■ Reinvented Home

Campus ministry has reshaped itself over the past decade and a half, partly in consolidating the advances of the 1970s and 1980s and partly in response to the strains and conflicts in denominational and public life and to opportunities presented by digital communication. When I delivered a version of this essay in 2009 at a GBHEM-sponsored consultation titled “The Promise of United Methodist Campus Ministry: Theological Explorations” and queried about present status, the participants assured me that something new was happening but found some difficulty in naming and defining it. Second, sizing up the present and looking to its unfolding in the future are not the skills and perspective a historian brings to the task. At best, I can make some conjectures that draw on the consultation, recent work by Alice Knotts and others, stories in the *United Methodist Reporter*, and insights shared with me by Robert Monk.

Websites, e-mail, blogs, Facebook, and other ways of being virtually present have made possible new ways of exercising ministry with students *and* new connections of campus ministers with one another.<sup>69</sup> Building on relations established in annual United Methodist Student Movement forums and United Methodist Campus Ministers Association events, college religion professionals can, with digital, online connections, resource one another, pass along new ideas, strategize about initiatives, and variously collaborate in ways less dependent upon GBHEM and/or jurisdictional or conference offices and officers. Such virtual connections and the many *United Methodist Reporter* stories compensate, perhaps, for reductions in networking on conference and denominational levels when staffing reductions in college-related areas occur during denominational financial crises. So, digitally connected campus ministers can share frustrations over funding, discuss relations with local church pastors and conference officials, compare views on the current generation of college students, detail experiments with intentional residential communities, inventory the value of mission trips and community work days, and converse about initiatives in caring ministries and spiritual direction with students.

Similarly, the website for College Union, underwritten financially and resourced technically by the Foundation for Evangelism, flashes with interactive content, features campus ministry openings, counsels chaplains on submitting articles and ideas, offers pod casts, and beckons campus ministers to multi-day “Refresh” annual meetings. The connection of College Union to the array of “Good News” organizations and caucuses seems at this point to be soft rather than hard-wired—as is its relation to the conservative-evangelical “Ivy

Jungle” network. Still, one cannot help but note the degree of intentionality and well-designed strategy by Methodism’s unofficial but largest seminary in its training, mentoring, interning, placing, and networking of campus ministers. None of the official United Methodist schools, nor the collectivity of them, seems to have shown anything like that commitment to programming and placement in the arena of ministries in higher education.

At any rate, two networks for support of campus ministry function in some competition. Alongside the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools, GBHEM, and the United Methodist Campus Ministry Association exists an Asbury Theological Seminary–Foundation for Evangelism–College Union network. One blogger on the latter’s website contrasted the former (UMCMA) as more of a lobby and the latter as endeavoring “to better equip those in campus ministry.”<sup>70</sup> Campus ministry, then, functions with two ecumenical networks, one National Council of Churches-like and increasingly inter-religious, the other National Association of Evangelicals-like and tacking toward the conservative–evangelical networks; one liberal-prophetic and the other missional-evangelistic. The 2009 meeting of GBHEM-sponsored Student Forum, which serves the former network, featured progressive Muslim Eboo Patel, founder and director of the Interfaith Youth Core (Chicago) pleading for interfaith campus ministries. Among headliners in the 2009 Refresh Conference, serving the latter network, were inspirational speaker Sally Morgenthaler, author of *Worship Evangelism*, and conservative United Methodist theologian Billy Abraham.

Campus ministers do, indeed, seem to welcome all the help they can get and from wherever. They complain of inadequate support from conferences, of little appreciation on the part of the denomination of the importance of sustaining and retaining the loyalty during college of its own membership, of being on their own. Nor can they count on much interest from religion departments, which, in the stronger private and state universities, have given up thinking they had a role in furthering vocations in ministry. A few administrations in United Methodist colleges have reestablished offices of church relations and have aggressively rebuilt relations with conference offices and local churches across the conference. But such reintegration is rare. More frequently, campus ministry does indeed seem to be left to make a home for itself and to do as much building of neighborly relations as it can. The church seemingly will leave it to campus ministers to reinvent a home life. Yet as they do and as they describe what they are about, they appeal again and again to the church, at local, conference, and connectional levels to join in this rebuilding.<sup>71</sup>

## ■ Redefinition?

The vision of the entire connection at every level engaged with higher education and of the ministries on campus forming and equipping new generations of denominational leaders seemingly guided Shockley, Neinast, and Burry in their rebuilding efforts. So such a vision had inspired Wilbur Fisk and Stephen Olin at Wesleyan. So had it motivated James Baker at the University of Illinois, preoccupied Wesleyan professor Kenneth Underwood in his

survey of American universities, and beckoned Paul Hardin as he guided the assessment of United Methodism's colleges. So it has recurred for current campus ministers as they reach out for support on local, regional, and connectional levels.

One visionary can sometimes lead an entire church into a new day. And, clearly, the campus ministers and their leadership struggle to do just that. We are, however, *far* from being a college-related church and *far* from being able to bring the several levels of the church into engagement with the campus. Wesleyan University's story sadly shows why. As Underwood wrote, his university, once the church's flagship institution, dissolved its church into a university ministry. Currently, the university, first to bear the Wesleyan name, is without a United Methodist ministry. As already noted, a Christian chaplain, part-time and also pastor of First Baptist in Middletown, serves alongside Muslim and Jewish chaplains.<sup>72</sup>

That multi-religious situation on essentially secular university premises increasingly defines the work and the vision of a campus ministry that seems, as in the past, to be a frontier for the church. Campus ministry has taken—surely *must* and *will* take—an ecumenical, interreligious, or multi-religious direction, as American campuses become intellectually and demographically more cosmopolitan and contexts in which the religions of the world meet. How significant will be United Methodism's presence there and how engaged in such ministries will the whole connection be? It is a big challenge for a ministry with great ambitions and little in the way of resources.

And how will university/college administrations and faculties react to, support, and engage with campus ministries that put themselves to work on problems and with populations that might explode, without the teaching, mentoring, modeling, and nurturing of cordial and civil relations between and among potentially hostile religious groups? Episcopalians and Methodists are unlikely to be at one another's throats, but Jews and Muslims might. And Christians concerned with the plight of the Palestinians or the defense of Israel might well find themselves sucked into campus chaos. Will the denomination weigh in on such issues, do so with some degree of unanimity, and engage the College Union side of its campus leadership? Campus ministry in an age both connected and disconnected digitally can do interesting things on behalf of the university and the church. Having United Methodism at all levels invested in collegiate experience and dramas and open to disciple making beyond the very limited confines of the local church might just assure the denomination a new generation of talented leaders.

## Notes

1. See Donald G. Shockley, *Campus Ministry: The Church Beyond Itself* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989). A longer version of my essay—published as “For the Good of the World”: *Methodism's Ministry to the Campus*, Occasional Papers 102, April 2010 (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2010)—attends in notes to other literature on campus ministry and to general items on religion and higher education.

2. Robert C. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement,” in *Connectionalism: Ecclesiology, Mission, and Identity*, United Methodism and American

Culture series, ed. Russell E. Richey, Dennis M. Campbell, and William B. Lawrence (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 1:179–202.

3. Alice Knotts, “Introduction,” and the several essays in *To Transform the World: Vital United Methodist Campus Ministries*, ed. Alice G. Knotts (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2009), especially 17, 19, 39; Donald G. Shockley, “The Methodist Student Movement: A Brief Historical Sketch,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 32 (Fall 1995): 478–81; idem., “Campus Ministry: A Contrarian Investment Strategy,” *The Christian Century* (23 October 1985): 951–53; idem., “Rattling the Dry Bones of the Student Christian Movement,” *The Christian Century* (22 November 1989): 1087–89.

4. Donald G. Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), 103–11.

5. David B. Potts, *Wesleyan University, 1831–1910: Collegiate Enterprise in New England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Carl F. Price, *Wesleyan’s First Century; With an Account of the Centennial Celebration* (Middletown: Published by Wesleyan University, 1932).

6. Joseph Holdich, *The Life of Willbur Fisk, D.D., First President of The Wesleyan University* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1842), 221.

7. Wilbur Fisk, *The Science of Education: An Inaugural Address, Delivered at the Opening of The Wesleyan University* (New York, 1832), 3–4.

8. *Ibid.*, 6–7.

9. Holdich, *Life of Willbur Fisk*, 238, 303.

10. *Ibid.*, 296.

11. *Ibid.*, 302.

12. See nineteenth-century *Disciplines*, as for instance, the first, excerpted in *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook*, eds. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 82–86, and particularly Q. 4, 82.

13. Holdich, *Life of Willbur Fisk*, 308.

14. Sylvanus M. Duvall, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and Education Up to 1869* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1928), 39–40. James Edward Scanlon, *Randolph-Macon College: A Southern History, 1825–1967* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983).

15. Cited by Potts, *Wesleyan University*, 76, 73.

16. See Holdich, *Life of Willbur Fisk*, chapter 14 on missions.

17. *The Life and Letters of Stephen Olin*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), 2:339–40.

18. Price, *Wesleyan’s First Century*, 26.

19. *Ibid.*, 30–31; see also Potts, *Wesleyan University*, 13–17.

20. On the larger vision that informed the direction of Methodism’s early colleges, see Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 127–39. See also Charles Coleman Sellers, *Dickinson College: A History* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 195–99; James Henry Morgan, *Dickinson College: The History of One Hundred Fifty Years, 1783–1933* (Carlisle: Dickinson College, 1933); Scanlon, *Randolph-Macon College*; and Potts, *Wesleyan University*. John O. Gross affirms, “While both Wesleyan and Randolph-Macon were under the control of the Methodist Church, neither required religious tenets for the admission of students. . . .” See John O. Gross, *Methodist Beginnings in Higher Education* (Nashville: Division of Educational Institutions, Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1959), 39.

21. E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 119.

22. Kenneth Underwood, *The Church, the University and Social Policy: The Danforth Study of Campus Ministries*, 2 vols. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 1:51.

23. Shockley treats the colleges as ministries in Chapter 2, "Campus Ministries Begun by the Churches," in *Campus Ministry*, 24–36.

24. Monk, "United Methodist Campus Ministry," 179.

25. See Monk's gesture in that direction, *ibid.*, 179.

26. Beth Adams Bowser, *Living the Vision: The University Senate of the Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Church, and The United Methodist Church, 1892–1991* (Nashville: The Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church, 1992), i, 7–43. See also Myron F. Wicke, *A Brief History of the University Senate of the Methodist Church* (Nashville: Issued by Dept. of Public Relations and Finance, Division of Educational Institutions, Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1956), and Gerald O. McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* (Nashville: United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980). See the treatment in Robert H. Conn with Michael Nickerson, *United Methodists and Their Colleges*, foreword by F. Thomas Trotter (Nashville: United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1989), especially Chapter 5.

27. See Quentin Charles Lansman, *Higher Education in the Evangelical United Brethren Church: 1800–1954* (Nashville: Division of Higher Education/UMC, 1972).

28. See "The Report of the Special Committee on the Relation of Benevolent Institutions to the Church," *Journal of the General Conference/MEC* (1872): 294–99.

29. This estimate comes from Samuel Plantz, *The History of Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1892 to 1917* (New York: The Board of Education of The Methodist Episcopal Church, 1918), 3–4.

30. Lucy Rider Meyer, *Deaconesses, Biblical, Early Church, European, American, With the Story of How the Work Began in the Chicago Training School, for City, Home, and Foreign Missions, and the Chicago Deaconess Home*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1889), 94, 100.

31. *Journal of the General Conference/MEC* (1888), 95, 100.

32. Virginia Lieson Brereton, "Preparing Women for the Lord's Work," in Hilah E. Thomas, et al. eds., *Women in New Worlds*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, 1982), 1:178–99; Noreen Dunn Tatum, *A Crown of Service: A Story of Woman's Work in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, From 1878–1940* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1960), 325.

33. John O. Gross, "Wesleyan University," in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, 2:2528–29, 2410–12; e-mail from Ms. Suzy Taraba, Wesleyan University Archivist; and Wesleyan University website.

34. Robert W. Sledge, *Hands on the Ark: The Struggle for Change in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1914–1939* (Lake Junaluska, NC: Commission on Archives and History, 1975), 30–37; citation from 35.

35. See Merrimon Cuninggim, *Uneasy Partners: The College and the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994). See also Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and George M. Marsden and

Bradley J. Longfield, eds., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

36. James Chamberlain Baker, *The First Wesley Foundation: An Adventure in Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: Parthenon, 1960), 9–13.

37. Shockley, *Campus Ministry*, 34–35; Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 179–82; Underwood, *Church, the University and Social Policy*, 1:64–69.

38. Baker, *First Wesley Foundation*, 40; Underwood, *Church, the University and Social Policy*, 67.

39. Baker, *First Wesley Foundation*, 89.

40. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 183.

41. Baker, *First Wesley Foundation*, 112–15; Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 182–83.

42. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 187.

43. Baker, *First Wesley Foundation*, 112–16.

44. Phillip E. Hammond, “The Radical Ministry,” the lead essay in Underwood, *The Church, the University and Social Policy*, 2:3–15. Shockley tellingly treats the period under the title, “Getting Beyond the Sixties,” in *Campus Ministry*, 90–101.

45. See Table 1-1 in Hammond, “The Radical Ministry,” 7, comparing attitudes of campus and parish ministers; and Donald G. Shockley, “The Methodist Student Movement,” 478–81.

46. Underwood, *The Church, the University and Social Policy*, 1:14.

47. Phillip E. Hammond, *The Campus Clergyman*, foreword by Kenneth W. Underwood (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1966).

48. *Ibid.*, 104–06, 111–15.

49. *Ibid.*, 134–35. The renewal function was his fourth.

50. Hammond, “The Radical Ministry,” in Underwood, *The Church, the University and Social Policy*, 2:3–15.

51. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1970; first published 1969).

52. Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The House Divided,” in Underwood, *The Church, the University and Social Policy*, 2:275–91 and especially 289.

53. *A Summary Report for the Committee on Consultation for the Study of Wesley Foundations*, by Woodrow A. Geier, *From the Original Study by Samuel N. Gibson* (Nashville: Division of Higher Education, Board of Education, 1967). These questions, found on p. 4, come as among the study questions posed for Chapter 5 and were one of six sets included in a short chapter entitled “Perspective.”

54. *Ibid.*, 9.

55. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

56. *Ibid.*, 12, 22, 19–20, 23–24.

57. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 192.

58. Shockley, *Campus Ministry*, 97.

59. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 192–93.

60. T. Michael Elliott, Renée G. Loeffler, Diane Dillard, and Kent M. Weeks, *A College-Related Church: United Methodist Perspectives* (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education, 1976); other titles, written for the Commission by the foursome and published the same year, were *To Give the Key of Knowledge: United Methodists and Education, 1784–1976* and *Toward 2000: Perspectives on the Environment for United Methodists and Independent Higher Education*.

61. T. Michael Elliott, Renée G. Loeffler, Diane Dillard, and Kent M. Weeks, *Ministry on Campus: A United Methodist Mission Statement and Survey Report* (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education, 1977).

62. *Ibid.*, 17–24, 32, 33, 53, 54–57, 61.

63. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 194.

64. Jack S. Boozer, *Edge of Ministry . . . The Chaplain Story: Chaplain Ministry of The United Methodist Church: 1945–1980* (Nashville: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1984).

65. Compare the titles and assessment by Robin Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement ‘Church Ahead of the Church’* (London: SPCK, 2007): “Story of a Storm” (c. 1965–80), “Living under ‘the Storm’” (c. 1965–80), “Picking Up the Pieces” (c. 1980–2005).

66. Shockley, “The Methodist Student Movement,” 480; Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 196.

67. Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 196.

68. Shockley, “The Methodist Student Movement,” 480; Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry,” 196–97.

69. See Scott Spencer, “Faith Communities in a Digital Age,” in Knotts, *To Transform the World*, 139–52.

70. A response by Mike Toluba, dated 9 December 2008, to an article titled “The State of United Methodist Campus Ministry,” by Steve Rankin of Southwestern College, now at Southern Methodist University.

71. See articles on *United Methodist Reporter* and on the College Union website ([collegeunion.org](http://collegeunion.org)).

72. E-mail from Ms. Suzy Taraba, Wesleyan University Archivist; and Wesleyan University’s website ([www.wesleyan.edu](http://www.wesleyan.edu)).

## CHAPTER 2

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# Faith on Campus: How an Obscure Bible Verse Sparks Thinking About Our Work With College Students

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Stephen W. Rankin

**F**or a number of years, almost simultaneous with my entering campus ministry, I have been intermittently intrigued with 1 Chronicles 12:32: “Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. . . .” What could those sons of Issachar have seen about “the times” that was valuable to David’s mission and Israel’s future? David has been anointed king, but Saul is still on the throne (and David is in exile); yet men in Saul’s army are defecting to David. As the narrative continues, David is soon installed in Jerusalem as king. In preparation for this event, the Chronicler lists the names and divisions of the troops with David, in which appears this description of the sons of Issachar.

At the risk of sounding unnecessarily ominous, I believe that The United Methodist Church—and, in truth, most of American Protestant Christianity—is facing large-scale change that requires an understanding of the times, like the sons of Issachar apparently provided for King David.<sup>1</sup> How we think about, interact with, and respond to college students is of crucial and far-reaching significance during these times. United Methodism is strategically placed for a significant role among college students in the United States. In part, it stems from United Methodism’s heritage as a renewal movement within a larger religious and societal framework. Couple our heritage with the diverse (and diversifying) make-up of

most colleges and universities, and we contact a range of missional possibilities far beyond denominational boundaries. It also makes us responsible. We must engage in this sacred privilege prayerfully, thoughtfully, and persistently.

In what follows, I attempt to gather together demographic information, developmental theory, and concepts regarding higher education in order to draw a sketch of college student spirituality. On one hand, these are exciting days to work in the college environment. On the other hand, our habits of depending too much on social science methods to do theological work hides basic dilemmas in trying to enhance spirituality in a religiously diverse context while, at the same time, avoiding narrow sectarianism. This chapter concludes with suggestions about how and where to focus our energies, in view of the times.

## ■ A Demographic Snapshot

According to a recent edition of *Statistical Abstracts*, there are 2,582 four-year institutions of higher education in the United States: universities, colleges, professional schools, and teachers colleges. In addition to the four-year schools, there are 1,694 two-year colleges.<sup>2</sup> The projected 2009 enrollment stands at 18,416,000 students.<sup>3</sup> (Almost 6.5 million are students at two-year colleges.<sup>4</sup>) The 2006 enrollment was more than 17,300,000,<sup>5</sup> fewer than reported in 2005 but clearly trending upward.

For generations, the “typical” college student was a white male. Following World War II, but especially since the 1960s, the percentage of female students on campus began to increase dramatically. Between 1970 and 1980, the balance tipped in favor of females. In 1970, the ratio of male to female was 4.4 million to 3.0 million. In 2006, it was 7.5 million males to 9.7 million females, almost a 25 percent gap.<sup>6</sup>

An even larger gender disproportion exists among ethnic minority groups. In 2005, there were twice as many African-American women as men in college. Close to that same proportion holds true for Latina and Latino students. *All* men, regardless of ethnic or racial category, tend to drop out of college at a higher rate than women; but this fact holds especially true for African-American and Latino men, which is a matter of serious concern for higher education staff, and it should be as well for church leaders.<sup>7</sup>

The number of international students on campus is also rising. In 2007, *Statistical Abstracts* reported 583,000, compared to 286,000 in 1980.<sup>8</sup> College campuses are ethnically and nationally as well as religiously more diverse. Campus ministers have been aware of this trend for a long time, and we regularly make strategic decisions about how to operate as *Christian* leaders in this context. This point has a number of implications to which we will return in the closing section of the chapter.

In turning to the literature about generational characteristics, I am hesitant to generalize, because I think “generation-speak” can be overdone. With that caution in mind, I would point out certain pronounced characteristics in students, largely because of technology. There really is something new and different about the “net generation.” Many people who follow the trajectories of college students are familiar with The Beloit College Mindset List.

To be sure, there is a the wide range of items that new college students have always (or never) had and an equally wide range of aspects of culture that they have always (or never) known. However, the seamless integration of technology is not one of these: “Migration of once independent media like radio, TV, videos and compact discs to the computer has never amazed them.”<sup>9</sup> What still amazes and befuddles me my children manipulate with ease, even the ones who are not particularly enamored by the latest technology.

Consider the following examples. Anyone who hangs around college students starts to notice how easily they sit shoulder-to-shoulder, looking at their laptops and “chatting” with one another. Increasingly, I hear colleagues say that students use computer technology to put a buffer between themselves and other people with whom they do not feel comfortable. Communicating through Facebook is a means of controlling the manner and amount of self-revelation and the risk of vulnerability. One headline reads: “Your ‘Real’ Friends Are Your Online Friends (or so Says GenY).” Researchers interviewing more than sixteen thousand users of MySpace in the United Kingdom between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one discovered that they use the Internet as a buffer. Feeling ill at ease in face-to-face conversations and unsure of themselves with peers, MySpace usage reduces the risk of rejection while searching for the right “group.”<sup>10</sup>

Other literature explores the impact of this technology on learning and preparation for careers. On the pessimistic side, Mark Bauerlein laments the damage done to students’ desire to learn. He takes issue with educators’ rosy generalizations that students are more self-directed and intellectually curious because the new technology provides easy access to information. Citing Nielsen research, which shows that students tend to read only what is in the top left corner of computer screens and then start to skip around (in an “F” pattern) or move to other pages, Bauerlein concludes, “Overall, teens displayed reading skills, research procedures, and patience levels insufficient to navigate the Web effectively.”<sup>11</sup> He concludes that students’ use of technology short-circuits their learning.

Somewhat in contrast to Bauerlein, Don Tapscott holds that teaching techniques must make the paradigm shift to incorporate new ways of learning that the technology demands. Students’ use of technology will not go away. Conventional practices (such as lecturing) create massive boredom, he claims; and students refuse to endure bad technique. Contra Bauerlein, therefore, the students are not the problem. Still, Tapscott admits that the new technology is creating, in reality, two generations within the same age group, one thriving and one failing. The number of students enrolling in college and the number of students dropping out of college are both increasing. As noted, Tapscott points the finger at out-of-date teaching-learning techniques and prescribes what has become a standard list of requisite changes among educators: making learning less teacher-oriented and more learner-oriented, more collaborative, and so on.<sup>12</sup>

What are the implications of these authors’ observations for campus ministry? First, students have quick and ready access to information, including rich online resources for Bible study or personal devotions or theology. At the same time, students are falling prey to thinking that growing in the Christian life is merely an exercise in “getting information.”<sup>13</sup> In my

experience, students use the Bible in two basic ways: for advice on particular life questions or for devotional purposes. Either way, their exposure to the Bible comes in tiny doses of what they perceive as (neutral) “information.” They have grown accustomed to a foreshortened time frame for such activities, which does not bode well for reflection and deeper Christian formation.<sup>14</sup> The technology does seem to breed impatience for slow, sustained thought. I am, therefore, inclined to agree with Bauerlein rather than Tapscott.

A final, significant characteristic of today’s college students is that they are increasingly the children of Generation X parents. Recent studies show that Generation X parents are more involved in their children’s lives (for good or ill) than were Baby Boomer parents. I was born in the middle of the Baby Boom. My parents did not accompany me to college orientation; neither did my friends’ parents accompany them. As a seventeen year old, I loaded my clothes, a couple of macramé wall hangings, and my clock radio and drove myself to college. Moms and dads did not visit campus until parents’ weekend.

According to Neil Howe and William Strauss, in the revised edition of *Millennials Go to College*, Generation X parents are significantly more involved in virtually every aspect of college life than were parents of Baby Boomers, from choosing the school to writing résumés, even to going to job interviews.<sup>15</sup> Today, moving the new student to college is a major family event.

These observations help to explain the phenomenon of “helicopter” parents—parents who seem always to “hover” near their kids (literally or virtually). The results are mixed. On the one hand, strong parent-child relationships can provide the ground for partnerships between educators (and ministers) and parents. Strong parental support enriches a college student’s life and makes faith development potentially strong. On the other hand, it appears that college students generally depend too much on parents to work through challenges that go along with growing to adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

This phenomenon of extended parental involvement in a young person’s life has prompted a new demographic category. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett is leading the call for a new description of this group as “emerging adults,” rather than as “young adults” or “late adolescents.” In spite of rising tuition costs, students are taking longer to finish college. They also double major, combine majors and minors, and change majors more often than earlier generations. Consequently, the path to graduation is longer and more circuitous. Arnett observes, “For most emerging adults, entering college means embarking on a winding educational path that may or may not lead to a degree. . . . Among 25–29 year olds, less than one third have obtained a bachelor’s degree.”<sup>17</sup> The assumption that one will finish college in four years is almost a thing of the past. This factor bears careful scrutiny, including its impact on campus ministries in its various contexts.

## ■ Survey Data About College Student Spirituality

Since college is a “safe haven for exploration,”<sup>18</sup> and since more students are enrolling in college at least for a time, campus ministers and The United Methodist Church as a whole

should consider the crucial importance of our work. This point takes on supreme importance when we start to realize the openness of college students to questions of faith and spirituality. In the religiously pluralistic environment of higher education, what do students know about their own faith traditions? What do they know about other religious traditions? What assumptions do they make about religion and spirituality—assumptions that actually limit their understanding? What terms carry the requisite legitimacy to pass muster for use in academia?<sup>19</sup> This last question is especially important. The terms we deem appropriate will be the terms our students use.

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), the gold standard for social science data on the spirituality of college students, notes that students draw a distinction between “religion” and “spirituality”—a distinction that raises serious questions. Can one be spiritual without being religious, or without at least asking essentially religious questions?<sup>20</sup> The HERI survey concludes that developing “a meaningful philosophy of life,” *construed independently of religious faith*, appeared with a positive response at twice the rate of students who said that they maintain the religious practices of their upbringing.<sup>21</sup>

These survey findings deserve a moment of reflection. First, as Jean Twenge has shown, today’s students use fiercely individualistic language to describe many aspects of their lives, even while hungering for community.<sup>22</sup> For them, the term *religion* suggests a system of beliefs and rules (especially about morality) that seems to stifle freedom. The notion of “spirituality” fits much better with an individualistic frame of mind. In his latest book, *Souls in Transition*, Christian Smith shows that while the majority of students still hold a fairly conventional (that is, traditionally religious) view of faith, the majority treats religion as a private spiritual resource that sits on a shelf, as it were, until something causes them to pull it down and use it.<sup>23</sup>

This inclination toward “spirituality” as opposed to “religion” does not bode well for students’ spiritual lives. We find here an ironic paradox. While sounding open and generous, this generalized “spirituality” actually leads toward ignorance and narrowness. Research from the Barna Group shows that, while high school students are among the most religiously active segments of the American population, that commitment tails off significantly when they enter college. “Twenty-somethings continue to be the most spiritually independent and resistant age group in America,” the report declares. Only about one in five college students keeps the same level of spiritual activity he or she had in high school.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to reduction of spiritual activities, students lean toward (often acquired) skepticism about Christianity. Another Barna report observes how attitudes have changed dramatically in the past few years: “In just a decade, many of the Barna measures of the Christian image have shifted substantially downward, fueled in part by a growing sense of disengagement and disillusionment among young people.”<sup>25</sup> Recent books such as *UnChristian* and *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*<sup>26</sup> illustrate this trend. Perhaps most campus ministers have worked with students hungry for “God”<sup>27</sup> but wary, skeptical, and sometimes openly hostile toward the religion the campus ministry represents.

To summarize: The number of college students is increasing. We in higher education have the glorious opportunity of interacting with a significant portion of the United States population in these college years. Colleges are increasingly diverse in racial and ethnic heritage and in terms of religion. Students are taking longer to graduate, and there is more variety in the way they undertake a college education. Students are more openly interested in exploring spirituality and less inclined to leave these questions outside the classroom. During college, many students learn to use the term *spiritual* rather than *religious* to avoid some of the negative cultural baggage associated with the latter term.

How do we take appropriate account of these general characteristics of college students and do our work faithfully as campus ministers? In offering an answer below, I note one more complication that demands attention. Since we are talking about the faith of college students, we must look at the theories of faith development that have been most influential in our work as campus ministers. In doing so, we encounter again the problem of terminology regarding “spirituality” and “religion” noted above. We discover similar tensions in the theory that exacerbates the current confusion about these terms.

## ■ Considering Educational Theory

James Fowler’s *Stages of Faith* is still regarded as the standard work on faith development, and so engaging his theory here is in order. In what follows, I critically examine Fowler’s work with help from another theoretician, James Loder, to discern how to appropriate the theory for campus ministry while avoiding the social scientific reductionism in regard to terminology noted above.

Most entering college students fit the third stage of Fowler’s model, the “synthetic-conventional” stage: “a synthesis of belief and value elements that are derived from one’s significant others.” This synthesis “is largely tacit,” meaning students’ beliefs “are not yet objectified for critical reflection.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, students essentially believe what their parents and significant others believe and have not yet developed the self-reflection and critical awareness necessary to “own” their own faith.

The college experience challenges students to make the transition to Fowler’s fourth stage: the individuating-reflective stage. Here students encounter people whose belief systems are different from their own. They are confronted with the realization that lots of good people, from professors to student life staff to peers, whose integrity seems as solid as their own, view God and the world quite differently from the way they do. This dawning awareness prompts the questions necessary to develop individuating-reflective faith. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on their beliefs and to develop new levels of self-awareness, which, in turn, provides opportunity for a more mature appropriation of beliefs. In going through this transition, Fowler says, “The two critical features of the emergence of Stage 4 are the critical distancing from one’s previous assumptive values system and the emergence of the executive ego.”<sup>29</sup> Students begin to “think for themselves” and to establish their worldviews on the basis of an inner sense of self-authorization rather than on the basis of “just believing” what they’ve “always been taught.”

It is clear from this very narrow slice of Fowler's theory that he uses no particular theological or doctrinal terms to describe faith. Although Fowler clearly identifies himself as a Christian, he is convinced that the psychological dynamics of faith development are universal and, therefore, applicable to any faith tradition. In fact, for Fowler, faith does not always have an explicitly religious content,<sup>30</sup> and so he spends the first five chapters of *Stages of Faith*, using the work of philosopher of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith, to describe "faith" as distinct from "belief" associated with particular religious systems.

Fowler admits the limits of "formalism" involved in a purely phenomenological description.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, a subsequent volume *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*, in which Fowler attempts to integrate his theory with the content of his Christian faith, reveals the tensions between an empirical, allegedly neutral, scientific approach and the particularities of a faith tradition. Here Fowler borrows the narrative approach of Gabriel Fackre, which explores the classic themes of creation, fall, covenant, incarnation, church, and an eschatological vision of the reign of God (which Fowler calls a "commonwealth of love and justice").<sup>32</sup> Yet, even in using identifiably Christian themes, Fowler's earlier formal definitions of faith tend to overwhelm the theological concepts he puts into play.<sup>33</sup> Let me illustrate. In Fowler's theory, maturity in faith increases as the stages of faith advance, so that faith at stage four is more mature than faith at stage three, for example. Thus, for Fowler, persons at stages five and six—the "conjunctive" and "universalizing" stages, respectively—are more mature than those at earlier stages.

Regardless, therefore, of the particular theological beliefs a person holds (about Jesus or about the Trinity, for example), a person who manifests conjunctive or universalizing faith is moving toward an optimally mature faith. The psychological and cognitive categories Fowler uses turn out to be primary and the specific theological concepts (borrowed from Fackre) are secondary, maybe even epiphenomenal. This inference seems even firmer in light of Fowler's belief that his description of faith is normative.<sup>34</sup>

James Loder, in *The Logic of the Spirit*, appreciatively criticizes Fowler's theory, arguing that it really is a theory about ego development rather than about faith development.<sup>35</sup> Loder uses Erik Erikson's work to show that a key part of developing individuative-reflective faith (Fowler) requires that one resolve the opposing psychic forces of isolation and intimacy. Inherently, this challenge has to do with trust—the essence of faith. If the ego is too self-protective (unwillingness to trust), isolation results. At the same time, trust requires a sufficient degree of separation from the other so as not to wind up with absorption or enmeshment instead of intimacy. In order for someone in the individuative-reflective stage not to get stuck in isolation, Loder concludes, he or she needs sufficient trust in the other to find authentic intimacy. At this point Loder turns explicitly to Christian theology for a description of faith. The human spirit cannot negotiate these psychic challenges on its own. It needs the Spirit of God to enable the move away from isolation into intimacy.<sup>36</sup> This Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who is the "face" of God—the object faith needs in order to do the work of ego development. Thus, while Fowler's work is enormously helpful in understanding the dynamics of ego development, Loder contends that it does not adequately

explain *faith* development. Loder, therefore, reverses Fowler's approach: His theological convictions guide his understanding of the psychological dynamics in faith.

This brief examination of the challenge of faith development shows why we cannot avoid attention to the content of faith, especially in these days. Formal and psychological descriptions of "faith" fit nicely with the bias toward "spirituality" and away from "religion" found on college campuses. But *faith* and *spirituality* are not neutral terms that can be filled in easily with the particular content of one's own faith. By using these ostensibly neutral terms, another kind of faith altogether is being advocated on college campuses. This paradox is part of the signs of the times we need to discern.

### ■ "Spirituality" and the Academy

In turning to literature on spirituality and higher education, we discover how difficult it is to stick to allegedly neutral definitions, while also trying to envision the outcome we would like for students of faith to achieve. The opening chapter of a collection of essays entitled *Spirituality in Higher Education* exemplifies this difficulty. The author asks "What is Spirituality?" then gives nine separate (but overlapping) definitions, containing words such as *transcendent*, *non-corporeal*, *purpose*, *compassion*, *nonviolence*, and *consciousness*. The author, Bruce Speck, points out that, in seeking a definition of spirituality agreeable to all parties, academics still tend to operate with the assumption that "unanimity is normative."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the "neutral" language of social science that avoids commitment to any particular religion is preferred over theological particularities.

This proclivity helps explain why academics consider Fowler's formal definitions as normative; because it appears to be universally applicable, not tied to any particular religious perspective. I think academics have been too trusting of this approach. Two problems arise: (1) Spirituality understood in this formal way actually reduces to the psychology of spiritual or religious experience, which then takes away the sense of transcendence important to spirituality, even for most people who do not want to self-identify with a particular religion. The terms of social science, rooted in methodological naturalism, wind up being too corrosive for all but the most naturalistic understandings of spirituality. Consider the practical damage. Any experience I have that I consider to be spiritual can always be reduced to something considered more basic and academically analyzable, which tends to take away the impact of the experience. (2) Perhaps more important, the list of terms from Speck's chapter shows that these "neutral" terms turn out to be not so neutral. Can a word like "transcendence" be understood without recourse to some theological vision, some understanding of self in relation to a transcendent something? It seems to prompt at least asking the question, what do I encounter when I transcend self? If we stop short of asking such a question, we circle around to some description of the psychology of the "awareness of "transcendence," which takes us back to problem #1, above. If, however, we ask any question about the nature of the transcendent that we think we experience in spirituality, then we immediately get into metaphysical and even theological questions, ground that has

been well-covered by the world's faith traditions. The allegedly neutral terms that Speck uses turn out to be reducible to other terms or are already connected to specific religious understandings.

To be sure, United Methodist campus ministers are free to fill in the formal definitions with the content of the Christian faith through their programming. But if my argument is true, then we are not filling an empty bucket. We are trying to take something out of the bucket first in order to put in the conceptual content of Christian belief. That is, many of our students *already* hold a relativistic view of "religion" and a bias toward an individualized "spirituality." This attitude predisposes students to adopt a posture of religious preference but holding that preference loosely in light of some sort of "faith" that they believe undergirds and is basic to all faith traditions.

Given the changing demographics and increasing diversity of college campuses today, how best do we witness to the Christian faith? We have a singular opportunity, in light of the spiritual hunger of a generation, to participate in their lives with holy influence. What do we in campus ministry do with this privilege? Let me risk a couple of prescriptions.

## ■ Where Should We Focus Our Energies?

Our argument thus far reveals a number of important factors in reading "the signs of the times" today. The transition to adulthood is elongated, making the college years more exploratory and formative than ever. Paradoxically, students are simultaneously fiercely individualistic and hungry for relationship. They yearn for spiritual vitality, yet avoid firm and deepening commitment to a particular religion for fear of being overly constrained and stifled in personal growth. Formal definitions of "spirituality" advocated in class and information resources available through computer and Internet technology embolden students to mix and match ideas from contradictory sources, but with little skill in reflection and evaluation.<sup>38</sup> Since "spirituality" is considered a matter of private choice, consistency and coherency in thought seems not all that important. It is not surprising that the HERI research shows students moving away from specific religious adherence to something more generically "spiritual." Unless we consider this move salutary, we need to do something to reverse it. We need to help students come to thoughtful commitments about their specific religious beliefs and practices.

Let us begin by raising the profile of the teaching office in campus ministry. Let us begin to view ourselves as educators. As I have attempted to show, the influence of theories purporting formal, supposedly empty definitions "faith" and "spirituality" are more widespread on college campuses than we realize; and they inevitably take precedence over the content of particular religious beliefs. Our students need guidance in exploring Christian doctrine and in seeing connections to their lives. More importantly, they need help in eliminating some frankly incoherent thinking.

I am not at all suggesting a return to sectarian dogmatism. I completely agree that Christian students need to know the precepts and practices of other faith traditions.

However, in order to get the most benefit from such experiences, and to come to reasoned judgments about their own and other religious traditions, they need an identity and a reference point in their own Christian tradition. The need of the hour, then, is for Christian students to understand their own religious particularity much better than they currently do.<sup>39</sup> And campus ministers are especially well situated to act as teachers and guides.

I believe it is also time for campus ministers, in addition to working with students on the content of the faith, to engage faculty and other higher education professionals in peaceful but sustained and pointed dialogue about some of the reigning assumptions in academia relative to faith, spirituality, and religion. Taking this step requires both courage and tact *and* thorough and continuing intellectual work on the part of campus ministers. Perhaps, then, more campus ministers should seek terminal degrees in a relevant discipline. At the minimum, we must show ourselves able to engage in lively and substantive conversations with people across the campus.

Being “of the tribe of Issachar” and “reading the signs of the times” render, I believe, some sort of picture like the one I have tried to sketch in the chapter. College campuses are more open to religion than they once were; but they are open in very circumscribed ways. In general, Christian students are not very knowledgeable of the faith they have been practicing and seem too willing to jettison big parts of it or to include ideas and practices that are fundamentally opposed to basic Christian beliefs.

Campus ministers have a marvelous opportunity to serve as representatives of Christ among not only Christian students but also students of all faith perspectives. We may have little institutional power; but, in a way, this fact challenges and gives us the opportunity to minister in ways more reflective of the character of Jesus. In so doing, the impact on this generation of college students could be profound.

## Notes

1. For a readable description of that change, see, for example, Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008). The last two chapters of this book are particularly illuminative for people in the formerly mainline denominations.

2. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 2009* (Washington, D.C., 2008), Table 269, p. 171. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic data comes from this source.

3. Table 211, p. 139.

4. Table 270, p. 172. An immediate and pressing question that cannot be pursued in this paper, but desperately needs attention: What efforts are we making to reach students in these two-year colleges? Admittedly, because of (sometimes) small residential populations, working and commuting students, “junior colleges” are difficult places for the traditional, residential approach to college student ministries. Some creativity (and partnership with local churches) is especially needed here.

5. Table 217, p. 143.

6. My own anecdotal experience, coupled with informal conversations with other campus ministers, suggests that it is not uncommon to find even 80 percent of the student leadership provided by women students. Again, it goes beyond the scope of this paper, but it is time we start having

candid and careful conversations about the feminist critique of male dominance. We do not want to sacrifice college men's gifts for ministry by running to a new extreme of female-only leadership, which is becoming an observable phenomenon at the local level. Of late, I have been noticing how often in church, university, and campus ministry gatherings all (or nearly all) the leaders/presenters are female. (I hope I can make this point without sounding like a whiny white male!)

7. This fact alone should ring the alarm bells in our denominational meetings.

8. *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, Table 273, p. 174.

9. See Beloit College Mindset List, [www.beloit.edu/mindset](http://www.beloit.edu/mindset).

10. Sarah Perez, "Your 'Real' Friends Are Your Online Friends (or so Says Gen Y)," ReadWriteWeb, [www.readwriteweb.com/archives](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives). Accessed 10 August 2009.

11. Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 146.

12. Don Tapscott, "The Net Generation as Learners: Rethinking Education," in *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009), 121–48. If I may dare to generalize further, I have the hunch that college men are less able than college women to discipline themselves with video and Internet games.

13. *Information* is the term I hear again and again from students to refer to the content of their learning, but in a strange way. Time and again, upon missing a class session, a student would ask me about "the information" he or she missed and about how I might get it to him or her. Recently, one student, in complaining about a particular professor's "biased" teaching, declared: "I think the professor should just give me *the information* (emphasis added) and let me make up my own mind."

14. A similar problem has been demonstrated with regard to the amount of time students devote to studying outside of class. Although the amount of time per week grows as students move through their college years, even as seniors they are spending much less time than professors think they need to succeed. The way students interact with computer technology is a significant factor in this change of behavior.

15. William Howe and Neill Strauss, *Millennials Go to College: Strategies for a New Generation on Campus* (American Association of Collegiate Registrars, 2003).

16. I am surprised at how often student life professionals use the word *child* to refer to incoming college students during orientation. It is quite common to hear references to "your child" in discussions with parents. It strikes me as odd that we refer to those we used to think of as young adults as "children."

17. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 120–21, 125.

18. *Ibid.*, 139.

19. Because faculty members are often reticent to discuss faith-related questions with students, the student affairs professionals often wind up fielding these questions and dealing with them in extra-curricular ways. However, these professionals are trained to talk about faith in religiously neutral terms, which helps to promote a certain kind of problematic vocabulary. See endnote 21 below.

20. See the website for the Higher Education Research Institute ([www.heri.ucla.edu](http://www.heri.ucla.edu)) for a number of relevant reports, including treatment of the religion–spirituality distinction. An important related challenge with regard to terminology has to do with the use of terms such as *spiritual* and *spirituality*. Commonplace in higher education literature, the meaning and use of these terms are often controlled by social science assumptions and methods and thus regarded as neutral with

reference to particular religions. Do we have something of a self-fulfilling prophecy at work, in that students are given this vocabulary through a range of college experiences, which they then describe using this vocabulary? The limitations of social science research methods are a major issue for religious life in higher education.

21. Cooperative Institutional Research Program, *Findings From the Administration of Your First College Year (YFCY): National Aggregates*, (2008), 16. Found at [www.heri.ucla.edu](http://www.heri.ucla.edu).

22. Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

23. Christian Smith, with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). See, for example, Chapter 6, “Six Major Religious Types,” pp. 166–179.

24. See “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years” (dated 11 September 2006), [www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147). This research is expanded in the book *UnChristian*, by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). Material gleaned from the Baylor Surveys of Religion support this claim. See Rodney Stark, et al., *What Americans Really Believe* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 19, where Stark asserts that people under thirty are “most likely never to attend church.” See also “Religion on Campus,” [www.pbs.org/newshour](http://www.pbs.org/newshour) (14 November 2006).

25. See [www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/94](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/94) (dated 24 September 2007).

26. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007); and Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

27. I put “God” in quotation marks as a placeholder for whatever word students might use to refer to the transcendent. Most students use *God*, because of the influence of Christianity in American culture; but the usage does not indicate a narrowly Christian or even theistic understanding of the term.

28. James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 47. The chapter from which the quotation comes, entitled “Faith Development Theory and Human Vocation,” offers a handy summary of the longer description in Fowler’s earlier work *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

29. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 179.

30. *Ibid.*, 4.

31. *Ibid.*, 93.

32. See Chapter 4, “Adulthood, Vocation and the Christian Story,” especially 66–68.

33. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 60: “Faith is a relation of trust in and loyalty to one’s neighbors, maintained through trust in and loyalty to a unifying image of the character of value and power in an ultimate environment.” This definition, to use Fowler’s own words, is truly “formidable in its formalism.”

34. To be fair to Fowler, one should note his bracing theological vision. In *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (p. 118), he speaks of the Transcendent Lord and Redeemer of history, for example, revealing his christocentric orientation. Yet, at the end of the day, I fail to see how these theological claims give any shape at all to his developmental theory. It seems, rather, to be the other way around. To the degree that people of non-Christian faith traditions are just as apt to arrive at a mature faith as are Christians the particularities of Christian theology are of secondary importance.

35. James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 255–56.

36. *Ibid.*, 252–64, 267.

37. Sherry L. Hoppe and Bruce W. Speck, eds., *Spirituality in Higher Education: New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 11. One could argue that this principle does not apply to church-affiliated schools. For explicitly Christian universities, for the most part, it does not. Yet there is an academic bias that favors the application of this principle even at private, church-related schools, such that one is often hard-pressed to see any difference between “secular” state universities and “church-affiliated” ones.

38. *Karma* and *reincarnation* are popular notions on campus. Christian students easily mix these concepts with their other, more conventional, beliefs. This phenomenon highlights the effect of individualism and formal categories of “faith” and “spirituality” that invite a hodge-podge of content.

39. See “God, Religion, Whatever: On Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” Chapter 5 in Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 172–92.



## RESPONSE

### Signs of the Times: A Response to Stephen Rankin

Quincy D. Brown

In his essay, Stephen Rankin refers to the tribe of Issachar—Israel’s religious scholars and custodians of the sacred traditions—as a conceptual framework to begin a discussion on campus ministry. Alluding to the tribe’s ability to provide King David with guidance by interpreting the “signs of the times”<sup>1</sup> during large scale changes, Rankin posits that campus ministers are the parallel to the tribe of Issachar and have been charged with the missional task of interpreting the college culture to engage students in ministry.

As the modern equivalent “tribe of Issachar,” campus ministers are called to work with students who are living on college campuses, a world of “discontinuous change” that is both *disruptive* and *unanticipated*. Since college is a time of significant transition—a threshold experience for students, filled with social, emotional, and spiritual change—it offers campus ministers an opportunity to throw down the gauntlet for theological reflection with students concerning life situations that challenge assumptions about God, self, world, and others. In addition to providing a framework for the future campus ministry to students, a closer reading of Issachar also creates a window to view students’ behavior, since one definition of the Hebrew name *Issachar* means “reward,” which accurately describes the entitlement mentality of our students.<sup>2</sup>

Building on Rankin's essay, I will argue that rituals and cultural expressions that are interpreted through the lens of Christian theology can have a positive influence on student spirituality. In addition, I suggest ways in which United Methodist campus ministries can interpret the signs of the times to reflect on important theological issues that address the spiritual needs of college students.

Theology represents our way of talking about God's nature and how we relate to God, one another, and the world; and it is an important issue for United Methodist campus ministers, who are called to proclaim the gospel in the academy. The mandate of proclamation of any kind is challenging, especially on a college campus, where the spirit of inquiry and academic freedom are high priorities. Moreover, proclaiming the gospel on campus becomes problematic when it ignores the importance of *making sense* of the "good news" to others, since several hidden and unknown gods reside on campus.

I am using the phrase *hidden and unknown gods* metaphorically to describe the objects of the college community's worship, which often includes (though unconsciously) strict adherence to orthodoxy and "right thinking" about God, Scripture, and faith in all situations. Like the apostle Paul, who addressed the community at the Areopagus in Athens, college students frequently encounter various compelling phenomena that clamor for their attention and ultimately rise to the level, power, and allure of "unknown gods." Unlimited accessibility to unknown or covert gods invites compartmentalized thinking that unequivocally divides life into the sacred and secular. Examples of this are the growing dependence on technology such as social networking and "the flavor of the day" mobile device or the flock mentality of reality-based TV shows. Identifying these items as unknown gods on campus is not easy, since they are rarely worshiped consciously and they are accepted as the community norms of commonly held assumptions that are exempt from criticism or questioning. Also known as sacred cows, or "golden calves," the tangible and visible object of devotion, unknown and hidden gods show themselves in more overt community-building ways through allegiance to Greek life, athletics, and political views that provides a sense of power and stability during the uncertain experiences of college.

In many ways, student culture has taken the best of the premodern world, a tribe-oriented worldview that focused on spirituality, icons, images, rituals, and symbols, and introduced it to a modern world, which values science, progress, competition, and objectivity. This phenomenon beckons campus ministers to begin to think theologically about how to communicate the good news of God's grace through word and action, since students arrive on campus with varying degrees of spirituality. Whether it is a deep, pietistic faith, love of liturgy and rituals, a philosophy of happiness, meditation, the quest for world peace, or religious apathy, students are searching for faith—ways to find personal meaning in life. Christian faith on college campuses invariably prompts questions, especially during "shipwreck" experiences that force students to question unexamined assumptions about God, themselves, and the world.<sup>3</sup>

But how does one make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world when the world itself is constantly changing? What stories do we tell to help students make sense

of and bring order out of the chaotic experiences of personal failure, sickness, death, physical and emotional abuse, and betrayal? To put it more succinctly, how do we help students interpret the signs of the times to engage in campus ministry? We need a way of thinking about campus ministry that combines the best of theology and the best tools from other disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, to enable us to interpret the stories and cultural behaviors of students and explore new means of shaping their faith.

The college campus is a mission field. Campus ministers may begin to understand this by reimagining campuses as *tribes*. For instance, the mascots of the majority of college campuses have tribal names: Mustangs, Commodores, Panthers, Hawks, Tigers, Bulldogs, and War Eagles. Each of these mascots represents a way of life—a tribe of people with different cultural assumptions, rules, and traditions. Like any tribe, each campus has a particular *context* that affects the ways it will be reached with the good news of God’s endless love, forgiveness, and amazing grace found through Christ. Much like the way students approach dress and mannerisms, *tribal identities* are survival techniques that help students with their nomadic patterns of gathering to meet friends in order to cultivate a make-shift family. Whether participating in ritual activity,<sup>4</sup> such as tailgating before the football game, rushing/pledging a Greek fraternity or sorority, or actually seeking out spaces like a chapel, Starbucks, the quadrangle, the Student Union, or the Waffle House, students are constantly trying to “fit together” their lives to enrich their minds, stir their imaginations, satisfy their hungers, and nourish their souls.

I borrow the concept of *tribal identity*<sup>5</sup> from the academic discipline of cultural anthropology, which defines and locates an individual within it and within the larger context of the world, nature, and even the supernatural, to provide a helpful way to interpret the stories and cultural behaviors of students and the importance of these stories to shaping their faith. Accordingly, a tribal identity gives an individual a place in the world, thus providing a framework he or she can depend on to interact with others and the natural environment. Tribes defined relationships, forged social bonds, identities, and commitments, and provided the individuals a sense of security, continuity, and wellbeing.

Since the earliest of tribal associations, human beings have constructed knowledge and meaning in powerful and often unconscious ways through image, symbol, and ritual. As cultural interpreters for the gospel, it is important for campus ministers to become knowledgeable in the “symbolic processes” and the “unconscious structuring processes” of tribal identification. Rankin favors theologian and psychologist James Loder’s theological perspectives for the spiritual development of adolescence and young adulthood over Fowler’s faith development theory.<sup>6</sup>

Elaine Ramshaw suggests that rituals have the unique ability to order experience and communicate some type of meaning, even if the meaning is as simple a message as “I will act as is expected of me in this situation.”<sup>7</sup> Formal rituals carry the core meanings of the social group performing them and provide key insights into the meanings, symbols, and images that influence the group’s worldview. Using both liturgical and ritualistic practices, the campus minister is equipped with tools to help students learn to establish order in

community, handle ambiguity and ambivalence, and introduces them to the need for encountering mystery.

Christian rituals such as Holy Communion can form faith for Christian “tribes.” In the United Methodist tradition, Holy Communion is a sacrament, “an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.”<sup>8</sup> This is what makes the ritual *holy*, since it shows us God’s grace and allows us to experience that grace. Moreover, Communion helps students to further experience God’s grace and unites them together as the body of Christ—a Christian “tribe.” Communion is also referred to as “the Lord’s Supper” as we remember Jesus’ shared meal with his disciples; and the designation of the feast as *Eucharist* (the Latin word literally means “thanksgiving”) helps students affirm their Christian identity and offer thanks to God for the gift of salvation.

By sharing the bread and cup, students are able to acknowledge the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, remember Christ’s sacrifice, give thanks for God’s work in their lives, and unite with all members of the body of Christ. Helping students connect their personal stories of suffering and pain to Christ’s sufferings places their experiences in a larger context in order to give it meaning. Other ritual ceremonies such as prayer vigils, sharing meals, walking the labyrinth, and marking the week with meaningful worship, all can help students to deal with difficult issues by taking a break from their busy and driven schedules to forge a healthy spirituality. Other rituals, such as road trips, service projects, and retreats, all speak to the journeying metaphor of life and the need for Christian students to integrate a vibrant faith with a curious mind.

As Rankin observes, college students are becoming increasingly more diverse in their ideologies, values, beliefs, and worldviews. This is pushing campus ministers to begin to look for new paradigms, to engage in what cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner calls “thinking with the left hand”<sup>9</sup> or “missionary thinking.” Rankin is correct in his assessment of formal definitions that are considered normative by academicians when discussing spirituality. This is because of the objective nature of free inquiry and critical thinking being championed on college campuses that is assumed to oppose issues of faith. In most cases, issues of spirituality are placed in the context of “transformational learning opportunities” through religious life on campus and other extracurricular activities that place an emphasis on the importance of spiritual development of students. For us, however, such dualistic paradigms must be overcome and recast in The United Methodist Church’s mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This means that campus ministers must find creative ways of bridging the gap that exists between the academy’s emphasis on the supposedly value-neutral term *spirituality*, with its formal and psychological descriptions that often ignore issues of religion, and the need for Christian students to develop a sustaining faith.

Rankin rightly points out that college students are often more comfortable using the phrase *spiritual but not religious* to describe their faith. I agree that, unless we help students identify the story that frames their spirituality (“I am spiritual in an Eastern way”; “I am spiritual in a Buddhist or Christian way”; and so on), we run the risk of encouraging a

“Me-ology” approach to spirituality among our students—a tendency to focus exclusively on themselves and their personal feelings and not on God.<sup>10</sup> This is the latest form of idolatry—the act of placing someone or something above God.

My hunch is that, rumbling underneath this proclivity for self-preoccupation, is students’ disappointment with the church’s inability to inspire their souls. This became much clearer to me when Elizabeth, a twenty-two-year-old senior, expressed her disdain for uninspiring church beliefs such as “hell.” Elizabeth’s negative experiences of church, as well as the deaths of members of her family, culminated in a wounding of her soul, which ultimately led to a search for new images and to outright rebellion. She painfully connects the notion of going to hell to be the punishment for not doing everything she was supposed to do. She blames her current worldview, best described as a “sort of an agnostic view with remnants of Christianity,” prompting her to pray over meals and about her struggles periodically. Elizabeth suggests that her experiences of church as a youth are close to worshipping the covert god of orthodoxy, where she was told that, unless she followed the “right way,” she was doomed, and would never be right. Elizabeth is what Nash and Murray calls a *wounded believer*,<sup>11</sup> who defines her or his religious experience as a reaction to the mental and emotional abuse suffered, often perpetuated in the *name* of religion. Like Elizabeth, by the time most college students hit their senior year, they come face-to-face with overwhelming change. Students manage these changes in various ways, but few are exempt from the anxiety and confusion change produces.

Rankin mentions that female students provide much of the student leadership and participation in campus ministry. So how do we find new paradigms to recruit young men, without alienating young women? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, as each campus will require campus ministers to interpret the “signs” of their campus. In my experience, guys tend to watch their heroes in stadiums, arenas, or on the racetrack. Men want to succeed at everything they do. Competence is very important to them. To put it bluntly: Men are competitive creatures who want to win in every situation. They tend to flock toward activities that focus on risk-taking, excellence, quality, boldness, aggression, and heroic sacrifice. Would campus ministry attract more men if it became a place to engage in the real challenge of finding the abundant life? What if campus ministry took to heart Jesus’ example of disciple-making for the transformation of the world by creating places that encourage taking risks, dreaming big, rocking the boat, and challenging one another?

As the tribe of Issachar, it is the campus ministers’ responsibility to ensure that students have opportunities to deepen their faith and to engage in the practices attendant to that faith.<sup>12</sup> Interpreting the signs of the times will mean assisting students with the development of their spirituality through faith-formation practices, which include existing campus traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that aid students’ “tribal” quest for direction, identity, meaning, and community during the college years.

## Notes

1. Historically, religious scholars, scribes, griots, and anthropologists were tasked with interpreting the “signs of the times” through various symbols, rituals, ceremonies, stories, and languages. The phrase *signs of the times* suggests that the church should listen to and learn from the world around it. For several college students today, however, the phrase may mean nothing more than a title of the million downloaded songs in their iTunes library, including, perhaps, Prince’s song “Signs O’ the Times.”

2. Unlike the generation of college students who preceded them, today’s college students perceive that they are part of a special group of young people. Older generations have the sense that they are collectively vital to the nation and individually vital to their parents’ sense of purpose. This leads to an entitlement mentality in which here students assume that they *deserve* top grades, since they have followed their parents’ expectation of high achievement to succeed. See Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Go to College: Strategies for a New Generation on Campus* (Washington DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 2003).

3. Sharon Parks uses the metaphor of “shipwreck” to describe when young adults experience something unexpected, disappointing, or engage in questions that challenge the way they make sense of the world around them. Shipwreck can take many forms—a family crisis, loss of relationship, sickness, betrayal, an intellectual inquiry that poses a challenge to an assumed faith or belief, and the like. See Sharon Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000), 27.

4. *Ritual* means “to fit together” and suggests a space where the spiritual and physical come together. Anthropologist Victor Turner suggests that ritual is an activity where people move from their ordinary daily life across a threshold into a state of *liminality*. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 95–96. Executed well, ritual can help deepen college students’ faith development. See David Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past: Story, Ritual, and the Human Brain* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 122–23.

5. Tribal identity is closely related to the term *participation mystique* that was coined by anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Brühl to describe a type of relationship in which the boundaries between a person and an object (thing) are blurred. Lévy-Brühl speculated about what he posited as the two basic mindsets of humanity, “primitive” and “Western.” The “primitive mind” does not differentiate the supernatural from reality, but rather uses “mystical participation” to manipulate the world. According to Lévy-Brühl, the “primitive mind” does not address contradictions. This could be observed, he claims, in tribal cultures where certain objects treated as holy artifacts were seen as filled with the spirit of their owners or worshipers. See Lévy-Brühl, *How Natives Think* (Princeton University Press, 1985).

6. I agree with Rankin’s assessment of Fowler’s limited definition of *faith* as a value-neutral meaning-making activity and his use of Loder to expand the notion of faith with college students. I would add Parks’ work with young adults, which focuses on faith as a response in a mentoring relationship. For Christians this means that faith is a gift and response to God’s grace. See Sharon Parks, *Big Questions*.

7. See Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 25.

8. See Gayle C. Felton, *By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism* (General Board of Discipleship: Nashville, 1996), 10.

9. Jerome Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (New York: Atheneum, 1971). Bruner uses the phrase “thinking with the left hand” to capture imaginative thought, nonlinear thinking, and spontaneity, which balances the rational processes of written, oral, creative, and communicable skills.

10. Jeffery Arnett calls this phenomenon “make-your-own-religions.” See Jeffery Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Late Teens Through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 172.

11. Robert J. Nash and Michele C. Murray, *Helping College Students Find Purpose: The Campus Guide to Meaning-Making* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc. 2010), 65.

12. Gary Miller, “Future Directions for the College Chaplaincy,” *Ailanthus: The Journal of the National Association of College and University Chaplains* (Winter 2003).

## CHAPTER 3

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# United Methodism on Edge: Campus Ministry as Mission Frontier

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Alice G. Knotts

**M**ission takes place at the frontier of what we know. Our faith helps us approach the frontier rather than turn back. In what follows, I argue that the world that is taking shape today confronts the church with a new mission frontier, and that campus ministry is uniquely positioned to help the church engage this missional challenge authentically and faithfully. The description of the consultation that featured the essays in this volume depicts campus ministry's unique place in this emerging missional context succinctly: "Campus ministry functions as a barometer of the encounter of faith and culture, church and world, higher education and ministry—often experiencing and wrestling with emerging questions, shifts, and challenges first, as a harbinger of sorts for the church." As such, then, campus ministry can help church, academy, and society negotiate the frontier before us into a hopeful future. Indeed, choices made on college campuses help set the course of society. It is in the crucible of developing thought on our campuses that patterns for and assumptions about leadership, business, government, and social movements are hammered out that will affect the future. It is at great peril to its own life and existence that The United Methodist Church minimizes its relationship to the academic community and young adults engaged in higher education.

## ■ Campus Ministry at an Emerging Mission Frontier

As mission settings at the intersection of the forces that are shaping our world, campus ministries can help the church understand the dynamics of mission on the frontiers of rapid change. The reality is Christianity today finds itself in the midst of major transformation. Of course, this is not new. From its inception, Christianity has experienced several major ideological shifts. One such shift, handled by first-generation Christians, asked the question of who was to receive the message that Jesus made God's love known and incarnate. They concluded that God's message was for the whole world. A second big ideological shift took place in the 1500s when Christians debated the question of who has the authority to understand what God is saying and doing in the world. Christian leaders concluded that providing Scripture in the languages and hands of ordinary people of faith empowered them to understand and interpret God's call for their lives and their society. Today, another paradigm shift of equal significance is unfolding before us. The question facing us is this: "What is worth doing?" Our capabilities and knowledge enable humans to do almost anything; we are barely limited by the resources and guiding forces of the universe. We can build dams and cities big enough to change the spin of the planet. We can manufacture products that won't biodegrade. Human knowledge doubles every few years.

The question "What is worth doing?" is particularly pertinent to students as they traverse college life. While making personal choices about what they do with their lives, they also make choices about what to do with profound issues of the day. Is it worth trying to end genocide? Save rain forests? Reduce global warming? Care for refugees? End poverty? Create jobs? Develop extreme sports? Increase markets in Africa? Provide entertainment? Stop terrorists? Work for peace? Improve biotechnology? Develop a new church for a new era?

The question "What is worth doing?" invites students to review attachments to materialism and reexamine the purpose and meaning of their lives. Are we being pressured to do things that are not worth doing or that have negative outcomes? Are we pursuing justice? Is our society characterized by generosity and compassion? Are we being good stewards? Are we solving or creating problems? Who benefits from what we do? Are we making decisions that benefit generations to come?

Also setting the stage for the mission of campus ministry is a social phenomenon of pendulum swings in how we function as a society. For example, society may embrace liberty, then rebel and embrace purity. After experiencing excesses, society may reclaim liberty. A century ago, this culture taught personal sacrifice, but now it values materialism. The church in its mission belongs exactly where the culture has moved to take an extreme position. When culture goes overboard in one direction, the excess can guide the church in perceiving its mission direction. When the pendulum swings to one side, the church has remedies to help heal a society that is off center. To illustrate, at a time when our culture is characterized by materialism and greed and when, on the whole, young adults are increasingly self-centered and self-absorbed, less mature in taking family and cultural

responsibility, and much less skilled in human relationships—these areas of concern help frame an agenda for mission.

This generation longs for rediscovery of acceptance and begs for authentic relationship. We live in such a time of diversity that each young adult, feeling that he or she is unique and different, also may feel isolated. The present generation is savvy about relationships and has language to observe and understand relationships, yet has little skill, time, or patience to work on them. College is a key place for finding a new language to communicate the depth and breadth of human experience. Campus ministries raise the questions of meaning, purpose, calling, and vocation that augment the intellectual search on campus. Fresh explorations of mission are crucial when the identity and experience of emerging generations are so different from the past. Young adults can help with this process of discovering the new mission frontiers.

Colleges and universities have been important to the process of guiding generations of Christians to think rationally and critically, discerning the meaning of human existence. Campus ministries and church-related colleges have nurtured students in the task of discerning their purpose and calling in the context of a faith community. That calling takes form in the vocations, professions, and lives of students as they pursue life in and beyond school. As a form of Christian mission, campus ministry is on the frontline shaping a model of Christian community, and thus of mission, for the future—a model that is diverse, fluid, and encompassing.

## ■ Campus Ministry as the Church's Ministry on the Frontier

The church as a whole is called to see the world as an all-engaging frontier of mission. As mission settings on the forefront of societal change, campus ministries can play an important role in helping the church understand more fully its missional calling as body of Christ, in two crucial areas: faith identity formation and leadership preparation.

### **Campus ministries are spaces for the formation of faith identity.**

The task we undertake in campus ministry is biblical. A Christian response to the question “What is worth doing?” is that Christians are called to liberate people from suffering and slavery.

<sup>1</sup>One day Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses decided to lead the animals across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain. <sup>2</sup>There an angel of the LORD appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but it was not burning up. <sup>3</sup>“This is strange!” he said to himself. “I’ll go over and see why the bush isn’t burning up.” <sup>4</sup>When the Lord saw Moses coming near the bush, he called him by name, and Moses answered, “Here I am.”

<sup>5</sup>God replied, “Don’t come any closer. Take off your sandals—the ground where you are standing is holy. <sup>6</sup>I am the God who was worshiped by your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” . . .

<sup>10</sup>Now go to the king! I am sending you to lead my people out of his country. <sup>11</sup>But Moses said, “Who am I to go to the king and lead your people out of Egypt?” <sup>12</sup>God replied, “I will be with you. And you will know that I am the one who sent you, when you worship me on this mountain after you have led my people out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:1-6, 11-12 (CEV)

Moses was a young man. He went to Mount Sinai, the place where he was called to lead his people. This reminds us that one important responsibility of campus ministry is to help show young adults the way to the Mount Sinais of this world so that they can discern their calling and lead people out of suffering and slavery.

If the church chooses to wait for wandering young adults to decide to cross deserts and find their holy mountains, we miss an opportunity to walk with and mentor the leaders of this new generation. In the United States, the Christian churches have missed mentoring the majority of youth for several generations. In many nations and movements, leaders fail to grasp the art of compassion or how to create a more just society or how to end suffering and slavery. Because society needs more out of leaders, the church has a responsibility to be in mission with young adults on campuses.

### **Campus ministries are centers for learning about faith.**

The processes and experiences that help form a faith identity are missing for many people in our current culture that has become global and increasingly separated from religious practice. Faithful church attendance has declined. Students have grown up in settings where religious differences have been settled by not talking about them. College students hold assumptions and values about their religious heritage, without being aware of them or being able to articulate them. Learning to be aware of these aspects of their identity, understand the dynamics and implications of their assumptions, and make conscientious choices based on a faith identity can be life transforming and healing.

Learning about faith identity is both academic and highly experiential. So when campus ministry centers provide nurturing and mentoring over meals, on retreats, and through service projects, lived experiences become the text for learning about faith identity. Differences that arise, conflicts, choices, changes, and surprises are a palate for faith identity formation. A university setting for this process works with the developmental tasks appropriate to young adults and to identity formation that shapes the rest of their lives.

The church needs to broaden its understanding of faith identity formation as it is experienced by young people today. Students are from all around the world; and campuses are

spaces where a wide array of cultures, languages, and religions meet. Often campus ministries are settings for such encounters. Marlon, a Buddhist student from Sri Lanka, hung out with students from a Wesley Foundation. There he received mentoring from a campus minister. Marlon went on a campus ministry civil rights tour and participated in community service projects, a bonfire at the beach, lunches, and conversations. The Wesley Foundation was there as he survived obstacles in life and when he lost family members in a tsunami. On a United Methodist Student Movement retreat, he took his first Communion. Is Marlon a Christian? I don't know if he claims the name, but he is following Jesus. We have here a model for mission, compassion, and relationship that does not seek to convert a Buddhist.

Campus ministry gathers young adults in experiences of faith with diversity of every kind. Around a common table, through common discussions, shared life events, and in working side by side at tasks, young adults experience communion—and their faith grows.

Often today's students have a fresh approach to religion. Most students see themselves as spiritual but not religious. Typically young adults do not participate in a religious group while on campus. Some explore spirituality on the Internet, creating avatars to participate in religious groups in a virtual world. In sum, it is complicated to be in mission with young adults when relationships are at the heart of Christian faith, young adults are seeking authentic faith, and on the whole, religious groups are not meeting their needs. Yet, this is precisely where our culture is headed; and so churches and congregations need to address the same question.

To attract students to faith learning settings, we need to reshape our settings and take them to students. Students don't want to be told what to do; but, if they learn for themselves, what they learn becomes their own. Students tend to respond positively to travel, especially in other countries, and to creative service-learning experiences. Here, again, the experience of campus ministry can help forge fresh approaches. At one time in our country's history young adults raised in the country benefited from an "urban plunge" orientation to poverty and issues in the city. Yet these days, campus ministries have discovered, with most students growing up in urban areas, the more pressing need might be to offer students opportunities to discover nature and the interrelatedness of all things. One campus ministry I know of took overwhelmed, stressed young college students to the country to build a corral for rescued horses—to the great benefit of everyone.<sup>1</sup>

### **Formation of faith identity nurtured by campus ministries joins knowledge with vital piety.**

The church has been through a period of intellectual loss, currently putting a priority on simplifying faith for people who want to have the warm experience without the challenges of learning their history or examining the complexities of religion. Experience does not substitute for knowledge; nor is it complete by itself.

Integrating faith experiences and classroom religious studies, so that intellectual inquiry has practical application, can be exciting and lead students and faculty to discover

places in society where changes are needed to meet basic human needs. From the beginning, campus ministries have helped our culture deal with human inequality based on gender and race. Campus ministry students even helped lead nations into the streets in the 1960s to work on liberation.

Campus ministries have changed the shape of universities. Wesley Foundations, initially developed to provide campus ministries to state universities, met basic needs of students and were some of the first models for student unions on campus. Wesley Foundations nurtured interfaith religious programs and often were the initial home of student clubs and organizations.<sup>2</sup> Wesley Foundations served as incubators that helped with the creation of departments in universities that expanded the academy with Religious Studies, African-American Studies, Chicano Studies, and Women's Studies. Colleges and universities have largely forgotten the historic role that United Methodists played in shaping higher education as it is today. The intellectual study of religion has shaped expectations for the pursuit of diversity, inclusiveness, and relationships on campus.

Since the 1970s, youth and young adults have been pulling away from church when it didn't connect with their feelings and when these students sought authenticity and integrity among people who, too often, didn't live by the principles of their faith. Not surprisingly, study of Christian faith among students declined. As it stands, most young adults on our campuses have done little reading of the Bible or Christian teaching; and often, their exposure to Christian faith has been in the context of groups more inclined to indoctrination than to giving young adults the tools to learn how to relate the religious questions to Scripture and to their lives.

The contribution of the university to the community around it should be more comprehensive than vocational preparation, leadership development, cultivation of sports, or economic and cultural enrichment. Campus ministries can remind colleges and universities to help civilization reach high. The church needs to review what it means to serve the spiritual needs of students and then call for fresh exploration of the design and scope of an academic world that has been coopted by economic interests. The mission of higher education deserves to be carried out with attention to ethics and classic virtues of great civilizations and faiths. Sometimes a prophetic voice is needed to address the intermingling of corporate or military research and the pursuit of academic freedom. The university cannot reach its highest goals without engaging the highest principles. Campus ministry can play a vital role in the dialogue about the role of faith and ethics in higher education today.

### **Christian identity formation takes place in the context of a faith community.**

Faith formation happens in community. Yet the ways in which young adults gather and find faith community keep changing. This calls for great sensitivity and creativity on the part of campus ministries. In fact, campus ministries become centers for reinventing and renewing the church. In providing spaces where students can explore their deepest questions, campus ministries can help the church understand the ways it needs to change in order to

minister effectively to this rising generation. What kinds of worship and spiritual growth work for them? What are their inner needs? How do they engage society and the world? Where do they yearn for justice? What does it mean to them to be in mission? How do campus ministries relate to students who have no religious upbringing?

By inventing new forms of church, campus ministries can help the church understand what it may look like in ten or twenty years. Certainly the music, clothing, and atmosphere of worship are changing and becoming less formal. When mission happens at the frontier of societal change, as it does in campus ministry, it prompts Christian leaders to ask what aspects of religion, religious life, and religious institutions need to be set aside or reconfigured in order to let God lead an emerging generation and culture.

### **Identity formation of young adults may take place in a public context that is not sectarian.**

For a long time United Methodists have given services to the community as a public church. United Methodist campus ministries provide a chaplaincy to the university; offer pastoral care to those who are troubled; celebrate high achievements; advocate for the oppressed; and address the complex educational, business, and ethical issues of the day. Because United Methodists have chosen this role of being a public church in our communities, when campus ministers fill this role in colleges and universities, campus ministries give leadership and visibility to the denomination.

A crucial emerging missional role is to provide a chaplaincy presence in times of trauma and violence. Campuses are places where mass shootings take place. Campus ministers step up and provide shelter, counseling, rituals, and recovery. They help traumatized students, regardless of the student's attitude toward faith. One campus minister walked into the police station with a college student to file an injunction against a violent boyfriend. In another situation, when a young rape victim asked, "Why did God allow this to happen?" a campus minister led her through the process of discovering a fresh, meaningful relationship with God.

The church needs to pay attention to the way in which the need for spiritual care has grown outside the church and through higher education. Twenty years ago, two university-related medical training programs offered courses on spiritual care. Today 600 programs teach spiritual care of patients. We must seek and engage new arenas where identity formation and faith formation are emerging.

### **■ Leadership preparation**

Campus ministries are centers for leadership preparation for laity and future clergy. They gather, mentor, and coach the next generation.

Campus ministries face a dilemma, though. Frequently, students are too busy and too stressed out to want to participate or volunteer. This is one indicator that priorities in our culture are upside down. Production and output, things completed and tests passed—these

become the measure of achievement. Yet, precisely here, where life is off center, emerges a place for mission. The challenge is demanding in the best of circumstances; but with many campus ministries caught in a downward spiral that sucks energy, the task can feel overwhelming. The fewer people there are to lead, the more tiring it is for campus ministers, and the harder it is to reach out and offer leadership training to significant numbers of students. Campus ministers need the support of the church, because this mission cannot be done in isolation.

One of the gifts of campus ministry is that it develops leaders who learn the art of prophetic leadership. The primary criteria for prophetic leadership are social conditions and careful discernment of God's desire for resolution of challenging situations and the ability to stay the course in the face of opposition. When campus ministries are effective with their tasks of accepting people as they are, guiding them through faith identity formation, and helping them step forward to take leadership, the core values of these leaders may critique social problems. Students who learn the art of prophetic leadership may find themselves at odds with other leaders of the day.<sup>3</sup> Christian faith ties its understanding of leadership to that of the prophets. The church raises leaders who know and understand that implementing God's call is different from conforming to culture. Leadership is about imitating Jesus, going where God sends us; speaking out for justice; and condemning despotism, greed, and materialism that traps others in poverty without freedom. The ability to provide leadership for these situations is grounded first in a person's faith identity. Persons so grounded are better able to see beyond themselves and to constantly renew and update their call from God.

The church and the world need leaders who have made these life commitments and honed their leadership skills to promote tolerance, global understanding, and cultural awareness. Our leaders need to be compassionate, committed to bringing people out of poverty, dedicated to helping others, and making a better world and paying it forward. Today's students must lead the world through massive global climate change and the church through an experience of renewal and rebirth.

Today's students are not massed in churches; they are on campuses. The church needs campus ministries to help reach these young adults. There are more students in college now than ever before in history. If United Methodist students, active in the church before college, do not connect with a church or campus ministry while attending college, the vast majority will leave the church.<sup>4</sup>

The authors of the book *To Transform the World: Vital United Methodist Campus Ministries* claim that campus ministry is a mission frontier. Campus ministry is a place where young adults from many nations with many different religious faiths, ethnicities, and points of view come together. They desire to better themselves and seek to find ways to earn a living, invest their lives, and be leaders who will transform the world. The church needs to be present in this crucible of leadership formation. It is here where the church has a crucial mission. It is also where church is being reinvented. As United Methodist Bishop Sally Dyck says, "Campus ministry holds the cards."<sup>5</sup>

Campus ministry is a place where potential leaders are found, nurtured in forming their identity, and provided opportunities to practice leadership. Currently the church has some broken links. Sometimes local churches do not know about campus ministries. Introducing youth to campus ministries before they choose a college can be helpful, as can sharing a website, an address, or a name and phone number once the choice is made. Congregations can take steps to bridge these gaps and encourage youth to integrate their faith nurturing with their academic growth. Church leaders can encourage young people, not only by providing local opportunities for leadership but also by talking up the leadership opportunities made available by campus ministries.

Churches can also widen their welcome to people from other nations and faiths. Students from a religious studies class in a university were assigned to visit a worship service from another faith tradition. Those who attended a Buddhist or Mormon worship service were invited to an orientation class afterward. There they could freely ask questions. In addition to helping them with their school assignment, this personal attention helped them feel comfortable and welcome. Capable religious leaders for this generation need to be able to move among people of different faiths with ease. Just as many students today can speak more than one language, we need religious leaders who can pass through ancient barriers and speak more than one religious language.

As the church undertakes the task of raising up people to engage in lay ministries and to lead the church, the task of finding and preparing young adults is daunting. On campus today, it is hard for campus ministries to find students based on religious preference, in part because of privacy restrictions. However, when campus ministries are engaged in mission work, the appeal of the mission attracts students. Lift up God's vision, carry out the mission, and God will provide leaders. The following well-known story from 1 Samuel 16 illustrates this point:

Samuel was a priest of the Hebrew people when King Saul failed to give needed leadership. The people were divided north and south by their attitudes and politics. Some wanted a new king. Samuel asked God for guidance. God sent Samuel, not to the power center in Jerusalem but to a tiny village called Bethlehem. Samuel arrived with a sacrificial animal, a horn, and some oil—all the basic supplies needed to anoint a king. Yet God sent Samuel, not to a wealthy man but to the home of Jesse, a man who had eight sons. Samuel wasn't sure what he needed to do, so he kept asking; and God kept saying, "I will tell you what to do." The situation was treacherous. God was asking Samuel to anoint a new king while Saul was still king. The elders of Bethlehem were afraid. They knew that this could create trouble with Saul. Samuel called for a worship event, to which Jesse and his sons came. Samuel looked into the heart of each; and in the youngest son God saw possibilities that others had not seen. This youngest son, grandson of an immigrant and descendant of a prostitute, was David, a youth, not yet a leader. David became King David, who inherited the moral leadership of the nation and brought people together.

In our time, the task of campus ministers is to take the role of Samuel and to ask what God is doing with young adults. Like Samuel, our role is to look into the hearts of young

persons. We may need to leave behind the politics of the old guard, the politics of north and south, east and west. We may need to bless new leaders while the old ones still have power. We may need to let God work with young persons, without trying to forge them into our own image, without pressing them to adopt the church that ordained or employed us. We may need to create a sheltering space where these people can grow even though, at the same time, we are being pressured to get them to conform to being “disciples” the way some church members or church leaders want them to be. We can broaden our concept of discipleship.

As the church works its way through the current crisis, God calls us to lead between what has been and what is coming into being. Our task in this in-between time is to keep asking. “What is God doing with this upcoming generation?” and to bring our oil and the tools we need to anoint the ones to whom God says yes.

## Notes

1. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Beth Cooper, Director of the Wesley Foundation, serving San Diego State University, for creative ministry that provided illustrations for this chapter.

2. Allyn Axelton (retired United Methodist campus minister), conversation with the author, 14 April 2009. Ricardo Feliz (faculty, Department of Hispanic Studies, San Diego State University, Wesley Foundation San Diego State University alumnus), conversation with the author, 6 November 2009.

3. Kirk B. Oldham, “Preparing Leaders, Campus Ministry Style,” *To Transform the World: Vital United Methodist Campus Ministries*, ed. Alice G. Knotts (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2009), 62.

4. Dr. Wanda Bingham, presentation to the Board of Directors of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Spring 2009. Jeff Schadt, “Listening to Students About Leaving the Church” ([www.edstetzer.com/2007/08/listening\\_to\\_students\\_about\\_le\\_1.html](http://www.edstetzer.com/2007/08/listening_to_students_about_le_1.html). Accessed 4/5/2010).

5. Bishop Sally Dyck, Minnesota Area, The United Methodist Church, in a presentation and discussion at the Biennial Gathering of the United Methodist Campus Ministry Association, Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, July 23, 2009.



## RESPONSE

### Pondering the Edge: A Response to Alice Knotts

Hendrik R. Pieterse

**B**eginning with Wesley’s refusal to acknowledge the strictures of the English parish system, Methodists have been in the business of crossing frontiers. And from the beginning, our boundary crossing has been linked to mission. Indeed, for us, crossing boundaries

is mission. So when Alice Knotts characterizes campus ministry as a mission frontier, it should not surprise. A prominent theme in her paper is that campus ministry functions as mission frontier, as missionary boundary, in that campus ministry experiences first-hand, and often first, the growing edges of social, cultural, demographic, intellectual, and religious change. Cast in the register of mission, the questions that emerge at these boundaries are thus, *ipso facto*, questions of faith. For campus ministry, Knotts contends, these questions converge—perhaps collide—at yet another frontier: the religious and vocational yearnings of a new generation of young adults. As such, translating the faith to a new generation is neither new nor particularly startling. However, asks Knotts, how does the church conceive of mission to a generation that self-identifies as spiritual but not religious, that finds sustenance in spiritual relationships but not in the institutions traditionally associated with fostering that spirituality, and for which pluralism, including religious pluralism, is a working part of their assumptive world?

The larger context for these questions is the unprecedented reconfiguration of our world as powerful globalizing forces are redrawing political, economic, social, cultural, and religious boundaries, weaving the fate of the human family into a shared global project that at once relates us in ways that connects and divides, includes and excludes, enables and abandons. Here United Methodists confront an unprecedented threshold of mission; and, arguably, of all the church's ministries, it is campus ministries that confront this frontier most directly and most dramatically. Herein lies both the promise and the peril of campus ministry today. Promise, in that campus ministries are laboratories of practical divinity on the frontline in which, as Knotts notes, the church's belief, discipleship, and practices are interrogated, negotiated, renewed, and reinvented. Peril, in that the potential of these missional experiments to invigorate and renew The United Methodist Church can easily go unrealized if they become uncoupled from the theological issues, faith world, and lived experience of the denomination's mainstream. Let me illustrate by using an example from Knotts's paper.

In describing the task of campus ministries as centers of faith formation, Knotts tells the story of Marlon, a Buddhist from Sri Lanka who participated fully in the faith life of a Wesley Foundation to the point of taking Communion. She wonders out loud whether this experience means Marlon is a Christian, and then states: "We have here a model for mission, compassion, and relationship that does not seek to convert a Buddhist." The context of the statement is a campus ministry community constituted by young adults with widely diverse faith experiences, Christian and non-Christian, and many whose search for authentic faith includes avatars in a virtual religious world but not religious groups such as the traditional United Methodist congregation.

Here we reach a theological frontier—one that, if approached carefully and thoughtfully, could enrich United Methodists' understanding and practice of their mission and ministry. However, to indicate a bit of what is stake in getting us there, let me counter Knotts's claim with a question: How do United Methodist campus ministry settings such as the one she describes negotiate the fact that the denomination these ministries represent

takes as its official mission the Great Commission—the mandate to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? Is a model of mission that has some version of the Great Commission as its theological basis feasible, let alone appropriate, for the radically pluralistic religious context in which campus ministries find themselves, particularly given the checkered history of this text in the church’s missionary expansion? For campus ministries, a constructive engagement with such questions allows much-needed clarification about the nature of confessional identity in a religiously plural environment; the boundaries of community shaped by such identity; the relationship between confession, baptism, and Communion (how open should “open” Communion be?); the place—perhaps the very appropriateness—of evangelism, and more. In wrestling with such matters, *precisely as* an extension of The United Methodist Church and in dialogue with its core beliefs, traditions, and practices, campus ministry can lead the denomination into a more reflective, more nuanced—and more faithful—missionary encounter with the world emerging before us.

For the church, such a dialogue with its campus ministries might prompt some to challenge the facile and largely unreflective ways in which the reference to Matt. 28:19-20 is bandied about and touted in denominational literature and pulpits, with little awareness, it seems, of the theological questions that go begging in so doing. As a consequence, congregations, including a goodly number of their clergy leaders, might begin to question the theological and ethnic monoculture (be it White or “minority”) that still characterizes the lived experience of so many of them. Such questioning might just open their eyes to the diversity of culture and religious expression that already exists under their noses, in their neighborhoods and in their towns. Thus a missional frontier opens up with all the transformative potential that Methodists have come to expect from crossing boundaries into unfamiliar territory.

Such is the promise of United Methodist campus ministry today. May it not go unrealized.

## CHAPTER 4

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# A Reasoned Faith and the Search for a Public Voice

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Mark Forrester

It was not by providence or arbitrariness that Charles Wesley’s “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” became the leading hymn in both the 1964 *Methodist Hymnal* and our current, 1989, *United Methodist Hymnal*. Few denominations have grounded and sounded their theology in and through hymnody more profoundly. The evocative image of a thousand gathered voices, praising “the triumphs” of God’s grace in Christ, can be elaborated upon in many historically plausible ways. Certainly our evangelical heritage, replete with mass conversions and teeming ranks of members, promotes more than mere nostalgia for a time when our biblical witness constituted an American master narrative. Because the Methodist movement gave rise to the second largest Protestant denomination in North America, and because God’s redemptive grace was easily demonstrated and celebrated, by sheer force of exponential growth, the thousands upon thousands of tongues that bore witness to Methodism’s ascendant period of monolithic greatness still reverberate as standard bearers of a kind.

While it would be a form of willful blindness to ignore the compelling evidence of evangelical success as seen through the lens of quantitative proof, it would be equally shortsighted to allow this one mode of faithful discernment to become the myopic through which the entirety of United Methodism’s memory and mission is viewed. It is, therefore, incumbent on us all to sing other stanzas of “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” in order to recall

and reclaim our distinct Wesleyan *voices* (not voice) made public and prophetic within the academy, our forebear's original marketplace of ideas.

Let us begin, briefly, where the people known as “Methodist” began: John and Charles Wesley's Holy Club. By today's standards, the Holy Club was an unimpressively small and informal association of serious-minded Oxford students that emerged in the late 1720s. This dedicated core of young adults, seeking sanctification through prayer, mutual accountability, and higher learning, became the unlikely formational mechanism through which “vital piety” took flight. More than any weighty theological treatise or grand systematic scheme penned by Reformation architects such as Luther and Calvin, Wesley's elegant, transformative vision of faith and reason working in dynamic tandem established, in my opinion, the theological *a priori* of what we search for today when we articulate a “reasoned faith” in search of a public voice in a post-Christian academy.

I will, therefore, slightly modify my assigned topic and present a few modes of ministry, service, and presence that have comprised my “job description” and, in turn, have become exciting avenues for theological reflection on a practical public theology of sorts, what lies at the heart our shared calling. Toward that end, I contend that today's campus minister is not so much in search of *a* public voice but of public voices that must address many publics found within the still “vital” dialogue of faith and reason. And because all theology, past and present, is contextual, we must willingly hear thousands of other tongues finding voice within the continuing mission field of higher education: not a choir's voice swelling to symphonic heights, but scattered and faithfully deployed voices that bear witness and intone harmonies amid the sometimes-maddening cacophony of multiple truth claims. What will follow are specific contexts that illustrate, but do not exhaust, arenas out of which campus ministry and/or the campus minister finds public voice.

## ■ The Public Voice of Campus Ministry at the Core: Student Ministry

The campus minister's primary “public” is the student body. While this states the obvious, it is often the obvious that we overlook and misperceive. It is engagement with the university student, especially the undergraduate, that constitutes the living context out of which we must forever shape and reshape our understanding, outreach, and motivation.

First, we must understand that students are a highly mobile public. We have a few short years between freshman orientation and commencement. “Here today, gone tomorrow” perfectly describes this missional demographic that, in Wesleyan terminology, challenges us to an “itinerancy in reverse.” Ours is a voice of the gospel spoken to a passing crowd. And when crowds within the larger crowd begin to form, and we are blessed with core members who incarnate our student ministries, we must not expect them to be anything less than sojourners of faith who, unlike members of the local church, will not—and cannot—establish themselves in perpetuity. William Blake's poem “Eternity” beautifully nuances the spirit of non-control that frees us to understand and find voice within our emerging public:

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sun rise.<sup>1</sup>

Once we have a sympathetic understanding of our core public's fleeting nature, our voice will find both outreach and in-reach. First, to speak inwardly to the heart and mind serves to prepare disciples for Jesus Christ. We do this through many public voices: liturgy, sacrament, proclamation, confession, education, and recreation. However, we can no longer assume that all who are drawn to the sound of our public voices are biblically literate or doctrinally astute. Often we must assume that our gathering public, if literate at all, speaks the tongue of cultural Christianity. A reasoned, critical, and unflinching conversation with Scripture within most public expressions of popular religiosity is rare. The Bible is thus revered in the same fashion Mark Twain said the public loves a classic: it is something to be praised but never read. Nevertheless, this must be accepted with compassion rather than scorn; otherwise, our voices will carry overtones that repel rather than compel. For the "good news" in Jesus Christ is proclaimed most convincingly to this public by *how* we say what we say. It isn't enough to have an amorphous love for students in general; we must really like them in their particularity. Such love, as unconditional positive regard, will limber our voices to speak the hard, radicalizing truths of the gospel that seek to claim young lives brought our way through prevenient grace.

Having been a campus minister for eighteen years, serving as the Wesley Foundation director at Austin Peay State University (1991–94), and Vanderbilt University (1994 to present), and having listened to gifted colleagues and mentors who faithfully wrangle with, and prioritize, the many legitimate concerns forever set before them—I have come to the conclusion that the one perennial task, shared by all, that holds the greatest potential for our ministry's public impact is vocational discernment. Too often we limit the notion of a "public voice" to traditional occasions of public oratory and address; and certainly these opportunities for high visibility through organized worship, memorial services, commencement prayers, lectures, and panel discussions serve to channel our voices into important public spheres. (More will be said about this below.) Nevertheless, there is no greater urgency or higher honor to be realized than to use our voices—our thousand reasoned voices as pastors, counselors, teachers, and mentors—to mold and equip young men and women who, in turn, will carry their own voices into professions, vocations, and avocations sure to influence publics, secular and religious, of their own making.

To be sure, the steady, timeless voice of vocational discernment joins us in continuity with our predecessors; yet the realities of today's information age gone digital and wireless, collapsing attention spans to nanoseconds, are daunting. Not only are we proclaiming the gospel to a moving crowd, when heard our voices collide with legions of voices, images, and appeals vying for the most precious and perishable commodity of all: time. In addition to this "virtual" public highway of incessant communication, the academy confiscates greater chunks of discretionary time by increasing extracurricular inducements to do service

learning, build nonacademic transcripts, and join as many professional, social, and altruistic clubs as are humanly possible. At least, this has been my experience for the past ten years. In the midst of this vortex or hyperactivity, we behold an ADD culture, flitting from one obligation to the next like swarms of starving bees.

Given all that, the voice most needed in this relentless striving is not that of organizational self-promotion with a spiritual twist (even though it is advisable to make good use of every relevant medium that can be exploited to get your ministry's "brand" noticed and remembered). The fact is that, in spite of all these emerging innovations, groups continue to form and achieve a "critical mass" the old fashioned way: via word of mouth. And the voice more often needed, heard, and heeded, the voice that has salience amid this beleaguered and distracted "millennial generation" is the reasoned, authoritative voice of the Good Shepherd entreating, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28)

A reasoned faith is a grounded faith; and what grounds our stressed, overachieving public is the call to rest. Yes, campus ministry generates many external activities that, in my mind, are necessary manifestations of Christian outreach. And the need for our core public to have an efficacious witness within and beyond the campus is both evident and imperative. Still, what makes our reasoned voice unique and spiritually disciplined is when it prompts, welcomes, and celebrates the renewal that can only come from Sabbath, from changing the rhythms and cadences of students' lives from harried "doing" to holy "being."

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel defines "the Sabbath," in his book by that name, as "the sanctification of time."<sup>2</sup> The logic of Sabbath is to make vocation possible, to give necessary pause and replenishment so that work, especially the work of the student, evolves beyond an academic major into a divine sense of calling and possibility. Because any personal vocation is "love in search of form," as one of my mentors once said, the most significant public voice that must be honed to perfection is the voice of rest, renewal, and quiet discernment that transforms public careers in the making into callings thankfully received.

Perhaps, I have overly sustained this conversation about students as the core public of the campus minister; but in some ways, a more detailed analysis is still found wanting. In the remainder of this essay, as I reflect theologically upon secondary but critically interrelated publics that "give voice" to campus ministers and the larger work of campus ministry, I will seek to affirm these publics as ends unto themselves and yet, at the same time, as means of serving, equipping, and assisting in the vocational formation of students. For the sake of economy, I will now segue into the next public arena of the university: faculty, administration, and staff.

## ■ The Public Voice of Campus Ministry as Proactive Collegiality

By "proactive collegiality," I mean one's taking the prayerful initiative to discern a common concern or goal that serves the dual but interrelated missions of church and academy. I have found that even within the most denominationally loyal institutions of higher education,

quite often the basis of a shared mission among faculty and administration is collegiality more than a commonly professed faith. At independent and state schools, the intellectual, political, and spiritual climates can vary from favorable to uninhabitable. I hesitate, however, to make generalizations about which kinds of colleges and universities are amenable and which are anti-religious; since experience has taught me that such profiling is unfair and often counterintuitive.

My three years at Austin Peay State University (APSU), for example, a Tennessee Board of Regents school, were full of happy surprises as I sought out the dean of students, his staff, and related faculty commended to me by my predecessor—who himself had been skilled at building bridges between student life, academic life, and religious life. I wrongly assumed that “separation of church and state” would preclude the many opportunities for mutual support and activity that developed.

On the other hand, my fifteen years at Vanderbilt University, a historic Methodist school founded by Bishop Holland McTyeire in 1873, have taught me to assume a greater degree of institutional aloofness and skittishness toward religious life. While the student culture (our primary public) is religiously oriented and spiritually curious, the secondary public of academics and administrators too often expect, or at least hope, that religious leaders (and campus ministers) will seek out public exposure only by playing symbolic and ornamental roles. The need to practice proactive collegiality in such contexts is urgent to the same degree that institutional policies and economic priorities result in less access to the vital public(s) we are commissioned to serve. This admission of fact need not signal despair, since the transformative power of God’s grace in Christ often thrives through humility and prayerful creativity.

I briefly share two “best practice” examples of what I am calling proactive collegiality. For it is at the crossroads of complementary purpose within the academy that the church, beyond itself, creates a public “ministry of presence” that cannot be quantified. Moreover, it is the campus minister who must take the *prevenient* initiative in “good faith,” believing that God is already in mission to our world of higher education long before we show up. (A bit later, I will succinctly articulate my missiology of ministry to expound upon this notion of “God’s mission.”)

A significant bridge built between our Wesley Foundation and the greater APSU community came about, quite serendipitously, as the indirect result of an off-campus homicide. A nontraditional student, who was also a paranoid schizophrenic, had gone on a shooting spree at a nearby apartment complex, killing a student and wounding another. While all acts of violence are hateful, this one was a hate crime rooted in homophobic rage. The shooter had previously written a number of inflammatory letters to the school paper, condemning the university’s gay/lesbian student organization and demanding its dissolution. Frightened by the trauma of this murder, the gay/lesbian student organization president, along with a faculty advisor, began looking for an alternative meeting place where they could assume a low profile. I understood this need as one of the church’s primary public responsibilities: to provide sanctuary. I thus “reasoned” to my board of directors who, not inclined toward

giving “sanction” to such a group, erred on the side of compassion by affirming this as a public ministry of refuge. Paradoxically, as we created a discreet place of sanctuary, our ministry took on greater public visibility with students, faculty, administration, and support staff.

This simple deed of proactive collegiality eventually led to advising on the dean’s five-year planning committee that next spring, not to mention stronger rapport overall that paved the way for partnering on programs, academic and social, co-establishing the university’s first “alternative spring break” (advertised through the alcohol awareness council as “the best spring break you will ever remember”), and taking the lead on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day by inviting and co-sponsoring APSU’s keynote M.L.K. speaker for 1993, Reverend William Sloane Coffin. Within a short span of time, our campus ministry took on many important roles, not so much because it was an established public voice, but because it was a proactive presence seeking voice in unison with others.

A second “best practice” that morphed from a modest student program to a citywide staged production was “the faith/doubt project,” a collaboration between The Wesley/Canterbury Fellowship at Vanderbilt (WCF) and Actors Bridge (AB), an acting company that had staged a few of its first performances at St. Augustine’s Episcopal Chapel, our campus home.

In 2004, WCF was blessed with a Focus Grant (through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry) that allowed us to create a ministry in the arts. Because the Wesley Foundation at Vanderbilt survives in large part because of our ecumenical partnership with St. Augustine’s Chapel, our shared resources had provided for only the most rudimentary student ministry—certainly not a budgeted theatre group, a choir, or anything requiring part-time personnel. At first, I tried unsuccessfully to build up a student ensemble by hiring a Christian improvisational artist and director. Because Vanderbilt Off-Broadway and other theatre programs were well established, and because performing improv was intimidating to most students, this otherwise good idea crashed and burned within a few months.

I then turned to Vali Forrister, codirector of AB, who had helped direct a local performance of *The Laramie Project*, a play written by Moises Kaufman about the 1998 murder of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepherd. Vali, a preacher’s kid, was also a public relations and education staff person for Vanderbilt’s Cancer Center, and thus had an open heart and mind about giving creative license to a subject sure to interest believers and skeptics alike: faith/doubt.

In short, the thesis underlying the faith/doubt project was that doubt is not the antithesis of faith but occurs in commensurate measure with faith itself (a sturdy insight gleaned from Paul Tillich’s *Dynamics of Faith*). A theological conviction at the heart of faith/doubt was that biography precedes theology. Again, this was hardly an original idea but, nevertheless, provided an experiential and hermeneutical foundation for affirming that God is found in epiphany moments of truth that later constitute our personal and communal narratives. Our stories, thus, become the biographical fodder from which a considered theology grows (or fails to thrive).

The first phase of faith/doubt followed the methodology of *The Laramie Project*. We recruited from within WCF and advertised through *The Hustler* (Vanderbilt University's student paper) in order to attract students interested in oral history and/or creative writing. Having purchased several compact digital recorders, we trained students in the art of the personal interview. Those interviewed about faith/doubt were asked to tell their stories, not to explain why (or why not) they believed in God. Interviewers were trained to coax narratives of giving birth, dying, suffering through divorce, triumphing over hardship, and celebrations both unusual and sublime. In short, we were looking for religious and spiritual autobiographies that were not chronological from start to finish, but discrete memoirs and poignant recollections that could be recorded within an hour. Students sought, or were referred to, fellow students, professors, and/or other people connected to the university. Interviewees fell along a broad spectrum of faith, age, gender, race, and background so as to expand the public reach and relevance of the stories of faith/doubt that we later hoped to present to the public.

Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, providing reams of text for a second group of student writers to mull over. Weekly they would gather to cull out key phrases, paragraphs, and narratives that had potential for skits, musical adaptations, dialogues, and monologues. Soon, in collaboration with the AB director, producer, stage manager, actors, and a host of others, these unique and disparate stories of faith/doubt were woven into the tapestry of a staged performance that ran for two weeks during July 2006 at an off-campus theatre. All eight performances were sold out to audiences, ranging from serious theatre patrons to youth and adult Sunday school classes. What started off as a meager oral-history experiment gave way to a rich dramatization of faith in many guises, a veritable anatomy of the human condition couched in multiple languages of belief, skepticism, holy terror, and awe.

As stated at the outset of this essay, I contend that *a* search for *a* dominant public voice harkens us back to a religiously homogeneous time that, now gone, produces anxiety and yearning more than reasonable promise. When we as campus ministers find ourselves disillusioned by proofs of post-Christian disestablishment, reason should tell us that we are wise not to entertain illusions in the first place. The church beyond itself on campus, nevertheless, has found, and will continue to discover, new voices of faithful witness that make us anything but irrelevant, non-viable, or obsolete.

The few ways of attaining "voice" mentioned above, I am persuaded, intimate bold new horizons of public visibility and impact for the gospel of Jesus Christ—beginning with students, our primary public; rippling out to colleagues and administration through acts of proactive (and receptive) collegiality; and building on this ever-changing base of support to serve, and be heard, within the larger world beyond campus. And these are only two of many thousands of voices that have and will be heard. If we as a people still called Methodist serve the present age of higher education with the same Wesleyan spirit of innovation that guided our founders, our entire denomination can find renewal, in large part, by honoring and watering the roots that gave us a distinct public voice of faith seeking understanding through reason. In the remainder of this essay, I sketch out my

theological rationale for not accepting post-Christian disestablishment as cause for defeat, despair, or discouragement.

### ■ *Missio Dei*: God's Sending Voice Sounding Through Our Public Voices

As others in this volume have reminded us, ultimately, campus ministry is missiological. Our public voices of interpretation to our connectional family need to be orchestrated to begin and to end on this note. Often the view from local church pulpit and pew interprets campus ministry as extended youth work. And more than a few of our connectional leaders (who should know better) aid and abet in this misconception. When we deeply consider our work with minds and hearts flowering into independent maturity, the theological model of mission called *missio Dei* (the mission of God) is a compelling and traditionally congruent vision for those of us who know our modes of doing ministry must often adapt to non-ecclesial and profoundly foreign frontiers.

Not unlike old-world missionaries deployed abroad, we campus missionaries must be bilingual, if not multilingual, in order to serve and communicate Christ within educational, philosophical, social, cultural, technological, and economic contexts that enjoy homeostasis without the ecclesial community being in the balance. But unlike the colonial era of missions, when the gospel was used as a cudgel to westernize “pagan” lands, our presence will not be easily accommodated if our missiological “logic” reverts to the imperialist’s notion that the church is in the business of brokering God to others. Some are still of this mind, and even today campuses have onslaughts of ministries fueled by the zeal of Christian crusaders who maintain theological antipathy against the “godless,” secular academy as a badge of distinction. I believe a more Wesleyan voice will succeed in this mission field when God’s prevenient grace is understood as the voice that gives us voices to be heard and recognized by those—Christian and “other”—who are being sought.

Missiologist David Bosch defines *missio Dei* in this way: “In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. . . . There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in God’s love toward people.”<sup>3</sup> When mission is the primary attribute of God at work in the world (with or without the church), then the *activity* of the church (our voice) is one of *witness* to what God has done or is doing in our midst. Whenever safe sanctuary is being sought, for example, and the church participates in that seeking by providing physical space and pastoral support, the voice of *missio Dei* finds expression through our voice. The Eternal becomes temporal and dwells in public.

Because we are Christian, our witness is theological and christocentric. But other religious voices can also bear witness to *missio Dei*; so the many traditions that co-participate in God’s healing, justice, peacemaking, and other fruits of divine love have access and, in fact, can be agents of God’s mission as well. More can be said about the ecumenical and interfaith aspects of *missio Dei* made real within our mission context; but the main point to be underscored is that our distinctly Wesleyan presence should be respectful, neighborly,

and knowledgeable of the religious and secular “other,” even as we offer Christ, make disciples, and bear witness through proclamation, sacrament, service, and creative works of Christian love.

The missiological paradigm of *missio Dei* is not absolute, yet the main thrust of God’s voice echoing as “deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42:7) through our voices of witness is Wesleyan when appreciated as prevenience leading us onward. The very act of offering Christ and making disciples, so central to our denominational mission statement, is finally initiated by God, freely offered through grace alone, and seeks now to create new stanzas of “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” in this new millennium.

Throughout the long arch of history the church has found voice on the periphery as well as from the center of civilization. There have been, and will be, seasons under heaven that bring the church great growth and institutional prosperity, as well as decline and reformation. There have been seasons in Methodism through which faith and reason flourished so as to produce more colleges and universities than any other Protestant church in America. And yet our abiding faithfulness, regardless of where we are in the seasonal cycle of sowing and reaping, is more important than our apparent success or failure. Even during long periods of exile, which may well describe the church’s relation to the post-Christian academy, God’s people, though relatively small, have waxed poetic and prolific. It is my firm belief that the church’s search for a public voice will go from seeking to discovery, will resonate with God’s prevenient voice that ever trumpets through the thousands of voices past and yet to come!

## Notes

1. William Blake, *The Portable Blake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), 135.
2. Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2003), 9.
3. David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 390.



## RESPONSE

### Toward a Theology of Campus Ministry: A Response to Mark Forrester

Namsoon Kang

Reading the signs of our time is one of the most significant tasks for theologians and practitioners. Mark Forrester rightly reads the signs of our time, in which the epistemological shift from the modern to the postmodern has taken place. Although he has not

explicitly used the term *postmodern*, his emphasis on diversity and multiplicity of voices (not in the singular but in the plural), his interpretation of the disestablishment of Christianity, and his acknowledgement of multiple truth-claims in the age of post-Christianity precisely reflect the *zeitgeist* of our time. In this sense, he has done an excellent job in reading the signs of our time drawing from his concrete experience of campus ministry, since, in many ways, the campus is a microcosm of the world. I start my response by highlighting three important theological points Forrester makes in his essay.

### ■ Significance of a Multiplicity of Voices

The first insight is the emphasis on the *multiplicity of voices*. Forrester says that “today’s campus minister is not so much in search of a public voice but of voices that must address many publics found within the still ‘vital’ dialogue of faith and reason . . . not a choir’s voice . . . but scattered and faithfully deployed voices.” He makes clear that he values the multiple, heterogeneous, and scattered voices, instead of a homogeneous, unitary, monolithic voice. He thus emphasizes the shift in our time from the modern to the postmodern. Awareness of this shift and implications for ministry is extremely important for us theologians and practitioners, because decentering the monolithic voice in favor of multiple voices opens up a new horizon of possibility for campus ministry that celebrates multiple voices and locations.

### ■ Power of Public Persuasion

The second theological point is Forrester’s emphasis on the significance of “proactive collegiality.” Perhaps, “public persuasion” is a more appropriate phrase, since the collegiality was possible only through and after the initial “persuasion” by one party, the campus minister. The campus minister was able to persuade students and administrators to expand their horizon of understanding and open their hearts and minds to engage in the two projects Forrester describes. The fact is these persons likely would not have participated without (proactive) persuasion. By “public persuasion,” then, I mean the power and passion to convince or to invite people to join work in the service of universal values such as peace, justice, and equality. People do not simply “move” to do something they usually do not do; they need to “be moved” by compassionate pleas for committing to a good cause. In this sense, practicing the power of persuasion could be a significant and effective ministerial tool for doing campus ministry.

### ■ Importance of Theological Ecumenicality

Forrester’s third insight is the emphasis on ecumenicality in campus ministry. In this regard, the title “faith/doubt project” is fascinating. Combining the seemingly contradictory terms of *faith* and *doubt* in the title of the project is itself a public invitation to a multiple,

ecumenical, plural space of thinking, interpreting, seeing, judging, and acting. Acknowledging the different ways in which faith is experienced and refusing to consider faith and doubt as opposites confirm the core emphasis in theological ecumenism, namely, “unity in diversity,” not “unity in uniformity.” Moreover, theological ecumenism frees people from the theological monopoly of an exclusivist position about faith and allows them to experience faith as an ongoing journey of exploration, not as a fixed, doctrinal settlement. The spirit of theological ecumenism is extremely important, especially in campus ministry, where the primary subjects—the students—are themselves in an ongoing process of becoming and maturing, dancing back and forth between faith and doubt.

### ■ Toward a Theology of Campus Ministry

Forrester’s essay invites one to rethink various theological issues in *doing* campus ministry. To conclude, I would like to propose a few theological themes that seem to me significant in constructing a theology of campus ministry for the future.

First, campus ministry should ground its theological framework in a *theology of boundary crossing*. That the primary location of campus ministry is the university and the primary “parishioners” are students means that doing campus ministry requires radically crossing the boundaries of gender, class, race and ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, ability, religion, or denomination. Modernism has encouraged the construction of identity in a monolithic and rigid way and, thereby, has negated the value of one’s multiple narratives and identities. A modernist framing of one’s identity within rigid boundaries of gender, race, class, or sexuality excludes the possibility of holistic liberation and solidarity between, among, and within different boundaries of identity. A *theology of boundary crossing* lays the theological groundwork for a two-fold vision of campus ministry: A *campus ministry of resistance* that opposes the destructive power of domination and control of one over another; and a *campus ministry of solidarity* with those on the margins created by origin of birth, gender, race and ethnicity, class, language, sexuality, citizenship, religion, and so forth.

Second, campus ministry needs to promote a *theology of deep ecumenism* that radically seeks both unity in diversity among the churches and unity in humanity. Ecumenism is “deep,” because unity is more than a romantic chanting of “We are one in Christ” (which is often the case in ecumenical gatherings). Deep ecumenism is possible only through personal and institutional struggle with the question of what it means to be one in Christ and through an ongoing commitment to promoting multiple forms of justice and equality both on interpersonal and institutional levels. It is obvious that unity in Christ does not mean simply to make a collective public confession of belief in Christ. Being one would mean, for instance, to attend to the issues of inequality, injustice, conflict, bias, prejudice, discrimination, violation of human rights based on gender, class, race/ethnicity, citizenship, origin of birth, ability, sexuality among/between/within persons, nations, regions, or religions. In this sense, going “deep” is the never-ending task of an ecumenism that seeks unity in Christ for both church and humanity.

Third, campus ministry needs to exercise what I would call a *theology of multi-sensitivity*. As Forrester's example of the public "ministry of refuge" demonstrates, campuses are spaces where all kinds of human interaction, conflict and tension, or pain and suffering take place and often intersect among students with different gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, nationality, or citizenship. If campus ministry is to attend, ministerially and theologically, to the pressing issues on campus, then raising and implementing multiple forms of sensitivity in the direction, vision, and activities of the campus ministry are essential in doing authentic campus ministry. "Multiple sensitivity" would mean, for example, sensitivity to gender, race, ecology, queer rights, or geopolitical issues. The list can go on and on, depending on the level and scope of the awareness of the campus ministers and their understanding of ministry about the issues of human life today. Therefore, expanding the scope of sensitivity would be the ongoing task of the campus ministry in the contemporary world. If the campus ministry is a channel for transforming students into critical and responsible agents in changing the world beyond the walls of the campus—agents committed to making the world a better place for the disfranchised—then campus ministry plays a powerful role in planting the priceless seeds of change in the hearts of the students.

Forrester's essay is a humble invitation to us all to explore the various possibilities of doing campus ministry today. What campus ministries might need to do now is to move from *searching* for a public voice (as in the title of the paper) to *creating* public voices. After all, public voices are not simply just "out there" to be found. We need intentionally and passionately to create effective public voices so that doing ministry—whether it is teaching, parish ministry, or campus ministry—can function as significant channels for promoting peace, justice, equality, and compassion, not only on campus or in church but also in our societies and in the entire human community. Here the Wesleyan "public and prophetic" voices Forrester calls for need what Cornel West calls "prophetic criticism," that is, the deliberate notion of unveiling, negating, and problematizing, while keeping "track of the complex dynamics of institutional and other related power structures in order to disclose options and alternatives for transformative praxis."<sup>1</sup>

## Notes

1. Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (New York and Cambridge: The New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1990), 31.

## CHAPTER 5

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# Recovering a Holistic Discipleship

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Malcolm L. Frazier

One of the mission projects of the campus ministry I lead is the Wings of Hope Orphanage, in Fermathe, Haiti. All the children have either mental or physical disabilities. While there with a student mission team recently, one of my students, deeply impacted by the experience, came to me in tears saying, “Reverend Frazier, I do not even know who I am anymore.” During a Bible study, a student shared that he was stillborn at birth, having his life literally slapped into him. He believes that God has a special calling on his life. On another occasion, I led a mission trip to South Africa for college students and young adults, the theme of which was vocational discernment. In reflecting on the trip, upon returning home, one student wrote that, while she knew that God’s will was always in her best interest, she feared that God would require too much. She returned from the trip ready to remove the layers that were preventing her from accepting God’s call. At yet another time, during a debriefing following one of our alternative spring break mission trips to New Orleans for post-Katrina relief, many students expressed a commitment to honor their experiences by being more socially conscious of conditions in their own neighborhoods.

Campus ministry abounds with stories like these. They illuminate the reality that, although they might not use theological language, college students are engaged in issues of discipleship and vocational discernment. I have seen this emerge in the contexts of mission trips, Bible studies, counseling sessions, and community witnessing. This essay explores a holistic understanding and practice of discipleship centered in vocation, in which thinking and doing, personal and social holiness are experienced as inseparable dimensions of

Christian calling. What role does campus ministry play in disciple-making? What can it teach us about calling and vocation? Before I address these questions, I lay the ecclesial groundwork of claiming campus ministry as church, since an exploration of discipleship and vocation must be grounded in an understanding of what it means to be church.

The stated mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.<sup>1</sup> The addition of the phrase “for the transformation of the world,” in 2008, is a direct challenge to the church. In *Called To Be Church*, Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall write:

Being about the work of changing lives and then changing the world would seem to be the core purpose of the church and of Christian community. To what extent would this characterize the life of today’s congregations? The core purpose of the church is to be a community that sustains continuous change and transformation as we grow in the likeness of Christ and image of God. But in today’s world, this purpose is often lost or displaced by other purposes entirely. The purpose of churches today often seems to be less about changing lives toward the way of Jesus Christ and making disciples than it is about satisfying the members of the congregation—keeping them happy by meeting their social needs and proving comfort and services.<sup>2</sup>

We make disciples as we proclaim the gospel; seek, welcome, and gather persons into the body of Christ; lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the Spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ; nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing; send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and continue the mission of seeking, welcoming, and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.<sup>3</sup> According to the Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church, the “visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men [and women] in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite of the same.”<sup>4</sup> United Methodist theologian Thomas Frank writes that the church is where people are invited, welcomed, and received into fellowship; encouraged in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ; strengthened in their spiritual formation; and supported in their everyday lives in the community as faithful disciples.<sup>5</sup>

The references above support my claim that campus ministry does embody the essence of the church, both in definition and purpose. Communities of faith on college campuses are indeed places where believers congregate in chapels, residence halls, classrooms, and on the campus yard to hear the pure Word of God preached and to experience Christ through

the sacraments. United Methodist Communications has launched a new campaign entitled “Rethink Church.” The question that drives the campaign is “What if church wasn’t just a place we go, but something we do?” The challenge is also to consider church as occurring not only on Sundays. Using the metaphor of ten thousand doors, the campaign suggests that there are many doors through which church can be expressed. Christian campus communities gather throughout the week. In addition to morning worship services on Sundays, my campus ministry colleagues lead worship services at various times and days. Healing services occur at 11:00 P.M. during the week, while student-led worship services are held in the evenings. It is not uncommon to find students engaging in praise and worship at noon. The worship services can have different formats. Amy J. Rio-Anderson, the chaplain of Salem Academy and College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, gives this example:

One creative way for students to worship is done by hosting worship stations. The entire community joins together for music and singing. When the group is not gathered as one, students can visit one of the worship stations throughout the room. The stations are hosted by student leaders (trained by the campus minister). The stations seek to relate to the Millennial Generation’s desire for ritual, liturgy, innovation, and a full experience of the senses. Students may stay at one station the entire time or visit various stations. Possible stations are (1) prayers for healing and anointing with oil, (2) praying the psalms, (3) group reflection on a Scripture reading, (4) working with an art medium, (5) dance or movement, and (6) lighting candles for intercessory prayer. Ancient and new ways of worship are combined and intertwined. The one constant is that the students are fully engaged as a worshipping community.<sup>6</sup>

Realizing the importance of the sacraments, some Bible studies are preceded by Holy Communion. I have had the privilege of baptizing on my campus, with student leaders participating in the ritual. When United Methodist students are baptized or join the church on campus, their names are placed on a church membership role that is maintained by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville. My colleagues share that one of the best attended worship services during the year is Maundy Thursday, during Holy Week, when the Eucharist is celebrated and the ritual of foot washing observed. Campus ministry was not only rethinking church but also practicing it before it became a slogan; and, consequently, it was practicing discipleship.

I suggest that the ten thousand doors emphasis of the Rethink Church campaign has a direct parallel to how the church makes disciples. The campaign video shows people engaged in various kinds of ministry, some of which I have already referenced from *The Book of Discipline*’s list of how disciples are made. I have also mentioned corporate worship; and would add that students not only assist in planning and leading worship but also preach and give testimony. My campus has many chapel assistants who help with all aspects of the worship service. A men’s fellowship group serves as ushers and greeters. During worship, students are invited to answer a call to Christian discipleship. There is an altar prayer. One

of the most poignant moments for me occurred when a student, after partaking of the Lord's Supper, asked whether he could be saved that day. He openly declared Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior that Sunday. These transformative experiences happen throughout our denomination's campus ministry communities.

Another "door" through which disciples are made is Christian conferencing. In addition to district and jurisdictional conferences, students attend the Student Forum of the United Methodist Student Movement, a national leadership conference for college students. Established in 1989, it provides leadership training, including developing skills for leading local campus ministry, Bible study, peer ministry, and organizing activities; spiritual formation, including personal faith enrichment, worship, education in social justice, voluntary service, and the development of faithful discipleship on campus; and networking, including opportunities to connect with other students nationally and internationally. There are also legislative sessions, where resolutions are discussed and voted on, as well as jurisdictional meetings, where student leaders are elected. Another conferencing opportunity is Exploration, a national gathering for high school seniors and young adults considering ministry in The United Methodist Church. The event provides participants with the opportunity to enhance their personal relationship with God and to discern where God is calling them. An instance comes to mind. While meeting as a member of the design team for Exploration 2009, I got a call from a student who informed me that he had decided to go to seminary. He was one of the students who had attended the previous Exploration event.

There are also Christian conferencing events for campus ministers and chaplains. Members of the National Campus Ministers Association (NCMA), an ecumenical organization, meet annually. Many of my colleagues belong to College Union, which also meets annually. There is the United Methodist Campus Ministers Association (UMCMA), which hosts a biennial gathering. All of these events include worship, workshops, keynote addresses, networking, business meetings, and fellowship.

The door that opens up to service activities also leads to disciple making. Behind this door you will find campus-sponsored mission trips, where students go to both domestic and international locations to feed the hungry and to care for strangers. One of the biblical groundings for this is found in Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" While preparing for a mission trip to Haiti, I collaborated with the General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C., in developing orientation sessions that addressed the need not only to offer acts of compassion but also to understand the structures that are in place that cause people to be deprived and marginalized. The student mission team learned about the history and political climate in Haiti and how foreign policy adversely affected the poor masses. On returning to campus, the students were given tools of advocacy. Hundreds of students from my university have spent their spring breaks doing post-Hurricane Katrina relief work in the Gulf Coast, where they meet other university students. Indeed, the residents and volunteer coordinators report that the majority of volunteers are college students. In the summer of 2009, I led a mission team of university

students and young adults on a trip to South Africa. The mission was a partnership with Bryanston Methodist Church in Johannesburg on their Akani Project, a child enrichment program in Diepsloot, a settlement near Johannesburg. In addition to being with children, many who were orphans, the team visited the Apartheid and Hector Peterson Museums to understand the context in which they were doing mission work. Among other missional activities, the team also visited a church in Johannesburg that was serving as a refugee site, took a tour of Robben Island that was led by a former inmate, and engaged in dialogue with South African pastors. Reflecting on a visit in Soweto to Regina Mundi, one of the largest Catholic churches in the country, one of the mission team members captures an aspect of disciple-making: “Above one of the doorways of the church was a stone statue of Jesus, with his arms stretched in welcome. But either by the passage of time or vandalism, the hands of the statue had been broken off. This was a powerful image for seventeen young adults on a mission trip, all listening for how God is calling them. An image of Jesus missing one thing—his hands. What an invitation to us to be the hands of Christ in the world.”

These kinds of service ministries are not unique to my campus. Similar ministries take place throughout the campuses around the nation and are very influential in the process of disciple-making. Indeed, these experiences are transformative and change lives. One of the members of the South Africa mission team said, “My life has been changed forever. No longer can I claim to be a Christian and not actively pursue a life of service, love, humility, and gratitude. God got my attention. I’m listening now. I’m watching now.”

In claiming the ecclesial nature of campus ministry, I have elucidated how it meets the doctrinal definitions and theological essence of church, notably how campus ministry participates in the practice of discipleship. Despite being referred to as “extension” ministry, campus ministry is at the very center of fulfilling the mission of the church. However, the extension ministry label puts us in good company. United Methodist historian Russell Richey reminds us that those in campus ministry are true heirs to John Wesley, the founder of our denomination. He writes:

Who more than he [Wesley] ministered beyond the local church? We carry on his extension work as teachers, publisher, missionary, fundraiser, administrator of the connection, and chaplain for the people called Methodist.<sup>7</sup>

The phrase “the people called Methodist” reminds us of our Wesleyan heritage, explained in part by Wesleyan theology. In *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, Richard Heitzenrater writes:

Wesleyan theology, while grounded in Scripture, emerged from Wesley’s experience; it attempts to explain life in the presence of God. Wesleyan organization arose from the need to nurture daily the seeds of faith that give new life. Wesleyan mission developed to spread the love of God to every neighbor, that is, to everyone who has a need (although especially to those in the family of faith who had the greatest

needs). And Wesley viewed this whole development, including his leadership role, as a part of God's providential activity in the world.<sup>8</sup>

To integrate discipleship and vocation (which are inseparable anyway), it would help to emphasize the word *called* in the phrase “the people called Methodist.” A recovery of our Methodist heritage challenges us to answer the *call* to be Methodist. How do we, a people *called* to be Methodist, integrate call with discipleship? What vocational discourse can we use as we exegete the Wesleyan theology of being in the presence of God, nurturing the seeds of faith, spreading the love of God, and facilitating the providential activity of God in the world? What role does campus ministry play on this terrain? An adequate theological response to such questions should commence with an exploration of the meaning of call and vocation.

The Methodist concept of a “called” people is analogous to the call of the Israelites. Os Guinness writes:

Calling has another important meaning in the Old Testament. To call means to name, and to name means to call into being or to make. . . . Thus when God called Israel, he named and thereby constituted and created Israel his people. Calling is not only a matter of being and doing what we are but also of becoming what we are not yet but are called by God to be.<sup>9</sup>

So, the first level of calling is to acknowledge that there is a Caller. R. Paul Stevens supports this claim in *The Other Six Days*:

As we shall see, the Christian doctrine of vocation—so central to the theology of the whole people of God—starts with being called to Someone before we are called to do something. And it is not something we choose, like a career. We are chosen. The Latin roots of the word “vocation,” *vocatio* and *voco* mean simply to be called or to have a calling.<sup>10</sup>

The reciprocity of naming the Caller and responding to the call necessitates being in the presence of God—a fundamental affirmation of Wesleyan theology. Guinness notes that in the New Testament “calling” is virtually equivalent to “salvation.” Specifically, such calling that saves involves a response to the lordship of Jesus Christ, to discipleship.<sup>11</sup>

So what does the discipleship element of being in the presence of God look like? History is a great teacher; and revisiting stories and ideas from the past can illuminate the present. We can learn something from the Early Church, when vocation referred to a countercultural commitment with significant risks and personal sacrifices in light of the persecution of Christians (until Constantine made Christianity the recognized religion of Rome). In this context emerged the athletes of the desert. These men and women practiced (at times extreme) forms of self-denial of body and mind in order to focus on God.<sup>12</sup>

One of the best-known figures from this period was Ignatius, a Christian bishop of Antioch, who was captured, imprisoned, and eventually killed in Rome. He felt a powerful sense of union with Christ in suffering and death, reflected in this excerpt from his writings:

Let me be fodder for wild beasts—that is how I can get to God. I am God’s wheat, and I am being ground by the teeth of wild beasts to make a pure loaf for Christ. I would rather that you fawn on the beasts so that they may be my tomb and no scrap of my body left. Thus, when I have fallen asleep, I shall be a burden to no one. Then I shall be a real disciple of Jesus Christ when the world sees my body no more.<sup>13</sup>

Athanasius, a fourth-century theologian and Bishop of Alexandria, portrays calling in his *Life of Anthony*. Anthony, after hearing a reading from Matt. 19:21, began a spiritual journey of patience, piety, and self-denial. After surviving a spiritual battle with a multitude of demons, Anthony exclaims: “Here am I, Anthony; I flee not from your stripes, for even if you inflict more, nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

During the Middle Ages, calling was regarded as a special call into the priesthood or monastic life. Adherents to this calling engaged in rhythms of daily discipline that were centered on God. They believed that these disciplines cultivated the personal qualities needed for salvation. These practices illustrate the Wesleyan theological element of nurturing the seeds of faith. A historical figure from this era was Benedict of Nursia, whose rules shaped the lives of the Benedictines and other orders of monks and nuns. The rules were established to achieve total union with God. A monk’s concern about the world and his own passions were replaced by his longing for God.

The rules are the paradigm for spiritual disciplines among the monastics. It includes rules about the obedience to superiors, no personal possessions, service to brothers through weekly kitchen assignments, and the avoidance of idleness through reading, prayer, and labor.

Another historical figure of this era was Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologiae* illustrates what he thought were the virtues of Christian perfection: contemplation, charity, and obedience. As an example, he argues: “Hence the work of the active life conduces to the contemplative, by quelling the interior passions which give rise to the phantasms whereby contemplation is hindered.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, the active life can serve as training for the contemplative life—if activity teaches one how to calm inner passions. That is, in order to attain a state of charity (love), it is necessary to be voluntarily poor.

These historical accounts of rigid self-discipline, martyrdom, and rigorous self-denial as expressions of calling seem extreme to us contemporary observers. But could they serve as a barometer for where we are in our Christian walk and call to discipleship? Could they challenge us to ask how serious we are about our discipleship? Might not these accounts provide inspiration for those who are seeking a more authentic approach to faith expression? One of the many faults that college students find with the institutional church is a lack of authenticity. The recovery of some of these disciplines has

appeal. Witness the popularity of the Taizé Community, an ecumenical Christian monastic order in Burgundy, France, founded in 1940 by Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche, later known simply as “Brother Roger.” Over 100,000 young people from around the world, including college students, make a pilgrimage to this community for Bible study, prayer, worship, sharing, and communal work every year. One young person, interviewed in the video *Taizé: That Little Springtime*, said what drew him was the order’s emphasis on community. Belonging to a community is very important for college students. Jeanne Roe Smith, executive director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of California, Los Angeles, puts a theological spin on this. Recognizing campus ministry as emerging faith community, she writes:

The Christian faith is a call to community. How we nurture and develop faith communities and faithful people is integral to leadership and spiritual formation. Christian community is relational. Our relationship with God guides us to be in relationship with others. In an increasingly global and technologically oriented world, these elements of relationship with God and with neighbor are critical factors to consider when developing new models for outreach and presence on our university campuses.<sup>16</sup>

Remnants of monasticism can be found in other contemporary settings, such as the new monastic community named the Potter Street Community (formerly The Simple Way), located in Philadelphia. One of its founders is a young adult named Shane Claiborne, whose approach to ministry was deeply impacted by the time he spent with Mother Teresa in Calcutta. He challenges us to live an authentic Christian faith. In *Irresistible Revolution*, he draws deeply on the desert fathers and mothers in his vision of Christian community and discipleship, summarized in a quotation Clairborne keeps on his office wall: “The best thing to do with the best things in life is to give them away.”<sup>17</sup>

Traces of the monastic lifestyle can also be detected in the attitude of young people. While not referring to rules or discipline, Elonda Clay, a doctoral candidate at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, captures some of the spirit of the movement:

Consuming has become our way of life. We consume too much food, clothing, energy, information, television, internet, products to make us look cool, cars, land, luxury items, and allusions of the good life. . . . We have to get over having so many things; we need to stop hoarding the economic and natural resources of the world; we will have to relearn how to be.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to international pilgrimages to Taizé, college students regularly attend weekend spiritual retreats, many of which include abundant practices of meditation and contemplation. Mary Ann Kaiser, a missionary in Kenya working on HIV/AIDS education, attributes a part of her journey to attending Chrysalis, a three-day, spiritual renewal program.<sup>19</sup>

The final discipleship elements, spreading the love of God and facilitating the providential activity of God, will be explored concurrently because they are interrelated. I begin with an understanding of vocation prevalent during the Reformation. For Reformers such as Martin Luther, God's call was not limited to one's participation in the religious community. Nor did "vocation" apply only to those who entered the priesthood, the monastery, or the convent. For Luther, any station in life, including being a parent or grandparent or child, is a place from which to serve God.<sup>20</sup> Ordinary work of all kinds are legitimate vocations for the faithful. Luther believed in the priesthood of all baptized believers and maintained that there is no fundamental difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate; all are true priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do. Luther's theology of vocation is grounded in Christian love, having its biblical base in the two great commandments in Jesus' teaching. "The love of God is expressed chiefly in faith, the love of neighbor in one's vocation."<sup>21</sup>

## ■ Conclusion

To sum up: God uses both laity and clergy to spread God's love and do God's activity in the world. Vocation is, to use Frederick Buechner's felicitous phrase, the place where one's deepest gladness meets the world's deep need.<sup>22</sup> When they participate in Bible studies, one-on-one counseling, and conferences, college students are discerning the sources of their deepest gladness. When they go on mission trips and engage in critical social analysis, these students discover the world's deepest needs. During a vocational discernment Sunday worship service on my campus, Tony Campolo challenged the students to embrace their call to a special discipline and to deepen their vocation by serving in a marginalized setting. For example, a student studying to be a lawyer might spend time volunteering in the inner city at a legal aid clinic. A student pursuing a career in medicine, be it as a doctor or a nurse, might volunteer at a medical facility in a Third World setting. A student studying to be an architect might volunteer to build homes with Habitat for Humanity. Such experiences would make students better at their chosen vocations.

The mission statement of my campus ministry is "The Wesley Foundation at Howard University develops Christian disciples." The vision statement is "young adults in global leadership." We want people of faith in classrooms and courtrooms, at the head of Fortune 500 companies, and in church leadership. College graduates are serving in these contexts and in many more. The college campus is where students are either discovering or confirming their vocation. It is a place where students feel free to struggle with their sense of call, to have experiences that impact their career choices, and to find intersections between their faith and their vocation.

Holistic discipleship cannot be disassociated from church, including the church as community on campus. Disciple-making is multifaceted, with many ways of practice and many vocations. These ways and these vocations coalesce in campus ministry, where students are nurtured and equipped to be God's agents in the world.

## Notes

1. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—2008* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), ¶120, p. 87.
2. Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called To Be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 80–81.
3. *Book of Discipline*, 88.
4. *Ibid.*, 62.
5. Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 186.
6. Amy J. Rio-Anderson, “Being Formed by the Spirit: Spiritual Formation and Christian Discipling With College Students,” in *To Transform the World: Vital United Methodist Campus Ministries*, ed. Alice G. Knotts (Nashville: The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2009), 157–58.
7. Russell E. Richey, *Extension Ministers: Mr. Wesley’s True Heirs* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2008), 17.
8. Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 320.
9. Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 29–30.
10. R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 72.
11. Guinness, *The Call*, 30.
12. William C. Placher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 31.
13. *Ibid.*, 34.
14. *Ibid.*, 63.
15. *Ibid.*, 159.
16. Jeanne Roe Smith, “Emerging Communities, Emerging Faith,” in *To Transform the World*, 120.
17. Shane Claiborne, *Irresistible Revolution* (Colorado Springs: The Simple Way, 2006), 167. The book includes an appendix that acknowledges the development of a new ecumenical movement that is grounded in God’s love and draws on the rich traditions of the early church. This school of conversion is referred to as “the new monasticism.” Some of its marks include relocation to the abandoned places of empire, sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us, hospitality to the stranger, lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities, humble submission to Christ’s body, nurturing common life among members of an intentional community, geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life, and commitment to a disciplined contemplative life (363–64).
18. Vicki Brown, Meg Lassiat, Sharon Rubey, eds., *Beyond the Burning Bush: Hearing and Answering God’s Call* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2009), 134.
19. *Ibid.*, 183.
20. Placher, *Callings*, 207.
21. Gary D. Babcock, *The Way of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 34, 38.
22. Quoted in Victor L. Hunter, *Desert Hearts and Healing Fountains* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 28.

  
**RESPONSE****“A Fuller Understanding of the Gospel Itself”:  
A Response to Malcolm Frazier**

Helen R. Neinast

Malcolm’s enthusiasm for the work of campus ministry and the importance of that ministry is keenly evident in his essay. Even as he writes about the power of call in students’ lives, it is obvious that he has found his own call and his own power as a minister on campus. When he recounts the experiences of his students on service-learning trips, it becomes clear that these service trips become agents for change in the participants’ lives. These quickly become opportunities for discernment and paths to vocational reflection for these college students.

Thus, it is no leap of thought when Malcolm invokes the mission statement of The United Methodist Church: “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” His claim that campus ministry does embody the essence of the church, both in definition and in purpose, is buttressed by example after example in which worship, stewardship, holy community, the sacraments, and service are embodied on campus, in a surprising varieties of ways.

After citing chapter and verse on a large and impressive array in which the church is lived out on campus, Malcolm highlights what I believe to be one of the most important aspects of the church on campus, namely, holy conferencing by college students from across the country and, in some cases, around the world. Priorities at these national conferences include leadership development, spiritual formation, worship, and theological dialogue. These three- or four-day conferences reflect the very essence of what the church should be—and, indeed, the local church has much to learn from them. This is one of the essay’s most powerful contributions to understanding the church on campus and to articulating how campus ministry can inform ministry in the local church.

I did not find Malcolm’s mention of early-church historical accounts of rigid self-discipline, martyrdom, and rigorous self-denial helpful in the context of this essay. I much prefer his reference to Jeanne Roe Smith’s recognition of campus ministry as emerging faith community, a call to community, and a call to nurture faithful people in leadership and spiritual formation.

Malcolm writes with authority in making his case for campus ministry as the church on campus. But I would add this observation by Don Shockley, writing in *Ten Theological Theses for Campus Ministry* (circa 1985), in which he makes an observation that seems a critical addition to Malcolm’s argument:

I am intrigued by the Pauline imagery for campus ministry. We are sent out to the unfamiliar, indifferent, even hostile arenas as representatives of the church in its more familiar forms. But we are not sent merely to protect the church's children who have ventured there; we are sent rather to be in ministry to the locals who inhabit those spaces, whoever they may be. The church . . . has to take the risk that we will go over to the other side . . . allow the gospel to mingle with other stories and become something else. But, given trust and support, we will bring home more than we take away. We may in fact bring home a fuller understanding of the gospel itself.

“A fuller understanding of the gospel itself”—that rings true to what Malcolm Frazier has written; it also rings true to Malcolm's own ministry.

## CHAPTER 6

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# Cultivating a New Generation of Christian Leaders

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Kristin Stoneking

Recently, the local Presbyterian church with which our campus ministry is in partnership sent an e-mail to one of our student staff assigned to that church, wondering, essentially, how their congregation could engage more young adults in its ministry. Overt in this question was the concern that the church was somehow not meeting the needs of young adults; covert was the panic about relevancy and sustainability and the possibility of inadequacy that the absence of young adults suggested. In my ten years as a campus minister related to this congregation, this was the third time this question has been put formally to us, the first two times as the part of the work of task forces dedicated to getting to the bottom of the question of “Where are the young adults?” The question has come up countless times informally. Of course, this is not a concern unique to Presbyterianism or this particular congregation. United Methodists, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, too, wonder and worry about the dearth of young adults in their local congregations and in the ranks of ordained clergy.

### ■ “Where Are the Young Adults?”

All too often, in fretting about why young adults are not engaged in large numbers in our local churches, the conclusion that “they’re just not interested” is drawn. While the belief that students’ religiosity generally tends to decline during their years in college is

documented empirically in some places,<sup>1</sup> so has their overall desire to engage spirituality, ask big questions, participate in communities of depth, and find purpose and meaning. In 2003, a multi-year research project conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles, was begun to assess the spiritual desires and developments of undergraduate students. According to the HERI study, college students have “very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Many are actively engaged in a spiritual quest and in exploring the meaning and purpose of life.”<sup>2</sup> A 2007 study of more than 1,000 young adults, conducted by Lifeway Research, concluded that seven in ten Protestants, both mainline and evangelical, who went to church regularly in high school had quit attending by age twenty-three.<sup>3</sup> However, the HERI study found that eight in ten students reported attending religious services during the past year. Furthermore, according to the HERI study, similar numbers say that they discussed religion with both friends and family, and more than two-thirds pray. Three-fourths say that they are “searching for meaning/purpose in life” and many are engaged in a spiritual quest, with nearly half reporting that they consider it “essential” or “very important” to seek opportunities to help them grow spiritually. At the same time, nearly half also say that they are “seeking,” “conflicted,” or “doubting.”<sup>4</sup>

These findings from the Lifeway study and the HERI study seem inconsistent. Yet, while both deal with the way young adults interface with religion, these studies are most likely measuring two different aspects of student experience. The Lifeway research is correct that what seems to decrease during the young adult years is *religiosity in a Christian context*, which can refer to activities such as regular worship attendance, daily religious practices such as prayer or devotional time, in the manner exhibited during one’s youth. However, the HERI study correctly notes that what seems to increase is the desire for *spirituality, meaning, and purpose more generally*—the need for an “owned” faith, a spirituality that is questioned, tested, and refined, as well as one that can provide truth and guidance in a complex, pluralistic environment.

## ■ Spiritual Needs and the Quest of Young Adults

In terms of faith development, it is entirely appropriate, and perhaps necessary, for young adults to leave familiar religious settings and explore new territory, where they feel the freedom to deconstruct their faith, asking questions they may not have felt previously permissible. As Steve Rankin points out in his essay in this volume, James Fowler, in his pioneering work on faith development, posits that individuals move through faith stages as they travel through life, transitioning to a more nuanced and deeper understanding of their faith, themselves, and the world as they grow and are confronted with new challenges. Individuals move from the undifferentiated faith of infancy to the imaginative faith of early childhood and then to the mythic-literal faith of childhood. These early transitions are largely brought on by the growing consciousness of a child as she ages. As individuals move into adolescence, they tend to exist in a peer-oriented, dependent stage of faith, where they

have assimilated the faith of their childhood. This stage of faith provides a deep sense of belonging. Transition out of this stage is often precipitated by a major event, such as leaving home, wherein an individual is confronted with questions to previous beliefs and is challenged to construct a faith that can be personally owned but still connects with the traditions and beliefs of the larger community. This is a critical time, and if there is no intention or attention to integration of faith, experience, and education, persons may become arrested in their development or lost to faith.<sup>5</sup>

Meaning-making grows in complexity as we age; and there are certainly many examples of persons whose faith development has been arrested at a stage of discerning what is real or what is not real, or at a stage of dependency, or simply in a place of doubt or confusion. If we are to form mature Christians who have chosen their faith freely, we must allow the possibility that these same persons would decide against participating in the religion of their childhood, at least for a time. Moreover, for persons to be alive to paradox—which is one of the hallmarks of a mature faith—we must affirm and make space for the reality of competing truth claims.

We are mistaken, however, if we believe that allowing space and freedom in a faith quest is all that is necessary for persons to come to a mature faith. Again, according to the Lifeway study, 34 percent of persons who had ceased attending regular worship by age twenty-three said they had not returned, even sporadically, by age thirty.<sup>6</sup> In other words, contrary to the conventional wisdom that young adults essentially take a hiatus from engagement in a local congregation and return when their lives are less transient or when they are starting a family, more than a third do *not*, in fact, return. The difference between those who leave and stay away and those who engage in a spiritual quest and eventually become productive and vital leaders in faith communities is that some are guided, accompanied, and assisted through this period, while some are left on their own to sink or swim, possibly finding safe harbor along the way, but, more likely, remaining indeterminately unmoored.

A number of private colleges and a handful of public ones, buoyed and informed by the work of the HERI research team, are beginning to take seriously the task of addressing students' desire for the development of an interior life while in college. For example, Wellesley College has been at the forefront of forging dialogue spaces for students of all faiths to understand and respect one another and creating resources for other educational institutions. Duke University uses the model created by August Turak, entrepreneur and founder of the Self-Knowledge Symposium, which focuses on self-knowledge, character, community, and the desire for self-transcendence through small groups, to assist students with vocational discernment, leadership and ethical development, and rigorous spiritual seeking.<sup>7</sup> Those engaged in these efforts, both professionals and students alike, report that one of the keys to the efficacy of such programs is leadership. Young adults need to be in relationship with others, with whom they can process their questions, receive ideas, test and challenge themselves, and be taken seriously. Leaders, in turn, must be honest, informed, and practicing their faith in a daily and transparent way that exhibits both the benefits and sacrifices of a life committed to faith.

While mentoring and nurture are central to the successful transition to a faith that is thoughtful and developing, these elements alone are still not enough—and certainly not enough for the church to fulfill its promise and hope for an engaged, informed, and convicted membership, lay and ordained alike. As John Westerhoff, Christian educator, writer, and theologian, puts it in his seminal text, *Will Our Children Have Faith*:

We have expected too much of nurture, for at its very best, nurture makes possible institutional incorporation. We can nurture persons into institutional religion, but not into mature Christian faith. The Christian faith by its very nature demands conversion. . . . Of course, persons need to be and can be nurtured into a community's faith and life. There is a basic need to belong to and identify with a faithful community, to own its story as our story, and to have our religious affections nourished. . . . But persons also need, if they are to grow in faith, to be aided and encouraged to judge, inquire, question and even to doubt that faith; to be given the opportunity to experiment with and reflect upon alternatives; and to learn what it means to commit their lives to causes and persons. Only after an intellectual struggle with our community's faith and with an honest consideration of alternatives can a person truly say "I believe"—and thereby achieve personal Christian identity. Only then, I contend, can a person live the radical, political, economic, social life of the Christian in the world.<sup>8</sup>

As Christians, our goal and hope must always be conversion. That is not to say that we would diminish or devalue the faith of our Buddhist or Jewish brothers and sisters, saying that their faith is inadequate or based on falsehood. Indeed, if we are truly converted and able to live "the radical, political, economic, social life of the Christian in the world," then we must be able to live without being threatened by other truths and other paths and be able to see the depth of others' religious devotion and action in the world as complimentary to our own. But it is to say that we seek an experience wherein persons are transformed to strive for, with every ounce of their being, the life that Christ envisioned for us. And for those for whom faith is absent or empty, we must be able to articulate why the way of Christ could be life giving and life transforming for them.

## ■ Critical Questions for the Church

The critical questions for the church then become:

- In what ways do we respond to, support, and guide the needs and desires of young adults to integrate spiritually, to deconstruct and reconstruct their faith or current worldview, and to engage in religious practices that are independently chosen but connected to a larger community and tradition that we believe will be ultimately life giving and transforming for them over the rest of their lives?

- How do we do this in a way that takes seriously the culture and realities of life in the twenty-first century where pluralism is de facto and many have no formal religious background?
- How do we form in them the commitments required to lead in today's world with all its complexity and temptation?

The organizing unit for Christians has not always been a local congregation, complete with a building, a professional and geographically located pastor, and a (relatively) stable membership. In the beginning of Methodism, we were a wide and varied movement, led by a tireless and deeply faithful man, John Wesley, who was “teacher, publisher, missionary, fundraiser, administrator of the connection, and chaplain for the people called Methodist.”<sup>9</sup> The early Methodist societies were relatively small groups that met regularly for mutual support, prayer, Bible study, and even preaching, primarily by laypersons and less frequently by an ordained clergyperson. The members were encouraged to attend worship on Sundays at the local parish; but then, during the week, they met to seek “Christian perfection” in every aspect of their daily lives. As we look back on these societies today, and as they evolved even in Wesley’s time, what was called “society” was essentially the early church in Methodism.

Our earliest examples from Scripture of organizing units for the Christian movement include the band of twelve motley young men and their peripatetic guru, and that same guru’s pronouncements of what constituted an organizing unit: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I also.” (Matt. 18:20) Our current understanding of ecclesiology has moved quite a bit away from these models; and what we are faced with now is an institutionalized and often unwieldy behemoth that can sometimes prevent us from living as Christ as much as it can further it. I do not mean in any way to diminish the millions of lives transformed through our current models of church or the depth and breadth of good that is done through service out of our churches or the remarkable faithfulness of the persons who belong to our churches. I merely want to juxtapose our early, first-century Christian models and our early Methodist models of societies with our late twentieth-century models of church for the purposes of encouraging an openness to ecclesiological creativity and diversity.

And so, given what we know about young adults’ needs for spirituality, for freedom and space to question and grow, for educated and talented mentors, for communities in which to practice an integrated faith, for peers with whom they can journey—why is it that we would see campus ministries as marginal, the very places where these things are happening, calling them unnecessary or not critical to our collective mission? Or why would we call these places a “mission” of the church or an “extension” of the church and not simply the church itself? And yet, this is what we are doing when it comes to the church that exists in ministry on campus. In reviewing the literature on the spiritual needs of students, the role of mentoring in the college years, and the declining church involvement of young adults, it is striking how little of this research is being done by the church. While the church may

bemoan the state of things with respect to its aging populace and declining membership, investment and attention being given to the place where a large number of our young adults actually are—campuses—is glaringly absent.

Why would we sound the alarm and then fail to answer the call? *Why would we*, indeed? Part of the answer lies in our myopic understandings of what church is—that it is a building, a Sunday morning worship service, a set group of people, instead of a way, a life, a body, and a movement. The United Methodist Church’s current campaign to “Rethink Church,” targeted at 18–30 year olds, addresses this thinking and seeks to move us into more holistic, and possibly even more historically grounded, understandings and expressions of church. Yet, if one enters a zip code into the search engine on the campaign’s website to request “a United Methodist Effort Near You,” only local churches, not campus ministries, will be returned.

Another part of the answer lies in the failure of campus ministries to be little more than advanced youth groups, or pastoral care centers, or community social justice centers. Again, I do not intend to disparage the important ministry that happens through these places or to diminish in any way the persons engaged in these activities. But I do believe that these separate aspects sell short the total ministry and purpose for our church communities on campus and do not fulfill their potential in forming committed and mature Christian leaders and disciples. Moreover, campus ministries have sometimes failed to articulate their contribution and necessity to the church as a whole. But the same could be said about the larger church’s articulation of its necessity in the world; so, perhaps, campus ministry can be forgiven its lack of an audible apologetics. This does not, however, alleviate the need for the case to be made.

And yet, when the church is active and engaged through a ministry with campuses, and when a ministry to campus is broad-minded and varied, supported by the larger community of faith and led by an informed and patient clergyperson capable of both nurture and challenge, then we can know that we are answering the sound of the alarm. When the church takes seriously its call to make disciples of Christ and realizes that a vast, spiritually seeking population exists on campus and is ready to hear the life-transforming message of Jesus, then we can know we are responding to our evangelistic imperative. When the church accepts the responsibility to encourage the campus community not only to be a community modeling peace and justice but also to transform the whole world through the leaders being trained therein, then can we know that we are taking steps to make real the hope that all of our children would become generative and mature in their leadership in church and society. Our task is huge, but the continuance of the Christian movement depends on our ability to cultivate each successive generation of Christian leaders.

## ■ Campus Ministry in Ecclesial Context

In the aforementioned appeal from the local congregation was acknowledgement, albeit tacit, that our campus ministry is reaching young adults, and doing so in significant numbers and

life-changing ways. This has not always been the case; which is not to say the campus ministry was ineffective, but that its reach was limited. When I arrived at the campus ministry in 1999, there was a small core group of students who, while identifying as Christian, found themselves marginalized on a campus where “Christian” was perceived as equating with a set of conservative political ideologies, including opposition to rights for LGBTQ persons, membership in the Republican party, and traditional views about biblical interpretation. These identities and values did not match with their beliefs and sensibilities, and they experienced exclusion and criticism from other Christian students on campus. And, within the wider, secular culture of the Western United States, these students experienced suspicion about their Christian identity from the nonreligious population. Politically, they were marginalized for being Christian; and within the Christian community, they felt diminished and devalued due to their different understandings of the authority of Scripture, sexual ethics, and activism.

The campus ministry saw its role as healing the wounds of these students through pastoral care, providing a scriptural foundation for their more progressive theologies, and offering opportunities to serve and put their Christian faith into action. The campus minister had a notable presence on campus, often speaking to groups about how progressive Christianity understands certain aspects of academic and public life. All of these are laudable efforts; and though the student group was relatively small, the ministry’s existence and stand for an integration of education and faith was an important and appreciated part of the campus milieu. And for those who were involved, the experience was significant.

Furthermore, as an exercise in moving the church’s self-understanding from a building to a movement, the campus ministry, like most campus ministries, had much to witness to the wider body of the church. Like the early Methodist societies, the campus ministry was made up of a group of people meeting regularly and daily attempting to discern their calls through the resources of their education, the wisdom of the tradition, and the life of Christ testified to in Scripture. And as these persons discerned what their vocation might be, they were intentional about sharing their understanding of who Christ is and what a life in Christ could be for others. In order to share this good news, students and leaders alike were forced to find new phrases and new words that communicated the same possibilities but were not laden with connotations that had become rigid and distancing. As a model of how language is rethought to communicate enduring truths, campus ministries are excelling.

Still, the overriding challenge for the church’s work is for the invitation to transformed life to be issued and responded to much more broadly than was happening through our campus ministry in the past. Moreover, for the church to be renewed in each generation, it is essential for young adults to have the experience of actually being the body of Christ, an ecclesiological unit, wherein God is known and worshiped, persons are challenged and nurtured, leadership and creativity are exercised, and out of which persons can serve and transform their structures and communities, understanding all of this as an ongoing way of life and a self-orientation. It should not be merely an exercise in inter-Christian apologetics or an isolated peer group focused inwardly for a period of four or five years. Finally, for this

campus church to fulfill the totality of all we are called to incarnate, the members must be able to extend an invitation to others to follow Christ, now and in the future. To do this with authenticity and substance, students must struggle with the variety of belief and commitment in today's culture. I contend there is no better place to do this work than on our campuses, in all of their complexity and diversity, and no more potentially fruitful time than in the young adult years.

To get at creating a ground out of which students can do this work, our campus ministry has expanded to include a multi-faith residential community, a home for thirty-eight students of a variety of faith backgrounds to live intentionally with one another, growing and learning. Each resident signs a covenant agreeing to share his or her faith; seek to grow spiritually; participate in community life, including table fellowship at a weekly community meal; serve in a way that promotes peace and justice and is motivated by his or her faith; and live simply and sustainably, valuing relationships with others, God, and the earth over acquiring things.<sup>10</sup> The community is made up of students from six different faiths and spiritualities, the largest group among them being Christians. In this pluralistic environment, students have the opportunity to hear other worldviews and faith constructions, test out their own understandings and consider, finally, what is unique and essential about a life in Christ. Much like learning a second language allows us to comprehend our native tongues more fully, there is nothing like daily engagement with faith in a pluralistic environment to lead one into an articulated and owned faith.

Pluralism is a reality for young adults in the United States today, and the presence of competing truths can initially cause students to wonder whether there is any truth at all. Without a community or guidance, students may be left wondering long after they leave campus. Our work is to help them mine the richness of other faiths and spiritualities, while helping them to go deeper into their own faith, developing a more informed, nuanced understanding. Through the Multifaith Living Community (MLC), students are led into deep and sustained engagement with a variety of faiths, which brings them to appreciation for other paths to God. As witnessed to by one student:

Looking back, a great deal of my own intimate friendships have been with Christians. It has been great for me to develop meaningful, lasting, and deep friendships with Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus. I have been able to see what I appreciate about these different faiths. My Sikh roommates have a devotion and discipline that I, as a [Christian], value and admire. From my Buddhist friends, I have learned to take joy and comfort in the present moment.

And, as students gain new perspectives on spiritual practices and disciplines in other faiths, they are led back into their own faith to discover what exists in their own tradition. For instance, in our campus ministry, our students have chosen to delve deeply into the core practices of the Christian faith. Communion, in its authority, history, and practice, has been examined and deconstructed; the eight core tenets of progressive Christianity<sup>11</sup> have been discussed and debated; the connection between social-justice movements and

Christianity has been explored; and creeds, from the Apostles' Creed to more modern statements of faith, have been engaged. This is essentially theological work, and too many of our faith communities do not push our members to struggle for themselves with who God and Christ are. If we do not know who God and Christ are, we will be unable to fully be the church, the body of Christ on earth.

Let us return to the current Rethink Church campaign, the emphasis of which is that *church* is a verb, and that being church is a daily, active, sustained way of life. While I wholeheartedly support this revision of our understanding, it seems to me that the essential step of doing the theological work of exploring who we believe God to be, through our tradition, Scripture, and practice, has been skipped. Nowhere on the Rethink Church website are we given a compelling reason why Christianity equates with disaster relief, sustainable ecology, or food pantries. And yet what we are doing in campus ministry is a daily and active life in faith *grounded and supported by an engaged and informed theology*. In a living environment, this work happens daily and naturally, as students share the ways in which their coursework causes them to rethink their faith and question one another about their respective systematic theologies. One student put it this way:

Living in the MLC has helped me to broaden my understanding of what it means to live a life of service. I have come to view service as making the choice to respond to others with love and compassion. I do not need to seek out opportunities to do this—I just need to be open to God's daily call. This has given me a more immediate understanding of my purpose in life, which is first and foremost about building relationships with others. This involves challenging personal views as well as more systemic problems, both of which can prevent us from loving each other as God loves us.

Moreover, engaging in this work in a pluralistic environment leads to an ability to articulate why, among all competing and compelling theologies, Christianity is one's chosen and owned path. For young adults, a faith that is alive is an active, reasoned, and daily faith, motivated by a tested and owned theology.

The ethereal, dynamic quality of faith demands that we not try to contain it or define it as residing in one place. When the Rethink Church campaign asks, for example, "What if church provided legal aid for immigrants? Would you come?" we still are confronted with the presupposition that there is a place to which to come, even as the campaign ambiguously attempts to define church more broadly and actively. By contrast, campus ministries, on a daily basis, face the very different understanding of place that young adults have. Young adults are connected electronically in multiple ways, and, by and large, have experienced a transiency unknown at the same levels in previous generations. Campus ministers understand the ways in which this reality can not only be dealt with but embraced, as we assist students in prioritizing values so that technology can enhance their deepest commitments and relationships rather than being a distraction. As they engage this aspect of their lives with their understandings of community, transcendence, and even sin in all of its

dimensions—from isolation to dehumanization—their theologies take on dimensions that allow them to be faithful people in their real worlds.

The challenges and complexities facing young adults are legion. Not only are they developmentally at a place where they are questioning faith, commitments, and values, they are doing so in a pluralistic, technology-laden world wherein countless sources vie for their allegiance. In order to make sense of the chaos and to grow and develop into thoughtful and mature leaders in church and society, young adults must engage in the foundational theological work that juxtaposes the nature of God with new concepts of place. The Word must be taken seriously, but fresh ways to express good news must be discovered. Christian faith and its practices must be explored, dismantled, and tested to the extent that young adults will be able to articulate what they believe and why; and then go on to make a compelling case for why others should join them. Campus ministries are uniquely situated to guide students in this theological work because of the nature of the intensive peer environment, the pluralistic context, the interface of new learning from the academy, and the space provided away from what has been familiar. The future of the church depends on our ability as a community to nurture, guide, and ultimately lead our young adults to conversion through our ministries on campus, where they can rigorously and without judgment engage all that is facing them. It is only in experiencing conversion themselves, through the love and nurture of the community and the acceptance of a new and mature understanding of who God is and can be in our very complex yet interconnected world, that our young adults can authentically invite others into the transformed lives that they themselves have been converted to lead. Then and only then will we have the quality of leaders who can exhibit and undertake, with strength, wisdom, and commitment, the life of service that Christ calls us to, transforming our communities economically, ecologically, and vocationally. When persons are nurtured, engaged, and transformed in these ways, the body of Christ will not only be sustained but also renewed—and thus will thrive.

## Notes

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2. “The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose—Executive Summary.” See [www.spirituality.ucla.edu/spirituality/reports/FINAL\\_EXEC\\_SUMMARY.pdf](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu/spirituality/reports/FINAL_EXEC_SUMMARY.pdf).
3. Lifeway Research is affiliated with the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention.
4. “Spiritual Life of College Students,” 2.
5. James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981).
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7. August Turak, "I Do and I Understand: The Self Knowledge Symposium Model of Transformational Education." *Spirituality in Higher Education Newsletter: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose* 1/2 (June 2004).

8. John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Rev. ed. (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 35–36. Copyright © Morehouse Publishing.

9. Russell E. Richey, *Extension Ministers: Mr. Wesley's True Heirs* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2008), 17.

10. For the full text of the covenant, see [http://cahouse.org/Multifaith\\_Community/Application/MLC\\_Covenant\\_09-10.pdf](http://cahouse.org/Multifaith_Community/Application/MLC_Covenant_09-10.pdf).

11. See The Center for Progressive Christianity, <http://www.tcpc.org/about/8points.cfm>.



## RESPONSE

### Reclaiming Vocation: A Response to Kristin Stoneking

Brent Waters

One can only begin with a response of gratitude that Kristin Stoneking has written this essay. It explicates a compelling mission for campus ministry in a clear and concise manner, without any hint of defensiveness, while also identifying the contextual challenges without any hint of anxiety. The emphasis upon evangelization and preparation for conversion in light of the developmental needs of young adults is especially welcomed, as are the ecclesiological questions that she poses. As an aside, I cannot resist noting that for the Cal Aggie Christian Association, “cultivating” is the operative metaphor in harvesting a new crop of leaders.

My response focuses on the topics of ecclesiology and context. I employ a slightly different read of these topics in respect to campus ministry; and my comments are intended to complement and supplement what Stoneking has written. Thus, the tone of my remarks is interrogative, which, I hope, will promote further conversation and reflection.

Campus ministers and chaplains are routinely besieged by the plaintive cry: Why aren't students frequent churchgoers? This question, as Stoneking contends, reflects a myopic ecclesiology, as well as an ignorance of the developmental and spiritual needs of young adults, resulting in an impoverished ministry in general and a beleaguered campus ministry in particular. As she notes, the local congregation is not—and has never been—the exclusive model of ministry; and evangelization and preparation for conversion take place as much, if not more, within the world as opposed to the confines of ecclesiastical institutions.

However, this myopic ecclesiology also stems, in part, from the Protestant churches' mistaken perception of themselves as voluntary organizations. As such, their ministries, such as

worship and various programs and activities they sponsor, are organized by ordained professionals who recruit and oversee small cadres of part-time volunteers. But this self-perception virtually guarantees a disabled ministry, for ministry belongs to the entire body of Christ. All Christians, in virtue of their baptism, are ministers of Jesus Christ; and since there is no such thing as a part-time Christian, there are also no part-time ministers.

It is ironic that the Protestant churches have become adept at “priestcraft.” They have, perhaps unwittingly, fallen into the trap of believing that only those activities and services provided under ecclesiastical auspices and control constitute genuine ministry. This highly diminished understanding of ministry is a consequence of the virtual disappearance of any notion of secular callings and vocations, which, in turn, has rendered the laity, other than as part-time volunteers, effectively invisible. Yet if ministry belongs to the entire church, and if all Christians are ministers, then the work of the laity in the world is also the work of the church, particularly in respect to evangelization and preparation for conversion.

Recovering a more vital understanding of secular callings and vocations—or, more broadly, the ministry of the baptized—has three implications for campus ministry. First, students are often perceived as refugees who, for a few years, are plopped into a relatively comfortable camp, awaiting resettlement. Nearby churchgoers, for admittedly charitable reasons, believe they should offer a variety of programs and services to help these strangers in their midst adjust to their temporary surroundings. And they are offended when, more often than not, their offer of hospitality is refused. What if, instead, this time was used to affirm the student’s calling and vocation *as a student*? What would it mean to encourage students to explore, question, doubt, and even rebel; for this is what a student, in part, is called to do?

Second, although students are not refugees, they are sojourners. The vast majority of students will not become permanent residents of campuses where they (allegedly) study. It is a time of preparation to be equipped to fulfill their callings and vocations, and a time will come when God sends them into various locales around the world to minister in Christ’s name. What would it mean to help students perceive their forthcoming work as ministry? What would it mean to instill in them an acknowledgement that the ministry of the church is not confined to worship, ushering, relief efforts, and the like, however important these activities might be; but that it is also, and equally importantly, as bankers, doctors, lawyers, spouses, parents, and the like, that they minister in the name of Jesus Christ?

Third, it is understandable that congregations are frustrated that students are visible by their virtual absence. To use some business imagery, congregations need this age cohort if they are to compete within the spiritual marketplace; and campus ministry is often blamed for failing to effectively market the church’s goods and services. This consumerist mentality, however, is deadly, for it confuses ministry with the survival of whatever institutional model is currently prevalent. It is a failure, in short, to recognize that sometimes the Holy Spirit might use a little creative destruction in order to renew the church and its evangelical witness. What would it mean if laypersons were enabled to reclaim the ministry of their baptism? What would it mean to acknowledge and affirm that through faculty, administrators, and staff, the church’s ministry is already present on campus?

In brief, campus ministry will do a great service if through its efforts it can help every Christian reclaim the ministry of his or her baptism, to recover a vital sense of calling and vocation, whether it be secular or through holy orders.

In terms of context, Stoneking describes the contemporary university in all its dazzling and bewildering variety, while avoiding imagery that is either hopelessly naive or desperately flummoxed. She has captured in a few paragraphs the tension between particularity and pluralism—a tension, as she demonstrates, that can prove enlivening rather than deadening. In this respect, I was particularly intrigued with the multi-faith residential community and wished she had said a bit more about it. But in what she did say, my heart was strangely warmed; because she avoided the words *inclusion* and *diversity*. I have never been very comfortable with these words, for both historical and theological reasons. More often than not, inclusion has been an imperial strategy. Rome's favored device for dealing with its neighbors and enemies, for instance, was to include them in its empire. The price of inclusion was the loss of freedom and having one's identity refashioned in a Roman image.

Late liberal versions of inclusion are usually less dramatic, but nonetheless worrisome. It is often presumed by a community that other groups want, or at least *should* want, to be included. The price of admission, however, is steep, requiring the diminishment, if not effectively the extinguishing, of one's particularity. This may take the form of gradual enculturation over time, or, more insidiously, the subtle but effective denial of difference. This latter kind of inclusion is troubling because those being included are often reshaped in the image and likeness of those who, often for well-intentioned reasons, are doing the including. But note that such inclusion is always undertaken on the terms of the dominant community with little or no consultation with those they are including. It is sort of like married couples, for example, treating gay and lesbian couples as honorary heterosexuals.

This is why I have also never been terribly fond of the word *diversity*, because contemporary rhetoric about difference has been largely empty and vacuous. For all the talk about diversity, what we often end up with are variations of a dominant, late liberal culture—a so-called diverse world comprised of how late liberals see that world. Someone else is simply a projection of what I think he or she should be; so when I claim to see another, I am really doing little more than gazing in a mirror.

Ironically, the reason why late liberalism has such a problem with alterity is because of the lack of universality. You can't have the many without the one; there can be no rich variety of galaxies in the absence of a *universe*. In short, there must be some underlying uniformity if difference is to be truly recognized as such. This was one of Saint Augustine's great insights—that it is not out of the many one, but out of the one many; for all humans share a common pair of original parents. Hence, I can (or should) take delight in the other as one that is both like and unlike me.

In brief, is not Stoneking suggesting that evangelization and conversion have at least something to do with learning how to take delight in the other *as other*? And, more broadly, is she not beckoning us to imagine what the ministry of a universal *and* pluriform church might entail within the context of our contemporary world? I hope so.

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## Contributors

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**Quincy D. Brown** is the Vice President for Spiritual Life and Church Relations at LaGrange College, in LaGrange, Georgia.

**Mark Forrester** is a campus minister and currently the director of The Wesley Foundation at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee.

**Malcolm L. Frazier** currently serves as campus minister at Howard University and also as an adjunct faculty member at Wesley Theological Seminary, both located in Washington, D.C.

**Namsoon Kang** is Associate Professor of World Christianity and Religions at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, in Fort Worth, Texas.

**Alice G. Knotts** currently is helping with development of sustainable affordable student housing for Wesley House Student Residence at San Diego State University, in San Diego, California.

**Helen R. Neinast** has served the denomination and higher education in many different capacities at both state colleges and private universities.

**Hendrik R. Pieterse** is Book Editor and Director of Scholarly Research at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Stephen W. Rankin** is the Chaplain and Minister to the University at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas.

**Russell E. Richey** is William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Kristin Stoneking** is Director and Campus Minister in the Cal Aggie Christian Association at the University of California at Davis, in Davis, California.

**Brent Waters** is Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Associate Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, in Evanston, Illinois.

**Bridgette D. Young** is Assistant General Secretary for Campus Ministry and College Chaplaincy at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, in Nashville, Tennessee.



**General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
The United Methodist Church  
PO Box 340007  
Nashville, TN 37203-0007**

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